

Daughters Enter Boardrooms

Boosted by a Supreme Court verdict giving equal rights to daughters on inherited wealth, they have quietly but surely begun to enter the boardrooms of their family businesses. This is in contrast to the traditional ways when daughters' dues were settled within closed doors according to the wishes of family elders.

The Supreme Court bench of justices R. M. Lodha and Jagdish Singh Khehar had ruled on October 11, 2011 that under the Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act, 2005, daughters were entitled to equal inheritance rights along with male siblings (*something that was not available to them prior to the amendment in 2005*). A Hindu woman or girl will have equal property rights (and liabilities) along with other male relatives for any partition of inherited wealth after September, 2005, the apex court had stated.

Marking the trend Haigreave Khaitan, partner at 101-year old law firm Khaitan and Co. commented, *"Many female family members have started planning with the right to parents' ancestral wealth."* Female family members holding impressive business degrees are now part of many boardrooms driven by succession planning. Recently, Priya Agarwal, 22, joined the board of oil explorer Cairn Energy India as additional director of the firm - owned by her billionaire father Anil Agarwal. Earlier, TVS Motor chairman Venu Srinivasan's daughter, Lakshmi Venu took charge at Sundaram Clayton. Quality education, changing social norms and acceptance of daughters by business families are facilitating their entry in businesses.

Radhika Vohra, associate director at Control Risk, a global risk consultant observed, *"With a focus on the operational aspect of the business, family-owned Indian companies which have been lax in succession planning are changing fast."* Gender equality is also getting a thrust in small business families that are now keen to include both daughters and daughters-in-law in their business.

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