

Thriving in Construction | 01 – Moving Beyond Differences in the Construction Industry with Aishwarya Pathak

INTRO

In today's episode of our thriving in construction, the podcast, our guest is none other than Aishwarya Pathak, Project Engineer at Lunacon Construction Group. Aishwarya has a solid seven years of experience at design build firms. Her role includes contract preparation, specifications, schedules, estimates, and working drawings and design for superior commercial, public and residential buildings. Well, I guess it's time to hear from her side of the story. So, let us all welcome Project Engineer Aishwarya Pathak.

Patricia Bonilla: Hi, welcome to Thriving in Construction, the Podcast. And here we have our guest, Aishwarya Pathak. Can you please introduce yourself?

Aishwarya Pathak: Hi, I am Aishwarya Pathak. I'm from India. And now I'm working as a Project Engineer with Lunacon since last one and a half year. I love it.

Patricia: Good, good. Can you tell us what got you into construction? I mean, I know a little bit about you, actually. And I know you're very smart, very bright, I know how committed you are to your work with the grace that you do it. What got you into this industry?

Aishwarya: So I have a background of architecture. I practiced as architect for six years. And then I came to United States, I did my construction management. And I joined Lunacon as a Project Engineer. And this is my first job in USA. And now initially, I worked in the design aspect of construction.

And now I'm mostly interested in to the management and how it is executed. It really fascinates me how one's idea in someone mind is, is actually executed, and I can see the structure built up. So that's really fascinating. And that actually inspired me to be in this field.

Patricia: Awesome. So I am an engineer, and then I did construction management. So you are an architect? And now you did construction management and started working in construction. I'm curious, as an architect, now that you have been practicing construction management, how do you see the architectural world?

In other words, you have experienced how the challenges around managing a project, right? How do you see the difference between just being an architect not being involved in the construction? And now you're not the architect, you didn't do this design and you are managing the construction project for somebody else's design? How do you see both worlds now?

Aishwarya: So initially, when I started with construction, and when I used to see the drawings from different architects, then I could recognize that we used to make lots of mistakes that used to create lots of problems for the structural engineers.

Patricia: You mean the architects?

Aishwarya: Yes. And easily for the architects. We used to make some design mistakes, not mistakes, complicated design, and the structural engineer, or the mechanical plumber. They had a lot of difficulties in actually executing in that way. And as a project engineer, or as a management part, that is our work to resolve the conflict between both of them, the construction, architect and the MVPs. So that is interesting.

Patricia: What do you think is more challenging? Being an architect? Or being the construction manager? Where do you see the challenges in both? What do you think is more challenging?

Aishwarya: Both are challenging in their aspect. In designing, we need to look into the codes. All the standards are different in each cities, each state has different code. Whereas in management, we don't consider that. But it is very essential that we should look into the ADA standards, all the codes and standards, more on designing and executing.

It's necessary that I should have some knowledge about what the architect is thinking. And for me, that is the plus point I can read drawings, I understand what the codes are, and that is helping me in this industry.

Patricia: So that's awesome. You have a very clear understanding of you know what the difference between an architect, an engineer, mechanical, structural engineer. You have the understanding of construction management. And you really value all roles.

They're all important. Yes, all they're all important. So when you're in India, remember, three years ago, you were there. And you are working over there. What's the difference between working on a construction project as a woman in India, and working here as a woman? What's the difference?

Aishwarya: In India, we actually don't have anything particular for construction management or project management. There are a lot of lot of architects, there are a lot of civil engineers who are women, but there are no construction management, not even men. So that's a new industry in India. But yours?, I think it's growing. I mean, there are less women, but since a decade, it's changing.

Patricia: But who manages the projects? The architects? The engineers?

Aishwarya: So we have architects, there are builders or developers. And we have the super, like the site supervisors. So they manage the project, and the architect helps.

Patricia And when you work for any India, you work for the developer?

Aishwarya: I used to work for a project management, consultancy, and an architect. So I was a project manager, and an architect project architect.

Patricia: Okay. So this is the question. How is a woman seen in India in construction? So you're in a construction field, what's the difference that you see? Is there any difference from how a woman is treated in construction in India? And here? is there is there a difference?

Aishwarya: I mean, it's quite similar, because in India, it's really not safe at some time. In some of the cities, it's so unsafe to even travel in the afternoon. And working in construction, we have labels; they're very poor, they're very low background, different culture, it's really difficult.

And coming from, like a family background, good family background, our parents, they are very skeptical, skeptical about sending women in such field, but my family they supported me.

Patricia: They supported you? That's awesome. And so you're saying that it's because we're going to rural areas, sometimes slowly projects there, it can be unsafe for a woman more than a man.

Aishwarya: Right, and not even in rural areas. There are towns, when it get dark, it's really unsafe, really.

Patricia: And in here?

Aishwarya: In here, I found that in some places, it's, it's scary, but it's not like... I mean, we can sell life.

Patricia: In here, you can survive in the US?

Aishwarya: There's just one challenge that I face is I don't understand Spanish at all. And there are laborers who speak only Spanish. So it's very difficult for me to talk to them and communicate. That's one challenge I have. Even with the subcontractors when I talk to them, sometimes it becomes so difficult to try to convince them. But somehow we managed to.

Patricia: So you are in Miami. And this is why for those of you that are listening, Miami, you there's some huge population, people that speak Spanish and incredibly, but they don't speak English. So that's kind of difficult to understand. But it happens. And you're right about that. And in this industry, though, it's very prominent, prominent.

Aishwarya: Yes, especially in Florida, because we have Spanish population dominant.

Patricia: So are you passionate about construction?

Aishwarya: I am very much.

Patricia: Tell me how.

Aishwarya: So now I see myself as a project manager in coming years. I right now started, I would say I'm a newbie in construction, just the construction execution. But and I have learned a lot in the last year. And I think I would be very soon to be president.

Patricia: So you've learned a lot Tell me what's the biggest aha moment that you've had? What's the biggest distinction that you can express that you can tell us about you in your learning process? What have you learned that you can say you know what this is, this is going to make a difference for my future.

Aishwarya: So I learned a lot about how to manage things, how to schedule a particular thing and have a thing done in budget and within time and that's profit, and that's what we are working from.

Patricia: So make money.

Aishwarya: To make money and live, enjoy life later.

Patricia: Has the construction industry been a good advocate for you to make money? And as a person, as an individual as a professional, is a construction industry a place where a woman or a man can make money and have a good life?

Aishwarya: Yes, I do believe it's possible. And at very young age, we can start doing it doing this. In India, we did not have a culture of working from six age of 16, or something. So when I graduated, at the age of 22, I started working. If I would have been in Europe, maybe I would have started early and would have got more infield knowledge about different traits that sometimes I feel that I'm not connecting.

Patricia: The feel experience.

Aishwarya: Not just feel experience, but about the experience about different trades. I think my weakest trade would be mechanical, I don't understand how the HVAC system work.

Patricia: So let me ask you something, if there are women out there... how old are you?

Aishwarya: I am 30.

Patricia: Oh, my gosh, you look like you're 25? If there are women out there that they want to they're trying to decide, what am I going to study? They're in high school, and they're trying to decide, do you recommend construction for a woman as a space for them to develop? Would you recommend that?

Aishwarya: Yes, I would, I would recommend them. Even if they are not interested in completely in the construction. They don't study construction, even if they come from finance background, or any other background, they can be a part of construction industry. There is opportunity for everything in construction.

Patricia: Why is that? Tell me more.

Aishwarya: So what I feel is if one comes from let's say finance background, accounts and finances, accounting, it's one of the most important feature that is required in construction industry that will hold the finance of the project together. And that will identify if the project is going to be successful, is it going to be a loss for the company or the project? So the final aim is that the project becomes successful, and we make money and in time, and we get more projects.

Patricia: What other areas do you think of? You know, a lot of times we think construction, most people don't know that there's a career for construction management. A lot of people don't know. And when people hear the word construction, they ask you, let's say you tell someone I'm in construction, they say you're laying blocks or your you know, with the labor, you're a labor. That people have a tendency to say that construction means that you are in the field, just you know, with your hands going there with the work, right?

Aishwarya: That has happened to me, even my friends which are not from construction, who have done their from IT, IT people. So when I tell them, I'm from construction industry, they're like, Oh my god, so you do go on site and build buildings, that's it, that's what you do. And in architecture, they used to say that you only do drawings, that's all you do.

But that's not the thing, we have to look into the details, the nitty gritty, of how the design should be done. And in construction, we need to look how it should be executed. They don't think of that they don't even know about it.

Patricia: Right. So what other areas of expertise, you've talked about finance, and you talked about accounting, and I believe that.. what other areas?

Aishwarya: Preconstruction, the estimation part. So before we get the project, we should have a detailed outline of what the project is going to be, and how big the project is, will be. So that is one of the most important part of the construction. And then comes the operations. So before we get into operations, if we don't have a good pre construction, we won't get to.

Patricia: That's true. So if you are now let's say six years ago, and or seven years ago, you're gone to the university, why would you have done differently?

Aishwarya: I mean, I would have started working along with study that I didn't want to. I mean, I started off for my graduation. So if I would have gotten hands on experience and architecture at that time. So along with architecture, when I see things are happening on the field, I learned more so that I would have changed

Patricia: And what do you think are the biggest challenges that woman encounters in construction?

Aishwarya: They are not listened by men or anyone, sometimes they just ignore us. So I think we need to voice our opinion more loudly and more clearly. Women are more focused, they are more planned and not discriminating. But they are planned. And men they are volatile,

Patricia: Volatile [laughing]. Is that your experience with every team that you have worked with in construction,

Aishwarya: Not every member as is, in general, on in some people that have worked with they are like that.

Patricia: So your first husband, I know your husband is in construction, is he volatile?

Aishwarya: He's calm. He's very calm. I'm more organized than him.

Patricia: But you know, we need it. It comes it's a little bit of our personality. And we need it's like, we need all the parts of the body, you know, we need the hands, the fingers, we need all the parts, there's no discrimination as to why do we know...

Aishwarya: Both of them, they both have different perspectives that should be respected. For men and women.

Patricia: Right being organized. It depends on the personality, some, some women are very organized. So others are not very organized. Now, women's sometimes we have kids, we have husbands, we do many, many different things. And I think maybe because of that we develop some restrictions. What are the restrictions?

Aishwarya: So if I have kids, like immediately, I don't think so I'm going to go on site the next day and start working, that can happen with my husband, he can go and work do we want to. But that's one that kids are one is what one obstacle for some phase, then if we have enough, in our culture, we have parents at home, so we need to take care of them. I think that's, that's the whole rest.

Patricia: So what's going to happen when Ash has kids? And Ash wants to be a project manager, and she got her job, and she has her future dream job. And all of a sudden she got pregnant, what's going to happen?2

Aishwarya: I'm going to work till the end, and I delivered the baby. And after deliver my baby, and maybe for a month, I'm going to take a break, but still be connected with the construction and in the project

Patricia: Is it possible to raise kids, you know, attend to your house, you know, cook for your family and take care of your husband, you know, give him kisses and all that it's awesome. Also do the same, you know, in your job, it's possible.

Aishwarya: It's possible if you do that now, I mean, I cook everything, I take care of my husband, he takes care of me. But then when I come to my job, I'm into it. And so my work life and professional life and personal life is different. But it disconnected because if I'm frustrated work, sometimes I'm mad at him, that happens, but we try to stay calm or just ignore it.

Patricia: So you hear a good point. A lot of people say that the personal life and the business life, they need to be disconnected. And I think there's nothing there's not a biggest light. You know, you are you in everywhere you go you take yourself and who you are. And if you Yes, you want to try to leave stuff that is happening on word.

But there's got to be in the back of mind it is this. It is there and I think it comes with commitment to being the best that you can operating from a beautiful space of love and not take those charges with you. What is that? Sometimes it's easier said than done. You have to develop some rituals in order to do that. Right? So how does it affect you does your work life it is stress that you overcome our work or the stress that you are exposed to because we're going to talk a little bit about the stress in construction. Does that affect your personal life when you're at home with your husband?

Aishwarya: Sometimes it does, like not literally affecting, but I mean, I get sad I don't talk to anyone. I just try to ignore the fact. But that's affecting the life. Of course, yes, of course. But most of the time we try to ignore it. Because these forecasts often, I'm from construction. So we vow that sometimes so stressful that we need to ignore the fact and just do talk about the work and go for a walk, go for the night. We do that a lot.

Patricia: That's a good practice.

Aishwarya: Because we both are in construction. And we have to deal with the stress.

Patricia: So it's beautiful. Because those of you that don't know Ash, I know her. She's the most quiet. And she looks like she has everything under control. There's nothing bad going on. And she's always with a smile. And sometimes we see people that are so cool, calm and collected, and we think they have no feelings. But that's not true. Right? People think that...

Aishwarya: Sometimes, even my husband before we started dating, he used to think, oh, my God, she's like a stone or closed book. And then if I open up, then I start talking and then I don't stop.

Patricia: Then he doesn't want to hear you talk.

Aishwarya: Now he doesn't want to hear me.

Patricia: That's good. And now what how can you do that? How does that help you or not help you in construction? So when you have a challenge in a project, and you know, there's a situation where maybe the client is asking for something that is, or accusing the legacy of something that is not true? or asking for something that is not fair? or making you do something that is not... what do you speak out? Do you say something? Or do you just stay quiet?

Aishwarya: No, then I speak out, I before speaking up, I need to create a backup that I have a proof that use blogging wrong or it is not correct, this should be done in a particular way. If I have a button, that is they are correct, then no, that we are wrong.

Patricia: So you're saying that if you look at the facts, and then you speak up? And if not, I mean, you're successful?

Aishwarya: Yeah, we should accept our mistakes, right? It's not. That's a good practice. I see.

Patricia: Right. Right. So tell me something. Tell me about these ladies, again, that are out there thinking construction. And it is stressful, right? Is it stressful? Or no?

Aishwarya: No, if you enjoy it, it's not stressful. Stress is everywhere in everything. So not just construction.

Patricia: That's true. That is true. So what can they do to prepare themselves to be successful just like you and enjoy what you're doing? What do they need?

Aishwarya: They should be confident in what they are doing. And if we are successful women, we talk to them, and encourage them. That's it. They need encouragement. Every woman needs encouragement. And she can succeed.

Patricia: So are you saying look for someone that can encourage you?

Aishwarya: Yes. So it may be we can call for a group of young kids like women, ladies, small kids, and talk to them and walk to the girl walk to the construction industry, how it works, train them, not train them, not even try to manipulate them, just walk to them. It would be helpful for them, and they might consider.

Patricia: Do you think we need more women in this industry?

Aishwarya: We do need now the culture is changing. We have you, we have Patricia. Yes. What do we do need more women because women are calm, and they have a different perspective than men. And we should respect that.

Patricia: So you think all women are calm?

Aishwarya: Not all, some.

Patricia: You haven't seen some women that are not calm? Because I know you have some of your projects. You haven't seen women that are volatile in your projects?

Aishwarya: I have seen both of them. I mean I am calm, I become volatile very rarely.

Patricia: I love the way she says. So but when you see a woman that is all over the place and what you call volatile that some people call [inaudible]. What do you... it's more about a personality in other gender whether a woman or a man. How do you... what do you think?

Aishwarya: I mean, they should be everywhere, but if they have some logic, they should be there. If they are just talking because they are good at talking. They shouldn't.

Patricia: Have you find that?

Aishwarya: There are I have seen that there are there are these women, not women, everyone who can talk nicely, but they don't do work. They just talk. They just talk, so that's not good in construction industry. We need the work, not talking. It's not going the building is not going to be constructed on words.

Patricia: That should be left for the marketing. So tell me something. You we want to attract more women in construction? How do we do that?

Aishwarya: So we approach colleges with and there is everyone is starting out there. I think more girls are starting than boys, the population. So let's go to these colleges. Help create some small trainings, some small seminars and talk about them. Talk to them and ask their views what they want to do in their life. If are they fascinated by buildings or anything? They can be related to construction.

Patricia: Why would you are you passionate about construction? What is it that makes you passionate and enjoy? What in construction makes it?

Aishwarya: So when I was little, I used to be so fascinated seeing all the beautiful buildings, beautiful, aesthetically designed buildings on TV. And I thought I used to think that I want to do this, I want to build these buildings. So I love drawing and sketching.

So I started designing and then I thought of a career that I might do something in design.

So as I did architecture, and I did designing, designing, and I did all the residential projects. And at a point I thought, oh my God, I'm just doing blocks. And I need to see how it's working. So I shifted from architecture to construction, they both are sisters, they are family. So in construction and in the motor related from designing to seeing how it grows, I mean as just love it.

Patricia: So you go back to being an architect only?

Aishwarya: Not only both of them, I want to do both of them just design and see. I designed the design and building any structure and I want to see that how I'm how my team and myself it's building structures willing to do what I design.

Patricia: What kind of building would you love to design?2

Aishwarya: I love hospitality. I love hotels and resorts.

Patricia: What do you like about them?

Aishwarya: Their structures I read I love the aesthetics in hospitality. There is so many details about the amenities. love them.

Patricia: So you really want to learn about HVAC, right?

Aishwarya: I spoke to Emilio the other day. I want to learn about HVAC system, I hardly know about it and how it works.

Patricia: Who's Emilio?

Aishwarya: Oh, Emilio is Patricia's husband. Um, so I think that's that's, that's great that you want to do that. And we can create a space for that. We can talk offline later about how can we get there faster.

Aishwarya: And plus we have the interiors which goes along with hospitality and then designing so the idea comes as a part of it.

Patricia: Now when you have when you're in these projects and tell me what as what's the biggest challenge you have found in construction so far? The biggest challenge that kept you up at night and you didn't know how you were going to solve it, but you know, it was making you upset or it was out of control?

Aishwarya: So I will tell you a funny story when I started doing this. We are doing these roofing projects all we have roofing and HR bruises. And they used to talk about

eyebrows. I was like what the hell is eyebrows? Then crickets, I know cricket there is the insect cricket and the sports. So I did not know what these crickets and I was. So I used to do, "oh my God this is so different terminologies."

So in architecture, so one challenge that I faced a lot is the terminology between architecture and construction and from India, it is somewhat different than yours. So that was a challenge one challenge for me. And the work culture is quite different here. And back in my country.

Patricia: Really?

Aishwarya: Yes.

Patricia: What's different?

Aishwarya: I mean, I do believe then there are not many women in construction. They don't go on site much I used to go just for supervision on maybe monthly once, not twice. And there is no different departments in one particular office. We don't we did not have marketing, we did not have accounting, finance, estimating nothing. Just designing we are doing designing, or just a little bit of quantitative estimation. But not all the department, that is different. Yeah, I mean that those are different things comparing both the countries.

Patricia: So the biggest challenge you've had is with the terminology. Anything else?

Aishwarya: Terminologies and downside, I do worry about being in Florida. I don't understand Spanish. That's another challenge. And...

Patricia: That will be a challenge for many people.

Aishwarya: That is the challenge. And sometimes talking to the subcontractors. If I if I was in my country, I know in my language, I will convince that you need to do this. I wanted to get into your I think I might love that. Because I don't know Spanish.

Patricia: Oh because what about an English? Have you? Can you influence in English?

Aishwarya: I can, I do it.

Patricia: Awesome. And some challenges?

Aishwarya: I don't I love going on sites. I don't mind going on roof. I do go. So that's one a challenge for me. I love it. I love the challenge. Well, if it's a challenge.

Patricia: Awesome. So, in India, when you're there, you're saying there's not a lot of women in construction? Here? Do you think there's anything that has prevented you, being a woman has prevented you from getting what you want to do? Or do you think that has been a challenge because you're a woman?

Aishwarya: No, not at all. No, not even in my house in my family? They were like do what do you love. Do what do you want to do. So they supported me in everything.

Patricia: That's awesome. That's so what's next for you in the next. So you said you want to be a project manager and you want to have more experiencing in mechanical, right?

Aishwarya: I don't want more experience I need. I want to learn mechanical. And those are the trades which I do know the details of. The other thing that I'm really interested is in them. I mean, I learned them. And I it's really a very powerful tool in this age. And that will help our company Google a lot the big companies to use.

Patricia: So let me ask you, what prevents you from being a leader? In your company to make this happen? How do you... what do you need to become? What do you need to do in order to say to the owner of this company, "Hey, you know what, I think we need to do this in one or two years. And this is how I think it should be done. And I want to take I want to lead this process." What prevents you from doing that?

Aishwarya: Nothing is preventing. I think I want to excel in what I'm doing right now, once I reached my excellence in, I would say six months. And that's my expectation. After six months, I'm ready to go into the next step.

Patricia: So excellence means what?

Aishwarya: So there are a few things that... so now, let's say punch out, I haven't done it. I don't know what that is. So if I rest of the part, now, we are almost in the closing out of project once those are done and ready to be the next step. So I want to learn the from starting of the project till the end. So now we are at the end. If I know the end, I can do the next entire thing alone.

Patricia: Now you have a vision of what the whole thing is about, right? Hmm. So challenges are inevitable, right?

Aishwarya: They are inevitable, become the... we should accept it and face it one by one. That's what I do. Or people take it together and mess it up sometimes.

Patricia: What do you mean?

Aishwarya: if we have a lot of challenges... we have a lot of challenges. I do is I tackle one problem at a time. One day one problem, not five problems in one day? What if I don't solve it, I create more problems.

Patricia: So what's the biggest problem you have solved?

Aishwarya: In construction?

Patricia: In your project that you're working on?

Aishwarya: The roofing was a big mess. It was not even getting approved. We used to sit on it now I can review the roofing submittals letters in one hour.

Patricia: So the challenge made you better.

Aishwarya: Yes. I mean, all the things I learned in the last one year is I did not even know what that is we in back in my country. We did not had submittals I don't know what submittal was. Now, I can review it very efficiently. And it gets I made sure it is approved.

Patricia: If you want to be in design here in the US, are you licensed to do design?

Aishwarya: I am not but I am studying for it.

Patricia: That's very good.

Aishwarya: I started studying for being a registered architect. And I'm looking for fully and finally scheduling so that we can implement that in our company. I know I'm doing just the scheduling part. I have started I mean have put through for the aspect to it the money part. Now we need to put the elevation.

Patricia: Awesome. Well, preparation. I think you and I were talking a little bit a while ago that luck is not you know, there's not really luck. It's preparation meets opportunity. And I don't know if you know, but we want tools, design build contracts that are one is a \$75 million design build contract and another one is a \$50 million. So if you have that license is going to create a lot of opportunities, right? So I applaud you for that for being ahead of the game.

What advice do you give women that are trying to come here? You know, they're studying, they already got some momentum, they have already gotten their first job. What advice do you give them? Because I see that you were always trying to learn something new, so that you can get to the next level and next level. And you want to masters things. So what advice do you give them?

Aishwarya: I would say, so if you are in construction, studying construction, get or getting the field, just look at the building, how it's doing, how its building, how the people are working on it, even if you don't work on it, just see, you will know, I would say. And once you graduate, grab the first opportunity you get it because each and even a small company you're going to learn. And in a small company, you learn more because you have more responsibilities. That is the best thing.

Patricia: What do you want to go from here in the next five years? I know, you've said project manager you want to be in from the design to the construction, you want to see the whole process. What do you see you?

Aishwarya: For me as a project executive, not just project companies. I mean, I would love to have a lot of Project Manager under me.

Patricia: Why not? Right? Yeah. Can you be a good manager?

Aishwarya: I can be a manager.

Patricia: Why is that?

Aishwarya: I can. I would love people to work out to me, I can encourage them, I would teach them not to be a boss, but work with. That's a good thought to me as a leader. That's really important for being a leader to not just lead but work with the team at equal level.

Patricia: Are you good at training?

Aishwarya: Training people? Yes, I love it.

Patricia: Why?

Aishwarya: Because I, if I know something, I want other people to know about it. And I would tell them very calmly, if you don't understand them, you can ask me 100 times and I do it here so

Patricia: I know you do. I know you do. Everybody comes...

Aishwarya: If they don't know me as I will say this come to me. I would help you.

Patricia: You're very known to somebody has a problem with a schedule and they go.

Aishwarya: Anything not schedule. The other day, I was working with the project manager in Puerto Rico, and he did not know how to use viewpoint I was like I have learned that I can help you. I will help you.

Patricia: That's awesome. What do you think is the difference between the feminine energy and I don't want to say men or women the feminine energy and the male energy? What do you think is the difference? The differentiator in construction?

Aishwarya: Well, I really don't want to compare both of them because they do both are different. They have both different perspectives, and we should respect them both.

Patricia: Right and right and we're not talking about male energy. We're talking about energy, we're talking about the way maybe female energy in... listen female or male and masculine energy, it's not it doesn't belong to a gender. You know, you can have a man that we all have both. We have I believe me; you haven't seen me my masculine energy. I've done that most of my life. You haven't seen that part of me the volatiles you haven't seen.

But we also have, you know, the female energy that the one that is nurturing the one that takes care of the children, the ones that love but then you also have a masculine energy that drives you know, I was a single mom, I've raised my three kids for a long time, and I worked and believe me it was a masculine energy that was there not because I had to create and get things done.

So in the construction, that feminine energy that nurtures that loves that, you know, like can smile, not saying that we're not talking about men or women, what difference does he make in the industry? If you think there's a difference?

Aishwarya: So our project is like a baby. We should treat it in such a way that it's growing. And if something is not happening, we should have that masculine energy and push it. We need to do it. Go ahead. That's the thing.

Patricia: So I think you're right. If you can use both, it's amazing. And a lot of times we think that we're only driving one, that is only the masculine energy. And I think the best outcomes are when you can use both depending on the situation, on the outcome [inaudible]. So how do you use your feminine energy in construction?

Aishwarya: In construction, all the projects are equal. And I work very hard on them. If there is some problem coming from you and I need to push it, then I try my best, I'm trying to do with document and get it done.

Patricia: So you're more driving it.

Aishwarya: Yes. If not, I will do calmly and finish the work. And if I need a push then...

Patricia: So when you go home and you were in a project, you were in a meeting and maybe some people yell or someone yell at the other person, do you go home and do the same thing with your husband?

Aishwarya: I used to do, I stopped.

Patricia: That wasn't working, right?

Aishwarya: That wasn't working. The other day I switched on my TV, and I started dancing. That calmed me down.

Patricia: Awesome! You brought your feminine in the [audible]

Aishwarya: He danced with me so that was good.

Patricia: You initiated something great. And I love it. I love it. Remember the Coronavirus when it started? What was in your mind when they said everyone has to be working from... there's a Coronavirus and there are tons of people who are dying. And this is a little over a year ago.

Aishwarya: That was the time when I was almost in the time of graduating. It was March 2020; I had written new papers and I had a presentation in TRC in Arizona. And that was the peak time when the COVID was going. My professor told me that I cannot go because I have a 1-year old kid. "Are you interested in presenting my paper, too?" I said, "Yes, why not?" So I went and presented my key papers. And that was helpful the opportunity I took and that helped me to connect with different environment people from around, and I worked with women yet.

Construction they were talking about [inaudible]. They are talking about [inaudible], underground structure. That was so amazing. And I did my thesis thru Zoom. And I had good grades. And then I was worried about, "oh my God, because of COVID." "What if I don't get a job? I have to go back to my country." And that was really terrifying. And I contacted biggest...

Patricia: Cut, cut. That's the icemaker. It's raining. How we're doing?

Aishwarya: Good. Good, you're very good at questions.

Patricia: I'm learning from Tony Robbins.

Aishwarya: I love his podcast. Very good.

Patricia: it's just because I tried to listen I try to so focus on her. You're on the phone?

Aishwarya: I'm catching up an email and never had the opportunity to catch up [inaudible]. [inaudible] everything. But I'm listening. I'm just so kind of running, deleting everything.

Patricia: We're almost there, right? We're almost there. I want to talk about the Coronavirus, and I think I've gone to mostly everything, right?

Okay. So Ash, Coronavirus, only 1 year ago, a year and a few months. So why was that beginning of Coronavirus, what was that for you?

Aishwarya: Initially, I have not even care. I went to my conference in Arizona. I roamed around with two, three friends. I wanted to stay there but I came back because I had my thesis. I did my thesis, it was all good, and I suddenly looking for jobs. And I was so terrified what if I don't get a single job because of COVID. But then I contacted... I sent email directly to you. I got a call. She said, "Can you come for an interview today?" I said, "I cannot today. Maybe I can tomorrow because I don't have a car." She said, "No, it's thru Zoom." I was liked, "Okay. I'm okay with it."

And everything went well, and I remember I started working two weeks immediately after that. And I really like it. So, Coronavirus didn't stop me from getting into my expectation.

Patricia: Into what you want, right? So when you want something you get it, right?

Aishwarya: We get it and we should try hard for it. If I would just sit back and talk about it, thinking of landing a job, I would never have got a job.

Patricia: That's true. A lot of people just thinking negative. What else?

Aishwarya: Positivity and walking towards it. Walking towards what you want to do. Luck is not going to do it. It's not going to help. And we should have internal energy. It will help.

Patricia: Internal energy, what do you mean by that?

Aishwarya: It comes within us, something good will happen and to come into reality, we should walk on it. Give a positive energy to walk around.

Patricia: You're saying that... would you say that you're someone that has internal drive to succeed?

Aishwarya: Yes I have. Sometimes I feel so low that I don't walk and then all of a sudden I think I can do this. It's not going to hurt me. I should get back to what I was doing and grow on.

Patricia: So you keep yourself on the butt and you make it happen?

Aishwarya: Yes, I cry out. I don't mind saying that I cry but it goes on me.

Patricia: We all cry. Do you feel better when you cry?

Aishwarya: Oh, I think yes.

Patricia: Have you been in a project that [inaudible] in the situation in your life somebody has treated you unfairly and you just want to cry because it's not fair?

Aishwarya: Yes, it happened but sometimes.

Patricia: any tears come to you? [overlapping].

Aishwarya: I don't cry.

Patricia: In front of others?

Aishwarya: Because if someone shouted me, I might cry. And for no reason, I cry and talk to them that is not fair. I mean I'm not doing anything wrong. And it's not [inaudible] people to anyone like that.

Patricia: Absolutely! So you stand out when somebody else in [inaudible], you say something?

Aishwarya: I say something. I gets windily, I cry and I [inaudible]. All the emotions coming together. That's all.

Patricia: So, after you get your job, and we're still in the Coronavirus and you have to work, during the project, did anybody get infected? Was anybody afraid of getting infected by the Coronavirus? How was that like? Didi you have to work with a mask? Did you have to do something? Did you have to... what was that like? Can you remember?

Aishwarya: Yes, when I joined for audition 2 to 3 months, I was working from home. I used to go on site with mask with all the precautions. By April I was alone. Because my husband used to go at his office, he had to do in office. So nothing problem. But then I came back to be used to wear mask and on site [inaudible] and all the precautions taken care of.

Then when I did two to three times testing for COVID, that's fine. We shouldn't stop because of that. Anyone can get infected if he takes so many precautions. I saw so may people that getting precautions and they are getting infected. They are hospitalized. And I was roaming around, but with precautions.

Patricia: I also know people together that they were so afraid of getting sick they got and they got sick.

Aishwarya: Maybe I got COVID, I don't think I know. Maybe. Because I travel on weekends. I love traveling. So on weekend we try to go somewhere.

Patricia: And you did?

Aishwarya: Yes we did.

Patricia: So COVID didn't stop you from anything?

Aishwarya: No. nothing going to stop me to meet my family. But it did not stop our life.

Patricia: Enjoy life, right? Awesome. Is there anything that you want to ask me?

Aishwarya: What drive you in the construction?

Patricia: What drove me into construction? Wow, that was a quick question. You keep thinking about it?

Aishwarya: No I just thought about it.

Patricia: My father was an engineer. And I guessed I grew around construction. My father was an engineer. He was a developer in [inaudible]. And I basically decided I want to be... I have the option; to be a doctor, to be an attorney, or to be an engineer. And an architect too.

But in a traditional place like in Dominican Republic, probably the same thing in India, you look at traditional profession, right? There was no digital marketing. None of that

stuff. And one day I said, "I'm going to be an engineer." So I went to my father and said to him, "I'm going to be an engineer." He said, "No, that's not for women." He didn't want me to be an engineer. He didn't want me to be in construction. He didn't want me to be an engineer. And his philosophy was it was very hard, very tough for a woman.

Because in a way, I didn't listen to him. I just didn't listen to him. I just were you, Sir. He [inaudible] time myself. I just went to the university and raise. I probably have a personality similar to him, so I was the first one in... we have four. He wanted one of the guys, I have three brothers to be an engineer. And my second brother didn't want to go, didn't want to do it. So he went and became an Economist.

Aishwarya: So how do you feel about it?

Patricia: About what?

Aishwarya: About your father not supporting you?

Patricia: So it was for a time frame because I did it anyways. In the first semester, I became the assistant to the professor. I got good grades, really good grades and they select them. So when he learned that he was proud. And in my first semester, I had straight As. So I think after that, he didn't saying anything. He allows me to do it. Does that makes sense?

And then the problem with that is halfway into my career, he died. So it's not that I was able to participate with him more... in my idea was he was going to teach me. You know that when you're studying engineering, and you study architecture, you don't know construction. You don't know.

Aishwarya: It is totally different in the real world and in the academic.

Patricia: Exactly. It's a different profession. Construction management is a different profession but even if you study that, the practical application of the business, in the business world, you don't learn that on the school either. It's a process. In our industry, a lot of things we learn on the job. You don't learn them in the university. What are things that I like to do is change that. I would like to show people, train people on how you can do it before they get to the job site.

Aishwarya: That could be done along with as far as curriculum, they should incorporate that.

Patricia: Right. And that's how I got into construction, and I have to tell you I never looked back.

Aishwarya: What if you didn't get into construction, did you think about any other profession?

Patricia: I never had that thought.

Aishwarya: No? That's amazing.

Patricia: And it has been challenging, but I've never, never, never. I believed I connect with myself. At the very early age, I was always connected with me. When I decided, I look internally, I was able to make a decision from my heart. And I think I've been writing my decision. Because I've always been in this industry and this industry has taught me so much. People say it's only construction. People think you're laying blocks.

Somebody told me, "You are in construction? Really? Oh my gosh! And do you lay blocks?" And I was like, "No. look at my hands." There's more to construction than laying blocks. There is nothing wrong with it. Like my husband started in the industry as a labor. And I believe this industry is very rewarding. I think this industry gives you the opportunity to build, you build people in the process. The satisfaction of creation, right? We create. We come to this far to create. You make beautiful people, amazing people too.

Aishwarya: We meet lots of different people, different personalities. That's fascinating.

Patricia: Yes. What other questions do you have for me?

Aishwarya: I think, nothing [laughing].

Patricia: Well, thank you so much for participating in this podcast. I hope we can inspire all the women to come into this industry. And even in people in general to come to the construction industry. We just say construction allows us to have a good financial outcome in your life, create financial wealth. Would you say that this is a good industry for them?

Aishwarya: This is a good industry for them. We can make a lot of [inaudible] as we grow. It never stops, we don't have a limit. We don't have any peak, we just keep on growing and growing. And so I encourage lot of women and men to be a part of this industry. And do what you love and you will succeed. And that is powerful.

Patricia: That's powerful.

Aishwarya: And being in the construction industry, I feel [inaudible].

Patricia: You do?

Aishwarya: Yes, I do want to feel satisfied and profession satisfaction.

Patricia: And power to do what.

Aishwarya: And power to do things in life. Not just in profession, but in everything. I mean, I love traveling, I want to travel more. If I need more money, I want to work.

Patricia: And so if you have kids... how many kids do you want?

Aishwarya: I want two. I want girls.

Patricia: Two girls? So what are you going to tell your girls?

Aishwarya: you do what you love. I'm not forcing you to join any particular profession, any industry. Do what you love.

Patricia: Excellent!

Aishwarya: if you want to cook, cook. Do whatever you want.

b Excellent. What are they going to say about their mom, 10 years, 15 years from now? What are they going to say?

Aishwarya: They will say my mom is the best. Because of her, we are here.

b Who inspires you? Who inspires you the most?

Aishwarya: I think my parents. My dad. He used to tell me do whatever you want, Beta. Like child, used to call me Beta. Do whatever you want, and I'll be there for you. Back in my country, he provided my Bachelor of Science and after that, he said, "Now I'm done. If you want to learn more, it's you. If you're going to do Master's, it's your money. I am not sponsoring." I did Master's. one Master's in India. I came here, I did Master's in Construction Management. I was good so I got sponsorship in [inaudible].

Patricia: Who inspires you the most? Your mom or your dad?

Aishwarya: My mom? She inspires me to be... she is dependent in part of me. And my dad, he is the mini part of me to push that you need to do it, and you will do it. And my mom, she cares. And then my grandmother, she loves me.

Patricia: So they look at you now and they are very proud of you.

Aishwarya: Very proud of me. And I have a brother, younger brother and I want him to succeed. So I will do whatever I can do for him. He's like my kid. He's 25 but...

Patricia: That's awesome. Well thank you very much. I know you're going to be successful even more and I will help you, and you're going to help me. Because you are going to create more. So we were talking about the other day giving value. The more value we give, the more money we make, right? And the more people we help. So you have so much potential, and you want to grow so much, you can help our company also grow. And the more you can create the whole unit, and you can lead it. And you're going to get other people and train and that's how we grow, right? Teaching others, helping others grow, that's how we all grow. I'm very proud of you. I'm very happy that I hire you. I've been wronged with hires in the past but when we are right, it's beautiful. Thank you so much.

OUTRO:

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Thanks again. We'll see you see you next week, here in Thriving in Construction, The Podcast.

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