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Returning Mothers: Upskilling Their Way in Their Career

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50% of working women who are around 30 years of age in India leave their jobs to take care of their children: Report



Whether you are a mother who has been out of the workplace for one year or ten years, the thought of restarting your career can be daunting. The skills you might have learned might be outdated in the fast-evolving biotech industry, making it harder and being one of the biggest challenges for women who want to return to work after sabbaticals.

Arya, a mother of the 8-year-old Avanthika, who is currently pursuing the industry-oriented certificate program in Biosciences at Biocon Academy says, *"People often tell that if a girl is married and becomes a mother even before building up her career, then that's the end of her career. I totally disagree with this statement. Neither women have to sacrifice their careers if they are mothers, nor do they have to sacrifice their motherhood to build a career. We can do both at the same time and I am a prime example of that."*

After getting married during the second year of her bachelor's degree, Arya soon realized she is becoming a mother! *"Completing my course and starting a career were my biggest concerns,"* says Arya who took her 2-month-old daughter along with her to attend her examinations. She later completed her master's degree and worked for two years, and is currently on the way back to pursue a career she always dreamt of. She also says, *"Based on what I learned from my entire experience, we usually grow only when we are faced with challenges. I was discouraged by many that I will not be able to study once I got pregnant, but here I am today, standing in front of everyone after completing my master's and pursuing Biocon KGI Certificate Program in Biosciences after having a wonderful baby girl."*

Arya is just one of the many such examples among the alumni of Biocon Academy. While most women want to return to work, skill mismatch and job readiness is an apparent question that haunts them, and many have been trusting Biocon Academy, a CSR initiative of Biocon and the Centre of Excellence for Advanced Learning in Applied Biosciences, to match themselves with the current skills that are in demand in the industry.

A student of Batch 19 of the Biocon KGI Certificate Program in Biosciences, Vandana says, *"I'm a mother of twin girls. Building a career for myself was important to me because of them. This is why I chose to join Biocon Academy. The quality of education provided at the academy was crucial to achieving my goal."* This interest in upskilling themselves helps mothers like Arya and Vandana who are on a career break to enable them to regain confidence by connecting with fellow students, top-class faculty and industry experts, and best-in-industry curriculum.

Over the last couple of years, Biocon Academy has been seeing a steady growth in the number of mothers who are showing interest in rebuilding their careers and applying to various certificate programs offered by the academy. The first batch of Biocon JSS AHER Certificate Program that was launched in August 2021 had three mothers out of the total of 19 students. In just last one year, Biocon Academy has had 7 students who are mothers, with more and more applications being received for the upcoming batches.

Bindu Ajit, Program Dean, Biocon Academy says, *"With the right upskilling opportunity and having the belief in oneself, there's no boundary to what a person can achieve in their career. Since the inception of Biocon Academy, we have been increasingly witnessing more and more mothers who are willing to get back on track in their careers with an ardent willingness and capabilities to manage both careers and families. And we at Biocon Academy, understand this very much and support mothers as much as possible in each batch."*

"When I wanted to get back into the workforce after a break in my career, I realized that the number of options to bounce back seemed limited, as every potential employer focused on my career gap without looking into my skill set and knowledge. Then I planned to upgrade my skills by pursuing the Biocon JSS AHER Certificate Program in Global Regulatory Affairs," said Aruna Pathak, an alumnus of Biocon Academy. She also added, *"Initial days of the course were quite challenging for me to make a balance between managing my household chores, kids, and this newly joined course. But within a few days, I found myself to be a totally changed individual, high in confidence and back to the same groove which existed once when I was a working professional. I am grateful that I had great people around me. The support and motivation from family, friends, my fellow batchmates, and a very encouraging faculty helped me to strive harder to achieve my goal."*

Another Global Regulatory Affairs Batch 1 student Sangita Mishra said, *"The journey in itself was both exciting and exhausting, but the learning never stopped. It was challenging to manage both education and motherhood. Being a mother of a 5-year-old daughter the task felt uphill in the beginning. There were times when I felt demotivated. But the support that I received from Biocon Academy, my batchmates, professors of JSS College of Pharmacy, and my family along with my own resolution to achieve my goal not only helped me in finishing my education but also inspired me to pursue a Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Regulatory Affairs."*

Anjali, a student of BITS Biocon Certificate Program in Applied Industrial Microbiology, Batch 8, who recently got placed in the placement drive, mentions that she was worried about managing her family along with the course. She says, *"I couldn't stay at*

the hostel since I am a feeding mother. I had to take care of my baby and I was really worried about the emotions of being far away from my child. I thought it will not be possible. But my husband stood with me, and my in-laws helped me in managing my responsibility as a mother. And after a few days, it was a part of my routine. There was constant support from the faculty of Biocon Academy who always encouraged me during my studies."

A recent report published by Genpact Centre for Women's Leadership mentions that 50% of working women who are around 30 years of age in India leave their jobs to take care of their children. In today's fast-moving industrial scenario, this break in a career often comes with its own challenges, and Biocon Academy along with addressing the current skill deficit that exists in the biotech industry in India also supports mothers in rebuilding their careers with the right industry-oriented skills.