

Published Date:	31 Mar 2023	Publication:	Investors India [National]
Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	24
Circulation:	25,000		

WOMEN'S DAY SPECIAL

"It is necessary for our women to actively participate in India's financial ecosystem"



By: Meeta Shetty, Fund Manager,
Tata Mutual Fund

Q1: Your thoughts on significance of women-centered design and gender intentionality when we talk about financial inclusion.

The RBI's National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (NSFI) states that with greater control over their financial lives, women can help themselves and their families to come out of poverty and reduce their risk of falling into poverty. I strongly believe that India's socio-economic fabric needs to see galvanizing changes wherein women's needs, and aspirations are recognized, and women have equal access to need-based financial services with the accompanying financial education, specially so at the grassroots level. I think women-centered design or simply put designing products keeping in mind women's perspective will be the best way to acknowledge women's sensibility. In our male dominated society (national and international), this must assume importance. Gender intentionality is identifying that gender inequality exists and acknowledging that gradually women need to be empowered socially and economically. I

believe by itself financial inclusion of women will not reduce gender inequality but giving them access to various need-based financial products accompanied by financial literacy will lead to social and economic empowerment to women.

Q2: Women make for great customers, designing products for women makes commercial/business sense for financial service providers.

According to a recent study on spending, women account for over \$31.8 trillion in global spending. Women control more than 85% of purchases across many categories in the US alone. This piece of information more than highlights the fact that gender inequalities need to go, and women must be given their due rights and place in society be it as homemakers, working women or the movers and shakers in the business arena. If women are likely to shape consumer behaviour or spending trends going ahead then it is incumbent on the financial providers to design women-oriented products. I think India under Prime Minister Modi's excellent leadership is in the race to empower India's women folk going ahead.

Q3: Do you feel savings is the way to take financial products to women, and that India is missing out on a US\$ 20billion+ opportunity in credit; is the gender gap truly getting closed?

A report by LXME, a social fintech and a financial platform for women, found that an overall 33 per cent of women were not investing their money in any manner. I think Indian women in general (though there's increasing awareness in the cities) lack awareness of

Published Date:	31 Mar 2023	Publication:	Investors India [National]
Journalist:	Bureau	Page No:	25
Circulation:	25,000		

WOMEN'S DAY SPECIAL

the various financial products and investment avenues available to them. There also exists the fear of losing their savings. I believe financial literacy among the women needs to improve. The financial service providers should look at catering to women and make them aware of the benefits of having savings. India's women may be lagging on the financial inclusion front at the current juncture, but I think there is political will to accommodate India's women in the financial makeup of the country. In the prevailing global lull on the financial front, India is a bright spot and I expect India to eventually account for a major part of the burgeoning US credit pie.

Q4: How mutual fund industry can be gender inclusive?

- 1 In the US, socially responsible investment (SRI) funds often invest in businesses that strive towards women empowerment. SRI funds are a good example of mutual funds being gender inclusive. Some of these funds invest in companies that have policies in place that allow women to work towards climbing the hierarchy.

In India, most of the investment opportunities in the mutual funds industry are gender neutral. Women have the same opportunity to invest in instruments as their male counterparts. However, the scenario has been changing in recent years. As per a recent study conducted by Scripbox, a digital wealth management company, nearly 30 per cent of women shared that they had sought to educate themselves on personal finance during the pandemic. Besides, mutual funds are the most preferred investment instrument and is the choice of 22 per cent of women surveyed.

Q5: What do you feel is the biggest hurdle for women customers to become more active participants in the ecosystem? How do you help them to overcome?

Low level of financial literacy I think is the biggest hurdle in women becoming more active participants in India's financial ecosystem.

It is necessary for our women to actively participate in India's financial ecosystem to gradually eliminate the gender gap and bias. Lack of knowledge of the various investment opportunities available to the woman of current times or may be non-access to financial products has led to a major non-inclusion of women in the country's financial fabric. As a result, savings by women are not channelized for better returns.

Q6: What is your advice to women who want to rise to leadership positions?

Dream big. Pursue your goals with utmost focus, dedication and clear vision. Understand that failures are the steppingstone to success. Believe in yourself. Learn to manage your money well as money is very important to steer things in your favour. Develop strong communication skills to manoeuvre tough situations. Be clever and wise and move with steel resolve to tick off your bucket list. Successfully achieving your short-term goals will go a long way in ultimately achieving your life's aspirations.

Sources: <https://www.crowdspring.com/blog/marketing-to-women/> <https://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/080114/these-sri-funds-focus-empowering-women.asp>

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are personal in nature and in no way trying to predict the markets or to time them. The views expressed are for information purpose only and do not construe to be any investment, legal or taxation advice. Any action taken by you on the basis of the information contained herein is your responsibility alone and Tata Asset Management Pvt. Ltd. will not be liable in any manner for the consequences of such action taken by you. Please consult your Mutual Fund Distributor before investing. The views expressed in this article may not reflect in the scheme portfolios of Tata Mutual Fund. The view expressed are based on the current market scenario and the same is subject to change. There are no guaranteed or assured returns under any of the scheme of Tata mutual Fund. Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.