

Gen-Next Entrepreneur : Passion, Efficacy, Intention, and the Role of Family

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Abstract

The role of the family or community in entrepreneurship is well acknowledged. At the first level, it can act as the role model, provide experiential learning opportunity, help in the ideation process, and often provides resources for entrepreneurial venture. Family tradition in India is expected to bolster entrepreneurial efforts of the second generation, specifically if the family members are already into business. The joint family tradition, accounting, and early entry into business are some of the well-known features of the business community.

This study deals with a contrarian case. The business, family members, and process operate as a system in a specific context. The decision outcome may not always favour the entrepreneurial ambition of a next-generation individual. The entrepreneur had to disengage from the establishment, and create his own venture. The desire for inclusion, independence, and entrepreneurial efficacy are the hallmarks of this case study. It presents the sequence of events, dynamics, and challenges of a next generation entrepreneur from a business family. It also briefly discusses various aspects of the heavy machinery and precision making tools sector in India. The case study supporting resources are given to facilitate case discussion with the participants.

Keywords : Entrepreneurship, family, Machine Tools

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Preview of Indian Machine Tool Industry

Machine Tool industry is considered as the mother industry for capital goods sector. India manufactures several type of machine tools such as general/special purpose machines, standard CNC machines, Gear cutting, Grinding, Medium sized machines, Presses, Press Brakes, Pipe Bending, Rolling, Bending, Measuring, Metrology and Gauging, etc. (Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor, 2010).

Market Size

An estimate for the year 2018 indicated that the Indian machine tool industry stood 10th for production of Machine Tools and 8th for consumption. The estimated machine tool production was ₹ 7,300 crores during 2017–18 with a growth of 25% compared to the previous year. The road map of Indian machine tool industry gave the targets for production at ₹ 23,000 crores and exports of ₹ 4,500 crores by the year 2020 (Department of Heavy Industry, Government of India, 2010).

There are about 1000 units involved in the production of machine tools, accessories/ attachments, subsystems, and

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parts of which only 25 are large scale companies (turnover varying between ₹ 200 – 300 crores each) capturing about 70% of the turnover and the rest are in the MSME sector (Rais, 2019).

Though the exact number of employment is not known, around 80,000 people worked in this sector in the year 2017. The automobile industry has been the major demand driver for the machine tool industry.

Government of India 12th Five Year Plan

The government constituted a working group on capital goods and engineering sector, which included the machine tool industry sector. This section refers to Department of Heavy Industry, Ministry of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises (2011). The growth of the sector depends on substantial capacity expansion and support. The industry is fragmented and it suffers from challenges from supply chain, shortfalls in technology (technology gap), quality, and services. Macroeconomic factors like interest rate impact this industry. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in this industry is marginal and is not adequate for technology transfer. High-tech equipment are still imported because it is easier. It is pertinent to note that integrated machine tool parks concepts have been successful in promoting the industry in countries such as Taiwan, China, and Korea.

Industry Woes and Demands

The industry demands the complete implementation of “Public Procurement Order–2017.” They feel that the government tender terms favour imports against domestic manufacturers. The preferential trade agreements between governments should not put Indian machine tool manufacturers at disadvantage. The detailed document can be referred (Mohanram, 2019).

The Way Forward

With the advent of Industry 4.0, the machine tool sector is undergoing a turning point. Several technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), Cyber-physical systems (CPS), Smart Factories and Manufacturing, Cloud and Cognitive Computing, and Artificial Intelligence are going to impact the industry substantially.

The Department of Heavy Industry aimed at increasing the competitiveness of Indian capital goods industry through the Udyog Bharat 4.0 initiative. The Smart Advanced Manufacturing and Rapid Transformation Hub (SAMARTH) initiative is to increase the awareness through demonstration centres at Center for Industry 4.0 (C4i4) Lab, Pune ; IITD-AIA Foundation for Smart Manufacturing ; I4.0 India at IISc Factory R&D Platform; Smart Manufacturing Demo & Development Cell at CMTI (Ghosal, 2019). The industry association also wants massive skill exercise within the Industry, specifically in Digital Manufacturing, Industry 4.0, AI, Data Analytics, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, Machine Learning, Cobotics, and 3D printing etc. (Mohanram, 2019).

The machine tool sector is technology intensive and attracts individual techno-entrepreneurs. The following section discusses a brief and purposive review of literature about the role of family against the industry scenario.

Review of Literature

The research papers reviewed for this case study are by no means exhaustive. The objective of this section is to facilitate discussions on the case and a few related papers. The instructor and participants can find other resources as well.

A. The Family

Families and businesses are often treated as obviously separate institutions, but very often both are inextricably intertwined (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003). In the venture creation process, family has multiple roles starting from setting up a

role model, generating ideas, gathering of information, arranging resources, deploying human resource, networking with suppliers, and supporting the overall process (Krueger & Carsrud, 1993).

The family influences the business and the business influences the family. It was found that reducing family tension, living in a joint family of different generation, reducing time to sleep to allocate required time to the business, and hiring temporary resources aids in increasing revenue. The family has a greater influence on the business than the business has on the family (Olson et al., 2003). The family and business do not operate in silos. As a part of the society, several variables such as the degree of authoritativeness in the higher echelons of the family structure, the type of business holding and traits of respective family members involved with directly or indirectly with the business affects their decisions (Marchisio, Mazzola, Sciascia, Miles, & Astrachan, 2010).

Contrarian studies have suggested that the founding members of the firm do not necessarily support their offspring for new ventures. Reasons range from historical evidence of low success rate of entrepreneurial endeavours, unwillingness of putting family wealth and resources at stake (Sharma, Chrisman, & Chua, 1997 ; Welsh, & Zellweger, 2010).

The performance of the organisation improves with the entrepreneurial orientation (EO). It helps in acquisitive and experimental learning that improves firm performance as well as survival. However, the five dimensions of EO (autonomy, competitive aggressiveness, innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk taking) may not always contribute to the long-term success of family firms. However, the EO has positive impact on the growth of a second generation family business (Tung, Lo, Chung, & Huang, 2014). There are three aspects of a family business, controlling families, business entities, and individual family members. The business activity effects the family and individual members, leading to an impact on performance. In case of a succession process, the selection and development of the human capital of next generation family members (NGFMs) becomes crucial. Few decisions may impact the affective commitment of NGFMs. These decisions increase or decrease family cohesion (Marchisio et al., 2010). Similarly, a fair process (procedural justice) is supposed to improve firm's performance, commitment, and trust of the individuals involved with it. However, at times, other criteria such as the need, merit, and equality are applied (distributive justice), that creates conflict (Heyden, Blondel, & Carlock, 2005).

B. Family Member

The role of prior family background in business extends beyond immediate family members (Shapiro & Sokol, 1982). Students with family business background are confident of their efficacy to become an entrepreneur but, pessimistic on their ability to be in control (Zellweger, Sieger, & Halter, 2011). Thus, their career intention depends on their self efficacy and independence motive.

In general, the family experiences establish a dominant socializing influence on the values, attitudes, and behaviors individuals implement in various aspects of their lives (Carr & Sequeira, 2007). The entrepreneurial intention of an individual with prior family business background is influenced through self-efficacy, desirability, feasibility, and attitudes towards start-ups (Oluwafunmilayo, Olokundun, & Grace, 2018). If the entrepreneur has a family business background, the innovation quotient and risk taking ability also increases, thereby influencing how the opportunities are recognised and exploited (Casillas et al., 2010 ; Salvato, 2004 ; Short, Payne, Brigham, Lumpkin, & Broberg, 2009 ; Webb, Ketchen, & Ireland, 2010).

There is a gender dimension to family support. Female entrepreneurs are likely to get more support from family as they understand the internal family dynamics, business, and also because of their less exposure to the outer world resources and comfort with the present synergies (Ahmed & Kar, 2019 ; Kar, Subudhi, & Kar, 2016 ; Powell & Eddleston, 2017). Sibling relationship and role conflicts are also indicated as issues in family firms (Friedman, 1991 ; Memili, Chang, Kellermanns, & Welsh, 2013).

C. Outcome

The family, individual members and business create a unique social system that influence the outcome. At the same

time, the decision of new venture is not necessarily limited to family members only (Shapero & Sokol, 1982). The typical bundle of resources, capabilities and the interactions is viewed as the “familiness” of the firm. Wealth creation is proposed as a function of the “distinctive familiness”. The performance goal is trans-generational wealth creation (Habbershon, Williams, & MacMillan, 2003).

Case Methodology

The interview was conducted on March 8, 2018 at the office of the entrepreneur, at an industrial estate of Bhubaneswar. The authors received the consent for publication. The names of individuals and places have been masked to protect the identity. We incorporated additional information from secondary sources related to industry and the case study. The literature review is presented to support the case study discussion with the participants. This qualitative study aimed to find out how Mr. Gitesh succeeded in his entrepreneurial journey despite receiving no support from his business family.

Family and Early Life

Arbanslal and Bhurelal were two brothers. Arbanslal had three sons, and Bhurelal had one son. Bhurelal asked his brother to adopt one of his sons. This is how Karsen became the son of Bhurelal. At a young age of fifteen, Karsen joined the machine tools business of his father. The business was started in the 1960s out of Calcutta. Subsequently, Bhurelal divided family wealth equally between the elder son Jagat, and younger son Karsen. Jagat and Karsen continued the business in partnership for many years.

Gitesh remembers, “My childhood was only about machines. I completed schooling from a prestigious school in Calcutta. We had a very comfortable lifestyle. After coming from school, I used to be with my father (Mr. Karsen), in his office and learnt a lot about machines. Learning about machines didn't seem difficult and it came to me automatically and naturally.” He completed his class 10 from ICSE board and then enrolled himself for Diploma in Mechanical Engineering, along with a vocational +2 education.

While studying, he was also working informally in his family business. After Diploma, he enrolled for engineering in robotics and automation in Dubai. During that period, his cousins had business there, and he worked informally (that business is closed right now). He worked almost as a mechanic - opening the machine, understanding the problem and repairing it. Learning was hands-on, and he toiled a lot in those years.

After completing education, he came back to India, and wanted to work along with his brothers on an equal footing. However, his brothers wanted him to work under them as an employee. His uncle also supported his sons' decision and Gitesh did not appreciate this choice. He recalls, “I had to venture out on my own and the process was very difficult.” For about six months he kept requesting his uncle (who was the eldest of the family) to get something set up for him in vain. Instead, he was asked to work under his elder brother since he did not consider Gitesh capable enough to do something on his own. For a while, Gitesh remained idle and spent time doing odd jobs. Finally, he told his father about his desire to start his own venture. His father was not sure as he was just fresh from college.

Since the family was quite well off financially, Gitesh expected his uncle to give the seed capital and permit him to set up his business at some location with adequate initial support.

Gitesh's ambition took a beating. He also realised that all other family members including his brothers and their wives were permitted to become directors of some or the other business promoted by their family. This spurred him up. It urged him to start on his own. His mother, who was suffering from a disease, was his main motivator. “She is no more but I still remember her words, *'unless and until you do something, do not comeback!*’ She was my strength,” said Gitesh proudly. Gitesh is married, and loves travelling. Both his sisters are married into established business families.

The Venture

Gitesh came to Odisha and stayed in the cheaper hotels of Cuttack for a few months and then in Bhubaneswar. He kept

on looking for places to stay on rent and finally got a place in Cuttack Development Authority (CDA) housing colony area. Used to a comfortable life style, Gitesh found it difficult to manage on his own. He eventually became tired and sick. When prodded on the reasons for choosing Cuttack as the preferred place, Gitesh gave an interesting response “I had never thought that I would start business here. I came here as a student to play cricket match and I had done well. I had also visited Puri Jagannath temple a few times. I thought the place to be lucky for me,” he declared.

He formed a company HMT immediately after arriving from Kolkata. He initially could arrange around ₹ 50,000 – 60,000 which helped him to pay the hotel bills, initial rent, and the fee for company registration.

He travelled around the industrial area of Cuttack on foot. He had decided to sell machinery. He tried to convince and get clients to order from him. Some doubted him, and a few others supported. Fortunately, all the suppliers were known to his father. He took orders and the suppliers sent machines without taking any money or payment. Thus, despite having any capital, the dice started rolling.

After about 6 to 7 months, he started getting orders. Gitesh recalls one interesting experience. “In one such visit to different companies, I went to an engineering company in Angul, I met the owner. That time he did not know me personally. However, we started discussing about machines. All of a sudden, he gave me ₹ 2 lakhs and I asked him what machines he needed. He said he will tell me later. I kept on asking him about his requirements. Only after two years he placed an order. He is a very good friend of mine now. Till today, I have supplied him machines worth more than a crores. Now it is a perfect relationship.” Gitesh struggled a lot for about a year and concentrated only on his work. He did not even visit his family within this period.

He says “Thanks to God. I made some good friends, got the place to keep machines at their place. God was very kind. I started doing well within a year. I learnt a lot in Odisha and I have invested everything over here.”

Gitesh visited his family after one year, stayed in a hotel in Kolkata, and his parents visited him there. “Subsequently, my father separated from the family business and merged with my business about 6 years back. Our business has 7 showrooms in Calcutta,” he says with a sense of pride.

Heavy Machinery and Precision Machine Tools

“The Kolkata office used to get lot of inquiry from this region. Also being based out of Odisha since many years, prompted us to open a branch here in Cuttack. Machine tools are tools used for making big machines. My machines are mother machines to make other machines,” explained Gitesh.

Now his cousins are his competitors but Gitesh thinks that they are doing the same thing that they did 60 years back with only a few cosmetic changes.

The company with Gitesh at the helm has ventured into new territories - broach cutters, bedding machines, and almost a hundred new innovative equipment, which he has introduced. Gitesh claims that he is very good at innovating new products and starting new things. His working strategy follows the sequence of planning, execution, and then marketing. In 2017, he ventured into construction equipment dealership, and got inventory of around ₹ 30 lakhs. Though he was able to sell it, there were several service problems. He eventually had to discontinue the business. Selling machines comes easy to him. He says “I am blessed with the knack to sell. I get highest profit and satisfaction, when I am able to solve a typical problem which no body in the locality is able to solve. I use my technical expertise to suggest something. I pride myself in making any special purpose machine (SPM). It gives me immense satisfaction when I manage to do something that nobody else could. By God's grace, most of the time I have been able to give a new solution whenever any problem arose.”

Current Scenario and Plans

The company has around 15 employees in Odisha and 50 in Calcutta. As per Gitesh, the working capital for the company is huge. He does not put a number. The business in Odisha has doubled over the previous year and seems to be in good health. Every day the company gets around 4 to 5 enquiries. As per him, Odisha is a different market, and comparison with other regions is not fair. There is a common perception that people of Odisha are lazy. Gitesh does not

agree. He opines that it is up to the entrepreneur if he/she wants to grow and work hard. He also does not blame Government for lack of support. In his case, demand comes from diverse sectors, and thus, his risks are hedged with respect to business revenue. His strategy is to sell a few machines costing very low, with minimum margin. If the business performance is poor, instead of complaining, he finds alternatives. He says “I have to survive anyway. I am keen on expansion on the supply side and working on a strategy to sell to oil mills, atta mills, dal mills etc.”

In the near future, Gitesh wants to open the biggest showroom in Odisha. He sees an advantage in this market where he buys machinery second-hand, modifies it, and sells it at a lesser price than competitors, thereby creating a niche-segment. However, he finds that selling in credit is a challenge in Odisha. The bad debt is around 5% to 10%. In Calcutta, nobody gives or takes credit and business is simpler. The company has very less sale to corporate or big companies. Large companies have established procedures, purchase officers, technology experts, and large supplier base.

Gitesh says “I want to sell to the bottom of the pyramid and tap the profit at the micro, small, and medium scale. I want to target the agriculture sector as well. The bottom of the pyramid market is huge and has good margin. Last years' turnover was around ₹ 4 to 5 crores. Basically, I am a very satisfied person.”

Case Discussion

Questions

The participants need to appreciate the fact that the case study is based on the interview of the entrepreneur only. It is not investigative in nature and has no input from other members.

- (1) Discuss the role of family in this case. What could have happened and why?
- (2) Discuss the entrepreneurial orientations of Gitesh and subsequent outcome.
- (3) Discuss the role of the location choice, and business strategy of the entrepreneur.

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