



Working Women And Their Problems In India

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Technological advances plus the evolving work and family roles of women in this country have contributed to the business environment of the 21st century. The changing roles of women in India have led to their greater participation in the employment sector and changes in many aspects of Indian life.

In the history of human development, women have been as vital in the history making as men have been. In fact, higher status for women, employment and work performed by them in a society is a significant indicator of a nation's overall progress. Undoubtedly, without the active participation of women in national activities, the social, economic or political progress of a country will deteriorate and become stagnant. But ironically and tragically, women employees in general, are not taken very seriously by their superiors, colleagues, or society at large.

Women are actively and equally supporting the men from Stone Age in Socioeconomic ups and downs. The financial demands on the Indian families are becoming raise day by day. Traditionally Indian women had been home makers but in the recent decades, proper education and better awareness, in addition to the ever-increasing cost of living has made them to go out and choose careers. The sky rocketing cost of living, increasing expenses on education of children, increasing cost of housing properties in India force every family in India to look for ways and means of increasing the household income. As a result, women in India who were mostly known as homemakers are forced to go for jobs and take up even careers that were considered only suitable for men such as working in night shifts in call centers or BPOs. Research confirms that employment has a positive effect for women and families. Despite this, women still encounter a number of difficulties and misperceptions that affect their performance in the workplace. This paper will examine some of these difficulties and describe various methods employed by working women to resolve them.

II. PROBLEMS FACED BY WORKING WOMEN IN INDIA:

Working women in India are faced with lot more challenges than in the other parts of the world. Working women face ‘**domestic**’ problems as well as ‘**official**’ matters. Most of the cases in India men do not share household chores, it is women who have to cook, clean the house, do the dishes, wash clothes, get their children ready for school etc. Men just took care of few chores that are to be dealt outside the house. So, the major burden of running the family is on the shoulders of women. It was alright for women to handle all the chores as long as they were homemakers. Now with their increasing need for getting some income for the family, they have to work all the harder. Some of the problems facing by working women in India are as follows,

1. Mental harassment:

It is an age-old convention that women are less capable and inefficient in working as compared to men. The attitude which considers women unfit for certain jobs holds back women. In spite of the constitutional provisions, gender bias creates obstacles in their recruitment. In addition to this, the same attitude governs injustice of unequal salaries for the same job. The true equality has not been achieved even after 61 years of independence. In order to achieve success in corporate sector, women feel that they must do better than their male colleagues. This leads to higher expectations and efficiency by their bosses and subordinates. Working in such conditions inevitably puts strain on women to greater extent as compared to men, thus making them less eager in their career. No one thinks of upgrading their skills with technological advancement which makes it easy to terminate woman’s employment and hire other persons. Maternity leave is seldom given. Women’s issues do not occur on the priority list of most of the trade unions. Traditionally women are seen as the house-keepers and child bearers. A woman could still bear up with these problems if she controls over money that she earns but in most cases, their salary is handed over to father, husband or in laws. Therefore, main purpose for seeking employment to get independence is nullified in many cases.

2. Mental Stress:

Because of work pressure today, Women have started sleeping lesser than before because only when they wake up early they can cook for the family, get themselves ready for the job, get their children ready for the schools, so on an average, women lost 2 hours of sleep per day and up to 14 hours sleep per week. If they happened to work in a highly pressurized environment, then they will bring home their work and that cuts few more hours of sleep. It is not just about the reduced sleep, but such a lifestyle builds stress. This stress is passed on to the family and frustration level builds up in the family. They have to handle harassments at their work place, sometimes just over look things to ensure that their job is not jeopardized in anyway. Many Indian families are still living as joint families along with the parents and in-laws. This adds to their stress further because they have to please all the family members of her husband. Listen to their complaints that they make against her and turn deaf ears towards them and so on. Overall, majority of women in India look towards or live in the hope

that things will change. Some of us have given up that hope and learnt to accept that nothing can be done about it. India has a long way to go before our women will be able to live their lives to the full.

3. Sexual harassment:

Today, almost all working women are prone to sexual harassment irrespective of their status, personal characteristics and the types of their employment. An unreasonable and unjustifiable common routine practice at many workplaces is sexual Harassment. Sexual harassment is an unethical code of conduct that women find threaten. They face sexual harassment on way on transports, at working places, educational institutions, and hospitals, at home and even in police stations when they go to file complaints. It is generally perceived that gender bias against working women starts right from the stage of recruitment. It is shocking that the law protectors are violating and outraging modesty of women. Public transport system is overcrowded and women become easy targets for physical harassment. Most of the women tend to be concentrated in the poor service jobs whereas men are in an immediate supervisory position, which gives them an opportunity to exploit their subordinate women. It is a difficult situation for woman if the higher officer demands sexual favors. If refused the boss takes out other means to make her life miserable. There have been several cases of sexual harassment recently involving even the senior women officials. If a woman is praised for her work or promoted on merit, her colleagues do not hesitate to attribute it to sexual favors. This psychological pressure can easily lead to a woman resigning from her job. However, Indian women still face blatant discrimination at their workplaces. A major problem faced by the working women is sexual harassment at the work place. Further, women employees working in night shift are more vulnerable to such incidents. Nurses, for example, face this problem nearly every day. There is nothing that is done in hospitals to tackle and address the danger they face. Such blatant disregard of current Indian laws is one reason why sexual harassment at the workplace continues to increase.

In our society, most cases of sexual abuse go unreported because of the trauma and the social stigma attached to it. In the recent past, various guidelines, resolutions have been made to broaden the definition of sexual exploitation. There must be gender equality which includes protection from harassment and right to work with dignity. Sexual harassment of a female at the place of work is incompatible with her dignity and needs to be eliminated.

3. Discrimination at Workplace:

Also, Indian women are often deprived of promotions and growth opportunities at work places but this doesn't apply to all working women. A majority of working women continue to be denied their right to equal pay, under the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976 and are underpaid in comparison to their male colleagues. This is usually the case in factories and labor-oriented industries.

While a majority of the women still face discrimination and gender bias, in the last few decades, the number of women successful in politics, technology and business etc. is definitely on the rise. Society has started seeing women in a different perspective. They work as lawyers, nurses, doctors, social workers, teachers, secretaries, managers and officers etc. There is no profession today where women are not employed. However, it is true that working women have to face problems by virtue of their sex. For centuries women have been subjected to exploitation and torture, physically, sexually and mentally. There are innumerable challenge and problems faced by them both at home and workplace. What we generally see today, in addition to various media and journal reports is that in the workplace women generally face mental stress, sexual harassment, discriminatory practices, safety and security issues etc. (Martin, 1989). India's patriarchal society thinks of women only as homemakers and sexual objects and is generally subjected to exploitation and torture.

4. Safety of Working Women While Traveling or Transport Problems:

Typically, the orthodox mindset in the Indian society makes it difficult for a working woman to balance her domestic environment with the professional life. In some families, it may not be acceptable to work after six o'clock. Those families that do accept these working hours may experience considerable anxiety every day about a woman's safety while traveling. So many issues affect a working woman because she is closely protected or watched by her family and the society. According to survey conducted by ASSOCHAM, on 1000 women professionals, around 80 per cent of the households expect their daughters-in-law to prioritize household requirements over the official work. Further, many of them are physically and psychologically abused, by their in-laws and husband but they do not complain or let others know about it, particularly if they have children. Transport problem (shortage of public transport) is very common in almost all country. Not only working women but also girls' student faces this problem on daily basis. There are many incidents or cases like NIRBHAYA incident etc.

III. WORKING WOMEN CAN CLAIM MAINTENANCE:

A woman's legal right to claim maintenance from her husband is recognized under section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code. Section 24, of the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956, entitles a woman to claim maintenance from her estranged husband. Also, the claim for maintenance is extendable to her minor children. Further, these laws provide that maintenance can be claimed even prior to divorce, during separation. Initially, it was believed that a working woman in India is not entitled to claim maintenance, as she is capable of maintaining herself. However, the ambiguity was cleared by a significant decision in *Bhagwan v. Kamla Devi*, (1975) 2 SCC 386. The Supreme Court held that a working woman can claim maintenance from her estranged husband, if her monthly income is not enough for her maintenance. Further, the Court clarified that the term 'Unable to maintain herself' does not require a woman to be absolute destitute, to entitle her for maintenance. The legal right of a woman pertaining to equal pay at the work place remains unaddressed most of the time because few women are confident enough to complain. About right to maintenance, it is restricted, if she

remarries or converts to another religion. Further, there have been instances where the Court has ordered women with substantial earnings, to pay maintenance to their husbands.

A. Rights and Privileges of Women:

The Constitution of India not only guarantees equality for women, but also empowers state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favours of women in order to overcome their disadvantages in socio economic, educational and political fields. There are many articles in the constitution specifically encourages the development of woman in the society.

- **Article 14** - States that equal rights and opportunities for men and women in the political, economic and social spheres.
- **Article 15** - Prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, caste and sex.
- **Article 15(3)** - Makes a special provision enabling the state to make positive discrimination in favor of women.
- **Article 15(A) (e)** - Condemn the practices derogatory to the dignity of women.
- **Article 16** - Provides for equal opportunities in matter of public appointments.
- **Article 39(a)** - States that state shall direct its policy towards securing all citizens, men and women equally the right to means of livelihood.
- **Article 39(c)** - Confirms that equal pay for equal work.
- **Article 42** - Directs the state to provide the citizens the just and human conditions at work and maternity relief.

B. Policies concerning women's development:

Various policies advocating women's welfare and development have been evolved by the government. Some of them are given below.

- a) The National Plan of Action for Women (NPA) 1976.
- b) The National Perspective Plan for Women (NPP) 1988-2000.
- c) Sharam Shakti 1988.
- d) The National Nutritional Policy (NNP) 1993.
- e) The National Plan and Action for the Girl Child (NPA) 1991-2000.
- f) National Commission for Women's Act (new) 1990.

To provide for the protection of women from discrimination, and for the basic facilities like creche, recreational facilities, maternity benefits, hostel and transport facilities, etc. and for the welfare measures to be taken by the employers and the State for the women employees working in government establishments; public sector enterprises including banks and ports, educational institutions including universities, colleges and schools; factories, mines, plantations, agricultural fields, orchards and such other places and for matters

connected therewith and incidental thereto. BE it enacted by Parliament in the Sixty-fifth year of the Republic of India as follows: — This Act may be called the Working Women (Basic Facilities and Welfare) Act, 2014.

V.CONCLUSION:

Today, the status of Indian women has undergone considerable change. In fact, during the past fifty years, the situation of professional women has changed dramatically. Women have expanded their career aspirations. They are no longer confined to traditional female fields such as Education or Nursing. Though Indian women are far more independent and aware of their legal rights, such as right to work, equal treatment, property and maintenance, a majority of women remain unaware of these rights. There are other factors that affect their quality of life such as age of marriage, extent of literacy, role in the family and so on. In many families, women do not have a voice in anything while in several families; the women may have a dominating role. The result is that the empowerment of women in India is highly unbalanced and with huge gaps. Those who are economically independent and literate live the kind of life that other women tend to envy about. This disparity is also a cause for worry because balanced development is not taking place. In the contemporary world, women no longer lag behind in terms of career. They are keeping themselves shoulder to shoulder with opposite sex. However, even today they are expected to do multi-tasking. They have to take care of family and household even if they are working. Working women refers to those in paid employment. They work as lawyers, nurses, doctors, teachers and secretaries etc. There is no profession today where women are not employed. However, it is true that working women have to face problems by virtue of their sex. For centuries, women have been subjected to exploitation and torture physically, sexually and mentally. There are innumerable challenges and problems faced by them both at home and work place. Technological advancement results in retrenchment of women employees. No one thinks of upgrading their skills. Maternity leave is seldom given. Family management is becoming the job of both parents. It is much easier to terminate the woman's employment and hire someone else. Trade Unions do little to ameliorate the lot of women workers. Women's issues do not occur on the priority list of most of the trade unions. Women going to work are often subject to sexual harassment. Public transport system is overcrowded and men take advantage of the circumstances to physically harass women. Colleagues offer unwanted attention which can still be shaken off but a woman is placed in a difficult situation if the higher officer demands sexual favours, if refused the boss can easily take it out on the woman in other ways to make life miserable for her. There have been several cases of sexual harassment recently involving even the senior women officials. On the other hand, if a woman is praised for her work or promoted on merit, her colleagues do not hesitate to attribute it to sexual favours. Appropriate steps must be taken by employers or persons in charge of workplaces, public or private sector, to ensure safe working atmosphere for women. Appropriate work conditions must be provided in respect of work, health and hygiene to further ensure that there is no hostile environment towards women at workplaces. If we want to see a society free of sexual harassment, there is need of changing the mindset of the society. Simply enacting laws is not sufficient. So, the political structure should be altered to achieve the goal. Sexual

harassment, which was an invisible problem until quite recently, has now become a major social problem with the widespread entry of women in to the labor force. The psychological pressure of all this can easily lead to a woman quitting her job. Most of the problems that beset working women are in reality rooted in the social perspective of the position of women. Traditionally men are seen as the bread winner and women as the house-keepers, child bearers and rearers. All these matters put obstacles before the working women. A fundamental change is required in the attitudes of the employers, policy makers, family members and other relatives and the public at large. Although Indian women have started working outside their homes but still, they have a long way to go both culturally, socially and economically, to bring in positive attitudinal changes in the mind-set of people. According to the Indian Constitution, that free and compulsory education for all children would be provided until they complete the age of fourteen years. There has been special emphasis in monitoring the drop outs in primary education.

Finally, I would like to conclude that, Laws guarantee the human rights of Women and Children, but without proper implementation they would not solve the problem.

Suggestions:

1. The state should properly ensure and implement for women workers adequate means of livelihood.
2. The state should ensure fair distribution of the material resources of the country for the common good strictly, effectively and compulsorily,
3. The state should distribute the wealth in such a way that the wealth is not concentrated in a few hands.
4. State should strictly follow the principle of equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
5. The state should take proper steps to strictly and effectively implement compulsory and free education to the girl children up to their higher education.
6. The state should try to secure participation of women workers in the management of the factory.
7. Women workers should be protected against exploitation effectively. Women should not be forced by economic necessity to enter jobs and vocations not suited to their age or strength.
8. The state should effectively ensure to the women workers -
 - (a) The right to work
 - (b) The right to education and
 - (c) The right to state assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement.
9. The state should make provisions for securing just and humane conditions of work for the women workers and maternity relief even more effectively.
10. Government as well as NGOs must sensitize community on women rights.
11. State should introduce working women friendly transport system.

12. NGOs and civil society must aware the working women regarding system of complaint if they face sexual harassment.

13. Social Organizations or the institute where their workers are women, must introduce women friendly policies.

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