

Editorial



Dr. Mrs. Sushma Kulkarni

A study, courtesy ZINNOV, shows that if we have 1000 females start their journey, 640 of them attend school, 377 of these girls get to college, 256 attend STEM courses (approx.), 217 of STEM trained women join the tech workforce, 88 quit within 10 years thus leaving 129 in the workforce (approx.). 8 women out of 88 come back as second career women (80 women lost). 26 out of 129 reach senior positions, 2 out of 26 reach the board room. More than that, only 14% start-ups' in the country are led by women leaders.

There is a leak at each stage, widening as we move up the career ladder. What should we do about this "Leaky pipeline"? We need to create a Self-sustaining ecosystem platform for women's advancement and inclusion. It's not a pretty picture, and if we wish to change this picture, we need to take special efforts to sow the seeds of leadership in women even as they are little children. The need of the hour is to identify and block the holes that make the pipeline leaky.

Thus the most important aspect is that they should know that there are women who have struggled hard and reached to top. Presenting role models to them will definitely prove a milestone in their outlook. I am happy to share that we have worked on compiling and presenting the journey of 30 women leaders to the top positions in India through a book titled "Rising to The Top: Indian Women STEM Leaders." This book focusses on highlighting the challenges faced by Indian women leaders to reach the top and sustain the position.

The book beautifully presents diversity in terms of geography of India, as each part has its own language, culture and tradition which impacts on the upbringing and the aspirations of a girl child in the family. We have included women leaders from STEM too. Another parameter, which we have considered, is that they are from different career verticals like Industry, Academia, Research, Politics and Entrepreneurship.

There are stories of small-town girls, of girls from very orthodox background, girls from big joint families, and also girls born to financial disadvantage.

Journey to the Top is tough and women need to be ready to face the societal challenges and pressures. Courage to work and take risk, belief in your own self and a vision are important component of women leadership. Sometimes Women have to fight against culture, tradition and society to pursue their dreams.

There are as many as 30 minds in the following pages whose powerful lives should enlighten you to the fact that there is a reason you are born a woman. It's time to acknowledge that your wings are splashed with beautiful colours and as you soar, the sky is your limit. So, build those wings strong and powerful and splash it with the colours of your choice. But don't forget to fill it with iron and bind it with the confidence that nature has built you with! Enjoy!

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