

WomenWill Initiative on Promoting Female Entrepreneurs in India

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Abstract

This article reports the deliberations of a panel discussion on how to promote female entrepreneurship organized by WomenWill Initiative of Google Business Group at Gurugram on 24 March 2018. Panel comprised of Ms Seema Singh, WomenWill Lead at Google Business Group, Ms Runa Maitra, Founder & Director, People Talent International, Dr Anubhooti, Founder and Director, The NeoFusion Creative Foundation, and Ms Geetika Goyal, Founder & Director, Magic Creations. They discussed the issues, challenges and opportunities for developing an ecosystem where female entrepreneurs can thrive with great enthusiasm. Participants at the panel discussion also contributed to the discourse in an emphatic manner. They shared their concerns and articulated how things are changing for the better.

Keywords: WomenWill Initiative, Google Business Group, Female Entrepreneurship, India

Female entrepreneurs can truly be game changers in Indian socio-economic milieu if they are nurtured and supported by an enabling and empowering business ecosystem. This emerged as a dominant voice at a highly animated panel discussion on 'Why we need women entrepreneurs?' organized by WomenWill –an initiative of Google Business Group Delhi on 24 March 2018 at Awfis in Gurugram. Initiating the discussion, Ms Seema Singh, WomenWill Lead at Google Business Group Delhi NCR and Founder, Blue Hue, observed that there was an urgent need to develop a network of confident female entrepreneurs so that they may inspire and support other women to be effective business leaders and contribute meaningfully to social and economic development of the country. The panel discussion was held to understand the nuances of how female entrepreneurs learn, overcome obstacles, grow, develop and turn into formidable actors in business, economy and society.

Setting the tone of the panel discussion Ms Seema Singh mentioned that women have tremendous potential to engineer changes in the society as they have more power to create jobs, remove poverty by employing more women and taking control of self and their enterprises. However, numbers of female entrepreneurs have been abysmally low hence their overall impact has been miniscule. While we do have great success stories of female entrepreneurs in the country, there are many women who fail to take a decisive plunge despite having an intense desire to do something on their own. Ms Singh recounted some of the predominant obstacles as 'imposter syndrome', fear and guilt. She observed that even after successful stints in corporate or social life, females are filled with self-doubt about their abilities to steer a start-up and hence fail to take off on their entrepreneurial journey. Ms Singh said that enterprising women may overcome imposter syndrome by owning their

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success stories rather than attributing them to their spouses or families, refraining from comparing themselves with others, taking ownership of insecurities, focusing on their abilities to add value rather than pursuing perfections and giving a damn to all their known and unknown fears. Women are gifted as iconic mothers who can balance home and work with greater ease and they need to live under any guilt consciousness while pursuing their dreams of running a business or social enterprise, added Ms Singh.

Ms Runa Maitra, Founder & Director, People Talent International, took the discussion further and shared the narrative of how women evolved from being homemakers to game changers in business, economy, society and politics. She observed that women create organizations where they not only connect logically but also emotionally as they have potential to rise as centrifugal force and thus a natural knack for 'centreprenurship'. Women are good in certain industries like fashion, education, etc. but they are now ready to break all barriers and enter into unconventional domains in a big way. However, something holds back women who wish to break free and work on their dream projects – be it creating wealth, generating employment, starting an NGO or simply being a consultant, emphasized Ms Maitra. She said that women are more concerned about the likes and desires of their spouses. While they are willing to sacrifice their career and subdue their dreams, the same does not apply to their male counterparts. It is time that women take charge of themselves and their destinies. If one takes up responsibility seriously and works hard, authority comes automatically. So women need not look here and there for approval. Further, if women get involved in business enterprises, they not only bring in more prosperity to their respective families but also provide opportunities to many under-privileged females who are otherwise at the receiving ends due to inadequate knowledge, skills and abilities for decent livelihoods.

Ms Maitra also highlighted the need for women to indulge in networking so that they can create greater impacts in all spheres of life –be it social, political or economic. Now networking barriers are also breaking fast. Earlier, networking was 'for males only' where females used to play second fiddle. Even the prevalent spaces for networking such as pubs and bars were taboo for women. However, now emerging roles/ responsibilities have pushed women to break the ice and network, she added. Ms Maitra mentioned that women have now free access to information and that augment their ability to network confidently with others in the society. Social media has further expanded the networking opportunities for all and women can make most out of this opportune time. She said that networking is essential for boosting their net worth in the long run as women can support each other in their respective ventures by providing advice, opinion, contacts and resources whenever required. Networking is as important for women as starting new ventures. WomenWill itself is a classic example of how females across the world are connected to each other through 140 chapters.

Dr Anubhooti, Founder and Director, The NeoFusion Creative Foundation, said that women are pioneering change agents as they are gifted to alter the scenarios at home, at work as well as in the community. However, they are not at forthcoming and prefer to stay indoors rather than exploring their real worth and making a difference in a bigger way. Quoting Kiran Bedi, she shared five bottlenecks that hold back women: Metal, Marriage (kind of partners they have), Mobility (readiness to go out of the comfort zones), Motherhood (feel emotional, especially when children say "mummy please do not go to office today), and Mentality (can do, cannot do). However, women have to overcome these bottlenecks on their own. It is all about placing the concerns in right perspective and taking an objective view on how women and men can collaborate to run the families so that the former have ample opportunities to start their dream projects and become equal contributors to the prosperity of their respective families. But women of course need to take the first step and articulate their innate desires to excel outside of home in order to obtain concomitant support from their partners. Speaking out may pave the way for their onward entrepreneurial flight while keeping quiet

may suffocate them in the long run so that they may not even contribute to home-making, to say the least, added Dr Anubhooti.

To be an entrepreneur, one requires a little push which can come only from within, observed Ms Geetika Goyal, Founder & Director, Magic Creations. Hence, women need to carefully listen to their inner voices and take the plunge at the right moment when they are ready. She said that women are already involved in contributing meaningfully to growth of Indian economy by creating numerous livelihood opportunities female workers. Women entrepreneurs are able to nurture female employees as it is easy for them to connect emotionally. Besides, women have more sense of creating relationships. They have this as a default. This is why women entrepreneurs are passionate about their projects. This passion passes on to their employees and they together write success stories to inspire others.



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