

## A REFLECTION OF THE INDIAN WOMEN IN THE ENTREPRENEURIAL WORLD

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### ABSTRACT

*Entrepreneurship amongst women has been a recent concern. Women have become aware of their existence their rights and their work situation. However, women of a middle class are not too eager to alter their role in fear of social backlash. The progress is more visible among upper class families in urban cities. This research focuses on women entrepreneur. Any understanding of women, of their identity, and especially of their role taking and breaking new paths, will be incomplete without a walk down the corridors of Indian history where women have paused, lived and internalized various role models. Some have taken entrepreneurship roles where some has opted for employment, some in entertainment field and some for leadership roles while millions of others have taken the role of ideal stereotyped social roles. The paper slides from the era of fifties to the 21st centuries and how transformation has occurred in women roles. Also the paper talks about the status of women entrepreneurs and the problems faced by them when they ventured out to carve their own niche in the competitive world of business environment.*

A REFLECTION OF THE INDIAN WOMEN IN INTREPRENEURAL WORLD

### INTRODUCTION

Across centuries and across time, the role of women remains rooted into eternity. It forever remains the same and at the same time goes through many transitions. It takes centuries for women's role to unfold in different forms, shapes, sizes and to move in new direction. There are

some locales where women lives in bygone century chained and shackled to the social structures and coding and wishes of others who carve a code of conduct on stone. Whereas there are other locales where women struggle to find freedom and space to define their rule in a new context with new occupations and forge a new path for their new lives.

Once upon a time the large part of the world was designed such that men could only set up enterprises. Then there were women who by compulsions of circumstances took up income generating activities to sustain themselves and their family. The men of these women were either not there or if they were there would not or could not take responsibilities of sustaining the family.

Succession planning, leaving an heir, an inheritor and a continuity of the lineage is for men and their sons. It is rare for a man to plan for handling over to the daughter or daughter's daughter. The reality of women entrepreneur and passing the enterprise to a daughter will be the new reality and phenomenon of Indian business. The role of Indian women has ranged from that of a deity to that of a devdasi, from being pure to being vulgar, from being supreme to being downtrodden, and also a innumerable manifestations of virtue or vice. The role of Indian women has undergone dramatic and drastic changes from era to era, while within the eras themselves there have existed simultaneous contradictions. This in itself has created problems for contemporary women in experiencing a continuity of their identity within the society. What a women growing up in Indian society interjects is perhaps a collage and a flux of attitudes, perceptions, roles and locations of their identity. It seems to be difficult to take a logical look at all this. To every "yes" there is a "no" and to every "no" there is a "yes". The interjected collage does not, therefore, make it easy for women to define their role and take leadership roles and to enunciate directions and goals for themselves.

Then came a time when the order of the world changed. A new form and a new structure emerged. This took thousands of years and tears of millions of women who with courage moved

the mountain of debris of beliefs and freed themselves from the chains and shackles of centuries.

What was this change?

### CONTEXT OF CHANGE

Increasing globalization

Impact of technology

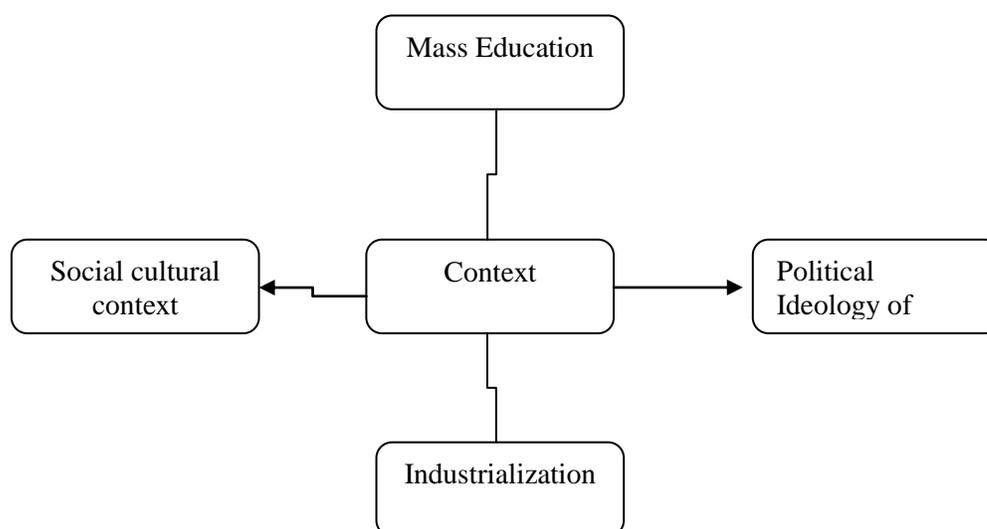
Impact of Media and Impact of other cultures

Impact of social, economic and political cross currents of the world

Unforeseen and unanticipated events across the world.

Let us look at the context of growing up for women in the last half a century.

Context of Growing Up For Women



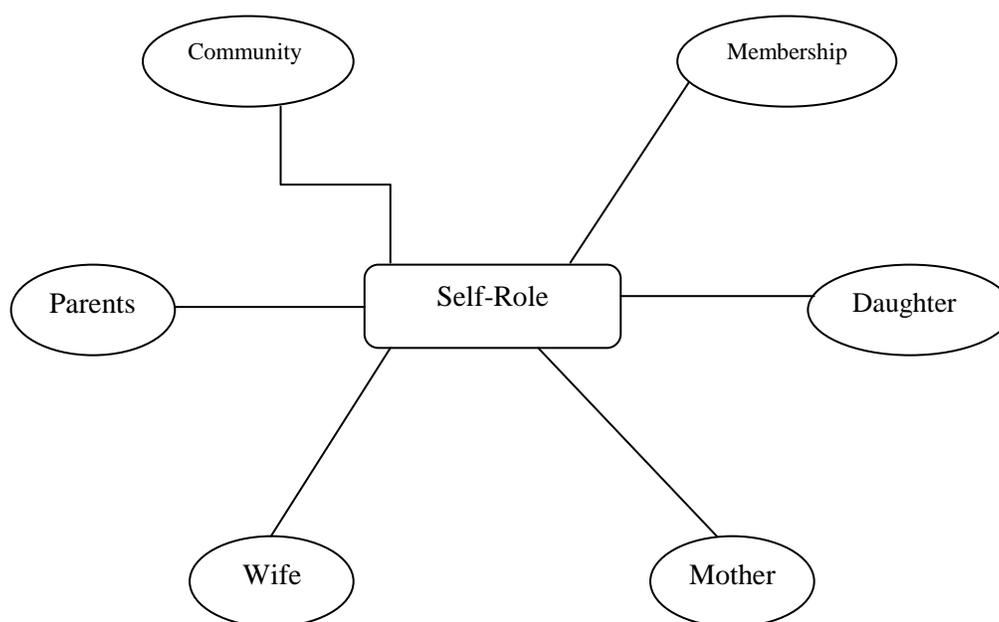
- The socio-cultural context of women's growing up remained the same for thousands of years.
- Political ideology and governance of a nation emerged from the 1940's in India.
- Industrialization took roots.
- Mass education for both women and men became a reality

## SOCIO- CULTURAL CONTEXT OF WOMEN

Each country over centuries evolves a cultural heritage, which is carried by its institutions and people. Each culture evolves a social design with social structures and its processes to maintain the society. The socio-culture context has institutions, traditions and rituals, which fosters values of living, modes of making choices and meanings in relationships. Society designs and defines roles for its women and men both in family and home settings as well as occupational and work settings. Each country has a cultural, social, religious, and political history with its ideology and philosophy. This influences both social and occupational roles that have enduring roots. Each society has economic developmental thrust through industrialization and thereby designs new occupational roles for both its women and men. Alternative models of occupational roles are logically and rationally understood but not emotionally responded to by the society.

What are the roles that women played and continue to play?

## WOMEN AND SOCIAL –ROLE INTERFACE



Becoming an entrepreneur did arouse a little dilemma in many women who have the potentialities for becoming one. However, to earn quick money was the basic reason for women to start entrepreneurship. They had a deep-seated need for a sense of independence along with a desire to do something meaningful with their time and to have their own identity instead of remaining closeted behind their husband's nameplate, women with high education view at entrepreneurship as a challenge, while for women with no education background find entrepreneur merely a means for earning money. These women needed little 'pull' and 'push' for venturing ahead as their circumstances forced them. On the other hand, women, coming from good financial background need 'pull' and 'push' as at times they themselves were not aware of their own inner strengths and resources and wanted their husbands/family members to decide the ways it should be utilized. Also the women of the upper crust society were hesitating to put forth the idea of taking up a non-traditional role.

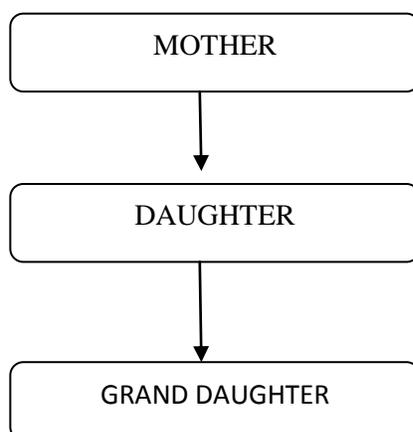
It is also found that compared to men, women were less concerned with making money and often choose business proprietorship as a result of career dissatisfaction. Secondly, women find entrepreneurship as a tool of meeting their career needs and childcare role. However, there are drastic differences in the way the men and women-owned enterprise views their activities.

Most women business owners in Indian organization were either housewives or fresh graduates with no previous experience of running a business. These women business owners were in traditionally women-oriented business like garments, beauty care, and fashion designing, which either do not require any formalized training or are developed from a hobby or an interest into a business. The classic example will be of herbal queen Lady Shehnaz Hussain who started her herbal-based treatment from a relatively small scale. Infact, she started literally from her kitchen domain to a chain of beauty parlors spread out across the nation and world. Shehnaz started her business as a hobby on a relatively small budget and made an herbal empire to be inherited by her family.

In the field of art, Mrinalini- Mallika Sarabhai story will be apt to cite an example. Mrinalini Sarabhai, an acclaimed danseuse, whose legacy was carried out by her own daughter. Mallika, an acclaimed dancer, carved a niche by coming out of her mother's shadow. She has also expanded 'Darpana Institute', which was initially started by her mother. Mallika then introduced new things with time and managed to build her own identity first as a women, daughter, wife, mother, dancer, and an entrepreneur.

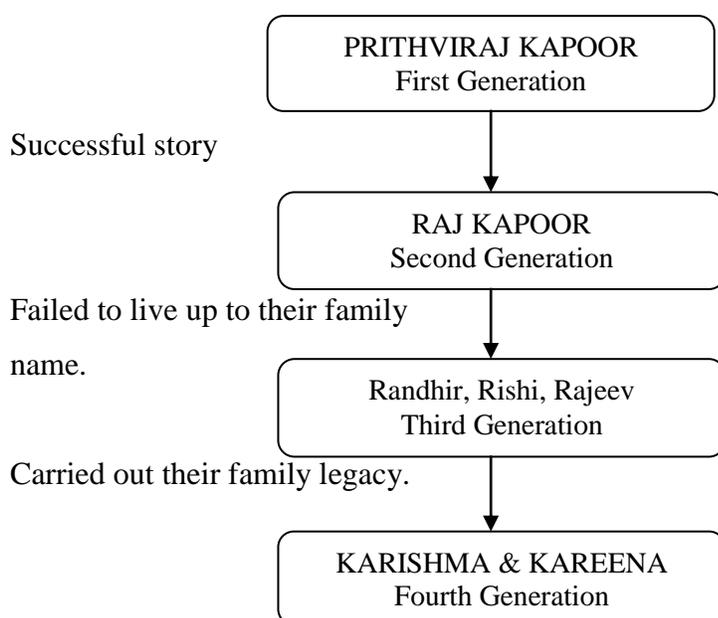
To cite another example of women on succession will be of the Bollywood world. Here women have reached to the highest plateau and their apparent heir has also succeeded in retaining the legacy left out by their mother. Shobha Samarat, a reigning actress of 50's who was considered to be the top most at that time. Her two daughters, Nutan and Tanuja made their own identity during 60's and 70's, and carved their own image, which was much higher than their mother's caliber. Subsequently, Tanuja's daughter Kajol too ventures out in the same field and now she is rated a top most actress. This shows the succession of three generations: mother-daughter-granddaughter.

#### SUCCESSION OF THREE GENERATION



However, many times it happens that the legacy, which is left by the first generation, the second generation may fail to carry out their inheritance to the higher plateau and the third generation has been successful to relive the family legacy. As in case of Kapoor clan. Raj Kapoor carried out his father's legacy in the entertainment business, his son's which was of the third generation, failed to carve their own niches. But then their children Karishma and Kareena Kapoor, of the fourth generation lived up to their great grandfather and grandfather's caliber.

#### Kapoor Family's Heirarchical Slope



If the present generation is not able to carry out their family legacy to a successful plateau, then the chances are their that the next generation will be able to relive their frozen legacy.

This has also eroded the myth that only the male member of the family will be able to carry out the family inheritance.

Women, who had started out their own business without any mentor or legacy, had created their own plateau and also earned many feats. For example, Shehnaz Hussain, who had neither a legacy not a mentor to follow, created her own legacy for her family. Women on other hand,

who inherited a small business from the family, had taken their small business to a greater extent and turned it out into a large organization .While there are also some women who had inherited a large organization, had taken the organization to a much higher plateau. What motivate these women to venture out in the no man's land? The primary motive is for engaging in some economically gainful activity is:

**Making money/making more money to support the family and, A desire for gainful time structuring.**

The first motive is found at the lower end of the socio-economic scale. However, the factors that initiate a women to take the plunge are usually environmental, for example, failure of husband business, sudden death of a father in a women only household like in case of KomalChabbaria, daughter of Late Manu Chabbaria, or husband' inability or unwillingness to shoulder the responsibility of the family, and many other similar reasons. What have been the processes of change for women in the context of the tapestry being woven globally and nationally? Let us look at some of the key changes for women over the last five decades.

**WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE FIFTIES**

These women fall into two categories. One set took to creating and managing an entrepreneurial activity where there was no income generating male. The women gave up her education and any other aspirations for herself and became the income generator for the rest of the family.

The second category was the one who lived by social roles and woke up one day to find that either she took charge of the enterprise the husband has left or she and her own family would be losers. For both this sets of women, it took enormous courage to break through the social maps and coding.

However, such women in the fifties were few. For many others the businesses were taken away by the relatives and the women and their families lived their lives as dependants while they had the resources or did not have the resources.

### **WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE SIXTIES**

Sixties were the decade when many women educated in schools and colleges began to have aspirations. These were largely unarticulated. Women accepted the social coding of the socio-cultural traditions and married. But soon they took small steps to start small one- woman enterprises at home and from home. These were still activities for self-occupation and engagement but behind these were the seeds of aspirations to discover a meaning for self and economic choices. This was still not for economic autonomy or economic self-sufficiency.

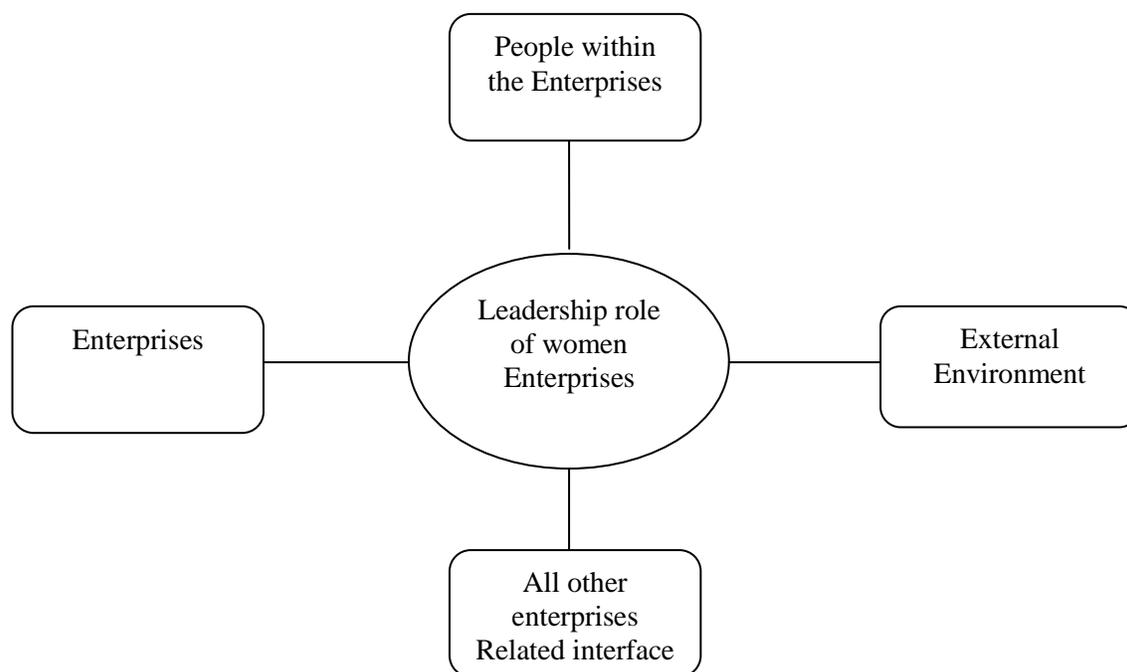
### **WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE SEVENTIES**

This was the decade when a critical mass of women completed their education and entered the work force as professionals. The women in this decade opened up new frontiers. These women were unlike their mothers and had not only aspirations but also ambitions. They opted for self employment be the enterprise a one woman enterprise or who employed several others. This was an active step swimming upstream and walking uphill. This choice was not out of compulsions or helplessness. It was an active choice to take charge of one's life. For many this choice began in their parental family and continued in their own personal homes. Women regarded work as an integral aspect of their life space. Income generation and a career choice where both the social system and occupation were equally significant. Educated and qualified the women aspired for a different role and life via their mothers and grandmothers. The women wanted homes, marriage and children as well as an occupation.

The women accepted the social traditional role behavior from the older generation but from their husbands, colleagues and children they expected understanding and support in their occupation choices. They looked for redefinition of systems and redesigned interfaces across the systems and institutions they worked with. In entrepreneurial roles the women were willing to carry their share of work responsibilities and also wanted the enterprise to grow and succeed.

They wanted their voices to be heard as leaders to employees and as managers of the enterprise to the outside business environment.

#### UNIVERSE OF WOMEN IN THE ENTREPRISE



#### WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE EIGHTIES

The women entrepreneurs of 50's, 60's and 70's had accepted both their social and occupational roles. They played the two roles and tried to balance both. However, by the time eighties came around, the women were educated in highly sophisticated technological and professional education. Many had medical, engineering and similar other degrees and diplomas. Many entered their fathers or husband industry as equally contributing partners. Women in other spheres opened their own clinics and nursing homes and many more opened up small boutiques, small enterprises of manufacturing and entered garment exports. This was the decade of the breakthrough for women in many fields and many frontiers. Women made personal choices, stood up for their convictions and had the courage to make new beginnings. However, all these choices and beginnings was not smooth sailing. For many, the society was hostile, the family

was opposing and non supportive and the women carried the guilt of not playing the traditional and appropriate social roles viz. that of being a good mother.

### **WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE NINETIES**

The women entrepreneurs of the nineties were qualitatively a different breed of women. These women already had a role model in the two earlier generations of women. The women of nineties were capable, competent, confident, and assertive women. They knew what choices to make, they were clear as to what they wanted to do and they went ahead and did it. The nineties have thrown up many names of women who initiated an enterprises of their fathers and husbands and contributed it with their competencies and capabilities. Sometimes they outshone the names of their fathers and husbands. This was the first time the concept of ‘the best’ rather than a ‘male heir’ began to be talked about. The fathers thought of ‘inheritance’ or a ‘legacy; to a ‘daughter’ than just a son who may have been incapable and incompetent. Women in the nineties have often questioned their traditional coding of their roles and have become conscious of the voice of their own identity. With economic independence, women have acquired a high self –esteem and have also discovered that they are able to deal with situations single handedly. In situations of mis-match in marriages, physical violence, demands for dowry, pushing the women into socially confirming roles and other forms of social psychological harassment women do stand up to make their statements and make difficult choices. Today’s women are fearless and have learnt to live alone, travel alone and rear children alone when failures in marriage and life partnerships occur. Some women have preferred to remain single, are leading happy and contented lives and are successful in their work. Many couples today, opt for leading a life without children, and prefer to focus on work, relationships, and the joy of experiencing freedom. Many and more and more women in nineties have made up their minds to have a single child in order to meet the demands of home and work and have very well been able to integrate their multiple roles in multiple systems.

### **THE WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF THE 21st CENTURY**

This is the century of telecom, IT and financial institutions. Women's expertise in all these industries is beginning to emerge and women are emerging as a force to reckon with. Many of these new industries are headed and guided by women who are seen as pioneers and mavericks. The loci of power have shifted away from traditional venues such as Old boys clubs, Golf courses and Cigar smoking rooms to power now being vested with energetic new upstarts working out of their homes or on their computer terminals from homes. This new cauldron of opportunity can become the proverbial melting pot for professionally trained and enterprising women. Here there are fewer barriers to overcome, less pre-conceived notions, fewer well-entrenched assumptions and rules and lesser gender agenda in the secondary environment. The transition to the next millennium is where the women will create new paradigms of being a daughter who takes the responsibility of her parents, is a wife who wishes to create a home and a family, a mother who takes charge of the children to make them the children of the new millennium. She is also the entrepreneur who builds an enterprise and discovers her relevance and meaning of her life in herself. She accepts the uniqueness of her identity and is willing to share the space. Simultaneously with all the dreams of togetherness she searches for mutuality, dignity and respect. She is also open to a life without marriage and parenting without a father.

Women of today have a new avatar in the free rolling 90's. she the Jill of all trades and her children are tickled by their supermom. Infact, many sons unhesitatingly describe themselves as 'Mamma's boys' which in 90's is no longer considered to be 'Sissy' but 'Savvy'. The children especially their sons have decided to break the age of old tradition of following the father's shoes. Instead, the children of 90's opt to follow in their mother's shoes. For example, Sharmila Tagore inspired her son Saif to follow her to Bollywood rather than husband Pataudi to Lords. Similarly, the queen of the chef world, TarlaDala's son Sanjay Dalal, an MBA degree holder, decides to make his mom's cooking as a career rather than to join his father's industrial equipment business.

These mother –son combination shows that women have been successful in inspiring their son to follow in their path, where earlier the son were prescribed to ride in their father's way.

However the next millennium offers a space beyond the present horizon where, instead of hope there is active engagement with the world, instead of dreams there are commitments, instead of aspirations there are choices, instead of ideals there are convictions and instead of searching for bestowal's and affirmation there is the acknowledgement of one's own uniqueness of identity. It is in this discovery that she can create and build an industrial empire from the first steps that she would have taken.

In the next millennium, Indian women would have to cross a major threshold and enter an unknown land. They will have to walk a path where none existed with a sense to discover. They will have to encounter and live with excitement and enthusiasm as well as threat, fears, anxieties and terror. It is the trust in the self, of the resource to be generated, of the courage to journey forth in a new land; to live through the terrain's of uncharted land that the women of today will shape a new identity. They will discover the voice, which has been silenced for centuries to sing the songs of life and living and to discover the joys of experiencing the beauty around.

### **STATUS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS**

Since the 21st century, the status of women in India has been changing as a result to growing industrialization and urbanization, spasmodic mobility and social legislation. Over the years, more and more women are going in for higher education, technical and professional education and their proportion in the workforce has also been increased. With the spread of education and awareness, women have shifted from the kitchen, handicrafts and traditional cottage industries to non-traditional higher levels of activities. Even the government has laid special emphasis on the need for conducting special entrepreneurial training programs for women to enable them to start their own ventures. Financial institutions and banks have also set up special cells to assist women entrepreneurs. This has boomerang the women entrepreneurs on the economic scene in the recent years although many women's entrepreneurship enterprises are still remained a

mnuch neglected field. However, for women there are several handicaps to enter into and manage business ownership due to the deeply embedded traditional mindset and stringent values of the Indian society.

Lets us look at what these obstacles that are faced by women entrepreneurs.

### **BARRIERS FACED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS**

The problems and constraints experienced by women entrepreneurs have resulted in restricting and inhibited the expansion of women entrepreneurship. The major barriers encountered by women entrepreneurs are:

#### **LACK OF CONFIDENCE**

As women are accepting a subordinate status, as result they lack confidence of their own capabilities. Even at home, family members do not have much faith in women possessing the capabilities of decision making.

#### **LACK OF WORKING CAPITAL**

To be women to do something in their own becomes quite difficult for them because of lack of access to funds as women do not enjoy the right over the property of any form and they have limited access over external sources of funds. Even getting loans from either a bank or financial institution becomes exceedingly difficult.

#### **SOCIO-CULTURAL BARRIERS**

Women has to perform multiple roles be it familial or social irrespective of her career as working woman or an entrepreneur. In our society, more importance is being given to male child as compared to female child. This mindset results in lack of schooling and necessary training for women. As a result this impediments the progress of women and handicap them in the world of work. However, the women of today will touch the magic of enlivening themselves and say, "this far I have travelled, there are distances to travel but there are moments here and

now where I can be". In this statement the past, present and future will emerge to create that space where movements and stability, where noise and silence, where light and darkness, and chaos and tranquility lose their absolutism to create a new rhythm and unfolding. It is in these new beginnings women will create a legacy and a heritage and pass it on to their daughters and their daughters leave family saga of creating an enterprise and make it grow into an industrial empire. An empire, which was built with determination, courage and resilience to rise again and again. A world created from nothing to an institution with values anchored in growth, excellence and human sensitivity of people. It is only then the girl child of tomorrow will say that "once upon a time there used to be my mother, or grandmother or a great grandmother, who lived in a time and today I am proud to follow her footsteps and add my landmark to her footsteps in the sands of time.

Women are experienced in managing one of the most complex organizations imaginable the household, with its many human interfaces and interplay between the sexes, different age group and different stakeholders. Women have learnt over the centuries the art of negotiation and reconciliation and qualities of patience and understanding, along with an inherent quality of emotional intelligence. All these transferable skills can be brought to bear upon the workplace making it the richer, from these valuable experiences.

Women are working in this multifaceted world. The organization scenario changes like a kaleidoscope with every responsibility, accountability and multiple pulls and pushes, which women have faced and came out with success. In the new order, women will put down roots of a family and discover the freedom of sailing in the open seas. The women will visualize a new horizon and identify directions and make tough decisions. In the cacophony of sounds echoing of the past the women will cross the threshold to listen to their own voices. The silence of centuries will find the first voice, which will beckon women to sail into the unknown and uncharted land to lay the foundations of their growth to contribute to a partnership.

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