

SUCCESS STORIES: Challenges Across Different Cultures

They spoke different languages but all these successful ladies had the same concerns — challenges being faced by women across cultures.

The Women's Leadership Conclave organised by The Economic Times saw ladies from backgrounds as varied as a taluka and corporate world talk of their success stories despite of the innumerable challenges faced by them.

During the 'Success Stories' session, elaborating on the innate managerial skills women are blessed with, author and columnist, Shobha De said that educating a single woman is equivalent to educating a community. She also spoke about the changing role of women. "During my mother's time, a woman's life was all about waiting, for marriage, children, grandchildren and then waiting to die as a *saubhagyawati* (married woman). However, since the late 20th century, the discovery of the four letter word: SELF has made women seek their own hopes and fulfil their dreams," she said.

Ms De was vocal about her stance on reservation for women. "Quota where there is a subsidy of any kind is not fair. Even if it's the harder route it should be merit bound as it could lead to resentment which is a self-defeating act," she added.

Shifting gear from women related issues in urban to rural India, Zarina Amin Pathan, federation leader, Mahila Arthik Vikas Mandal, who also runs a business of ready made garments and trains women too said, "It was a struggle initially with men taunting us but we were determined and we decided to go ahead. Now whenever there is a meeting in the village we are specially invited."

Renuka Ramnath, MD and CEO, ICICI Ventures, moderator of the panel discussion that followed spoke about dedication of women with their work. "Women tend not to be as dispassionate about their work as probably men can be. They start treating colleagues as children and business as their own," said Ms Ramnath.

The panel comprised Manjunath Jyothinagar, group president, Gitanjali Gems, Suneeta Reddy, executive director, Apollo Hospitals, Aneeta Madhok, dean, SP Jain



STORY TELLERS: (L to R) Aneeta Mādhoḳ of SP Jain Centre of Management, Sūnēeta Reddy of Apollo Hospitals, Manjunath Jyothinagar of Gitanjali Gems, Vicki Treadell of British High Commission and Sanjay Chugh of International Institute of Mental Health

Centre of Management (Dubai), Sanjay Chugh, founder chairman, International Institute of Mental Health, and Vicki Treadell, deputy high commissioner, British High Commission. The topics discussed ranged from women being control freaks, whether they tend to micro manage issues to other things like if they have a higher degree of creativity. Quoting an example of his previous assignment where there was a lady who handled hardcore finance, Jyothinagar emphasised on the need for education as according to him that makes a difference in spite of conditioning from the early years.

“In Gitanjali, there are more women than men across all levels. Recently we appointed a girl for the post of head of customer service position where interaction is with retailers and B to B channels. This is a rarity among old jewellery houses that are generally male dominated. She delivered so well that now all associates want to speak to her about any issues being faced by them,” he added.