

Vision: What future we want to create? To be known as the best B-School for aspiring management leaders in the country with an industry-focused curriculum and practice.

Mission: Why we exist? To create value for students, business and society by providing intellectual leadership, advancing the science and practice of management, and developing confident leaders to be the agents of change in a world driven by data, technology and innovation.

STARTUP SPARK

YOUR FORTNIGHTLY GUIDE TO INDIA'S ENTREPRENEURIAL NEWS

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Women's Day Special Message from COPE

At COPE Entrepreneurship, we believe entrepreneurship is not defined by gender – but opportunity often is. This Women's Day, we celebrate not just the achievements of women founders across history and industries, but the courage it takes to build when the odds are uneven, the rooms are unbalanced, and the questions are different. Women have always built businesses. What has changed is visibility, access, and the growing recognition that diversity is not a social checkbox – it is an economic advantage.

Innovation expands when more voices participate. Markets grow when more perspectives design them. Ecosystems strengthen when inclusion moves from rhetoric to reality.

At COPE, our commitment is simple:

To create spaces where ideas are evaluated on merit, where ambition is encouraged without apology, and where young women see entrepreneurship not as an exception – but as an expectation.

This Women's Day, we celebrate builders. Past, present, and future.

Because the future of entrepreneurship will not be shaped by one narrative. It will be shaped by many.

From Invisible to Unstoppable

On the world's balance sheets, women were once listed as dependents.

Today, they sign the cheques, build unicorns, and redefine what power looks like in business.

For centuries, women ran shops, farms, and factories—but history rarely recorded their names in the ledgers.

In Tudor London, Katherine Fenkyll took over her husband's drapery business in 1479. Across the Atlantic, Rebecca Lukens inherited a struggling ironworks and transformed it into a thriving enterprise, becoming one of America's earliest female industrialists. Madame C. J. Walker, born to formerly enslaved parents, built a beauty empire and became one of the first self-made women millionaires in the United States (Guinness Book of World Records).



These women did not “assist” businesses. They negotiated loans in rooms where they were unwelcome. They hired workers who had never taken orders from a woman. They scaled under constraint. If you wore blue jeans this week, you probably don’t know that a woman entrepreneur helped popularise modern denim manufacturing; if you used a stir-fry pan, you are standing on another woman’s innovation. The story of women entrepreneurs is not a side-plot in business history—it is the main story that was edited out and is now finally being restored.

Spotlight: Women Who Bent Markets, Not Just Rules

Muriel Siebert – The woman who walked onto Wall Street alone

In the 1960s, Siebert applied to ten Wall Street firms before one agreed to sponsor her seat on the New York Stock Exchange. After repeated loan rejections, she persisted, bought her seat, and later founded the first woman-owned brokerage firm on the NYSE. She didn’t just enter finance—she forced it to expand.

Madame C. J. Walker – Building an ecosystem before the word existed

Walker built a door-to-door sales network of thousands of women, training them as “Walker Agents.” Her company created employment, community, and economic independence decades before “women’s empowerment” became part of the policy vocabulary. These early entrepreneurs were not simply running ventures. They were hacking systems designed to exclude them.

A Pattern Across History - Women entrepreneurs historically shared three traits:

1. They built from lived problems.
2. They relied on the community before capital.
3. They persisted longer than markets expected.

Those patterns still hold.

India’s Women Founders: Building in Colour, Code & Courage

India’s new-age women entrepreneurs are not asking for a seat at the table. They are redesigning the room.

Falguni Nayar – Betting on lipstick and logistics

At 49, after a successful banking career, she founded Nykaa. She understood that trust—not just technology—would unlock India’s beauty e-commerce market. Nykaa proved that age is not a constraint; clarity is.

Richa Kar – Rewriting comfort with Zivame

She transformed lingerie buying from an awkward retail experience into a private digital conversation. This was not just commerce—it was cultural reframing.

Ghazal Alagh – From ingredient anxiety to unicorn

Mamaearth began as a parent’s concern over product labels. It became a fast-growing consumer brand rooted in transparency and storytelling.

Upasana Taku – Trust in fintech

As co-founder of MobiKwik, she built scale in a sector often defined by aggression and speed. Her leadership demonstrated that trust and technology are not opposites.

Dr. Geetha Manjunath – Coding early cancer detection

Founder of Niramai, Dr Geetha Manjunath, brought artificial intelligence into healthcare with a non-invasive breast cancer screening solution. Her journey bridges research, deep tech, and impact—showing that women entrepreneurs are not only building consumer brands but also redefining medical diagnostics and public health access.

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw – Biotech before it was fashionable

Long before biotech became a buzzword, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw founded Biocon in a garage in Bengaluru. She entered an industry dominated by global giants and scepticism about whether India could build world-class biologics.

**Click on underlined word to read the full article! Our newsletter compiles insights from diverse web sources, offering a comprehensive view of the startup ecosystem.*



A Larger Shift

From beauty to biotech, fintech to femtech, Indian women founders are operating across sectors once considered inaccessible. They are not confined to “comfortable categories.” They are building in algorithms, analytics, laboratories, boardrooms, and global markets. And importantly, they are expanding what young founders imagine is possible.

Global Women Founders: Building Empires Out of “No”

Across sectors—tech, fintech, health, sustainability—women founders globally are building at scale.

- Whitney Wolfe Herd (Bumble) flipped online dating norms by giving women the first move.
- Fintech founders like Rukayat Kolawole (PaceUP Invest) are redesigning financial tools around how women actually manage risk and wealth.
- Femtech and climate-tech founders are building in spaces once dismissed as “niche,” proving that underserved markets are often underpriced opportunities.

When doors did not open, they built alternative buildings.

A Data Lens

While women-led startups are growing, funding gaps remain real. Globally, women founders receive a significantly smaller share of venture capital. In India too, funding flows are improving—but uneven. Yet something interesting is emerging. Women-led startups often demonstrate:

- Higher capital efficiency
- Earlier focus on profitability
- Stronger customer retention metrics

In other words, constraint has created discipline.

What Do Women Actually Build?

Women entrepreneurs are no longer confined to “soft sectors.” **Digital-First Consumer Brands** like Nykaa, Mamaearth, Zivame—these are tech-enabled businesses at the intersection of commerce, data, and culture. **SaaS & Platforms:**

Women founders are building B2B SaaS, communication tools, AI applications, and global-first products from India.

Fintech & Financial Inclusion: From MobiKwik to niche wealth platforms, women are designing products that leverage stability and trust as competitive advantages. **Impact, Education & Health:** Many women-led ventures operate where markets intersect with meaning—education, climate, health, and inclusion.

Empathy is not softness. It is a strategy.

The Pathway: From Idea to IPO

1. The Spark – Lived problems become business opportunities.
2. Community First – Early believers precede investors.
3. Capital Hurdles – Bias exists; resilience scales.
4. Scaling with Culture – Teams built with intentional diversity.
5. Giving Back – Success becomes infrastructure for others.

The next generation of founders in this room will not be defined by gender—but by clarity, courage, and competence.

The question is not whether women belong in entrepreneurship. The question is how much innovation we lose when half the population is underestimated.

Closing Narrative

For centuries, women’s signatures were missing from the contracts that shaped economies—even when their hands built the value. Today, from India’s boardrooms to Silicon Valley servers, women entrepreneurs are no longer asking if they are allowed to build. They are asking how big they can dream. And perhaps the most powerful shift of all:

Young women no longer look at business history and wonder, “Is this space for me?” They look at it and ask, “What do I want to build next?”

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