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# Ã¢â?¬Å?Biotech has been the Right Choice for Me!Ã¢â?¬?

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**Ã¢â?¬Å?Biotech has been the Right Choice for Me!Ã¢â?¬?**



When I look back, a career in biotechnology was not something I planned for. It was something I ended up with after being herded through the entrance examination process that every middle-class Indian youth is acutely aware of. However, now that I have the means and luxury to reflect, I am glad this is where I ended up. I have traveled the world to study and work; and gained specific expertise in the development process of biosimilars, just as they are getting worldwide attention. All this while the biotech industry in general is at the confluence of technological breakthroughs, expiring patents, changing business models, and a talent glut in emerging markets. Looks like India (and therefore me) find ourselves at the right place at the right time.

The path to this point has been filled with challenges-some of them specific to being a woman in biotech. In India, the biggest impediment to growth is the prevailing sense that a BSc -> MSc -> PhD career path is one where you end up being a low-paid lecturer in a low-grade college. Thankfully I had colleagues around me who advised me on a specific career path in biotechnology. Without their guidance, I would not have landed a scholarship to do my PhD at the Ohio State University. Life for a PhD candidate and post-doctorate in the US is tough with long hours and endless coffee. But it taught me a very important lesson: that everyone is capable of doing amazing work and providing leadership, regardless of skin color, sex, or age; a lesson which is extremely relevant to working in India.

One of the challenges that all scientists face is over-specialization i.e. getting so deep into the subject matter that you miss the bigger picture. Thankfully, being in Bangalore, I am able to attend Indian Institute of Management Bangalore's (IIMB) executive general management program. It is essential for us to learn concepts in business outside of bench work in order to succeed.

Although Biocon has many woman employees, it will take a while for them to be a significant part of the senior management. I regularly walk into meetings with over a dozen middle and senior managers where I am the only woman in the room. A lot of this has to do with the general perception in our society that women perhaps cannot handle their careers, while also meeting their family and societal obligations. This mind set is changing, with more women business leaders setting an example for younger women like me.

At Biocon, we are fortunate to have one of the doyens of Indian industry (who happens to be a fabulous woman) as our CMD. Dr Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw has pioneered the biotech industry in India and demonstrated that women can be extraordinary leaders if they are committed to making a difference and seeing opportunities in challenges.

I have interacted in groups with Dr Shaw and have observed her capacity to challenge, inspire, and motivate our team. Having built Biocon from scratch in late 1970s, in an Indian society that was much more paternalistic than it is now, Kiran constantly reminds us that we are all capable of breaking the glass ceiling above women. For the Indian industry's (and society's) sake, here is hoping that she is spot on!