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Bridging the gender gap

A GRADUATE of Mumbai, Nishtha Kedia Agrawal worked in various media houses for some years before she faced difficult question of taking a break to look after her newborn child and family. Finally, she took a five-year long respite to raise her two children and stabilize her personal life. A long break is considered fatal for careers, but Nishtha decided to give it a shot.

This is a common story for many women returning to work, after a gap of couple of years post family illness, maternity, spouse transfers, children's board examination and similar reasons for a career break. Women who eventually get into a career get caught in an endless, mentally exhausting cycle of balancing their time between home and career priorities and initiating a story of painful trade-offs.

The solution lies in initiatives or platforms that India could provide which would offer women an enabling environment, such as training and guidance, flexi-timing, friendly work environment and a support system that would help women flourish professionally without compromising on their personal priorities. To encourage more women's participation in the

industry, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance came up with an initiative called the All Women Branch (AWB) in January 2014 to provide women with a platform that would help them be entrepreneurs and build a career in Insurance.

Currently in its second year, the initiative already has 30 such offices across the country and has made difference to the lives of over 1000 women across the countries who are successfully selling personal lines of insurance such as health and home. Sheetal Gupta, a home maker and mother of three who wanted to offer financial contribution and support to her husband in raising their children finally came to know about the All Women Branch initiative of Bajaj Allianz General Insurance and decided to give it a try.

Today she is a confident and respectable housewife and is a source of inspiration for many in her friend circle and community. This initiative has given many women like Nishtha and Sheetal a second chance to build a career.

anamika roy rashtrawar, Senior President, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance