

WORKING WOMEN IN 21st CENTURY

Pratima J. Shah

Professor, Applied Science & Humanities Dept., S.N.P.I.T & R.C, Umrakh/G.T.U,
Bardoli/Surat, Gujarat, India

Abstract: The 21st century is a century pregnant with opportunities and possibilities. It has been an era of change. Women have always been an important element of the society. But in the 21st century, they have become the torch bearers of change and have begun writing their own rule books unlike the women before who were guided by protocols. They have already begun to set new benchmarks in various professions they perceive. It all started from the sparks of globalization, education and socio-economic advancements which gave birth to the concept of women empowerment and lowered the curtains to the hitherto ideal role of a women as a mere home maker. This paper tries to portray the problems which working women may face while she tries to bridge the gaps between family, kids, job and her inner aspiration to achieve personal and professional goals. Women are new to the corporate world but very shrewd players. They have outpaced men in various corporate offices, political activities and have been constantly rising as eminent public figures. The egoistic men cannot bear the rising importance of women in the financial arena and end up creating obstacles in the path followed by them. But can the lava gushing out of a volcano ever be stopped. Present women are like that lava, she has begun to form the new lands and the men establishments in the society have already begun to quiver. The foundation of an equally opportunistic society for both men and women has been laid.

Keywords: Catastrophe, Opportunities, Priority, responsibilities, Working women.

I. INTRODUCTION

The working women are not new to this world. Since time immemorial they have been working all the 7 days a week and all 52 weeks a year without much acknowledgement of the work they do in bringing up a family, serving their needs and supporting them emotionally. She has always been treated as a “need not be paid servant”, but the dictionaries of the 21st century give a broader definition of a working women wherein she works for wages or earns a salary through regular employment. These employments could either be provided by external agencies or self generated to serve her dreams or portray her talents. In our country women is portrayed as Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, but the irony lies in the fact that it is particularly the women of our society who are greatly denied access to wealth. Women have discovered their real worth after ages of suppression. The women of this age cannot be held back by the norms of orthodox beliefs because they have learnt to move to the rhythm of their heart. She is financially independent. She is the decision maker and policy maker

in various fields. Even though she ventured into the outer world, the orthodox traditional roles made for her as a home maker, her so called duties as a mother, sister & wife are still at its place waiting for her. It puts a toll on her as she is torn apart by her home duties & office work. Her day begins in the early, morning with many things to shoulder before stepping out of the house for office. She has to cook food, make the children ready for school etc. She works more sincerely than her male colleagues at her office. At the end of the day she has no excuse for the household duties which are waiting for her even though she is damn tired. She never gets a word of appreciation from her family members. A husband can give the excuse of overburden at the work place & pressures at the work place. But a wife has to be fresh and amiable always.

II. WOMEN IN 21ST CENTURY

THE 20TH & 21ST CENTURIES HAVE RECORDED & MARKED MANY CHANGES IN THE WORLD. THESE CHANGES ALSO INCLUDE THE CHANGES IN THE ROLES PLAYED BY WOMEN. IN THE 21ST CENTURY, WOMEN ARE NO MORE RESTRICTED TO THE FORMERLY ESTABLISHED NORMS OF COOKING, WASHING CLOTHES, DOING HOUSEHOLD WORKS AND LOOKING AFTER THE CHILDREN AND FAMILY. THEY HAVE ACQUIRED A NEW ROLE OF BREADWINNERS IN THE FAMILY. KEEPING ASIDE ALL THE SHACKLES THAT HITHERTO KEPT THEM JAILED IN THE DOMESTIC TRAP; THEY HAVE MOVED INTO A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITIES, A WORLD WHERE SHE HAS A CHOICE TO LIVE HER LIFE & GOVERNED BY HER OWN NORMS. BUT HOWEVER OPPORTUNISTIC BE THE WORLD OUTSIDE, IT DOES NOT SERVE THE SAME BENEFITS AND PROSPECTS TO MEN AND WOMEN EQUALLY. EVEN AFTER THE ADVANCEMENTS IN THE FIELD OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, WE HAVE REMAINED MUCH AT THE SAME PLACE IN TREATING OUR WOMEN. THE ONLY CHANGE THAT HAS OCCURRED ALL THROUGH THE ADVANCING DECADES IS THAT THE WOMEN HAVE BEEN GIVEN REPRESENTATION AT VARIOUS PLACES BUT NOT UNTOUCHED BY PREJUDICES. IT'S LIKE SHE HAS BEEN GIVEN A CAUSE TO LIVE ABOUT, A VOICE TO RAISE BUT ITS VOLUME AND INTENSITY IS CONTROLLED BY THE MALE CHAUVINIST SOCIETY WHO CAN EVEN MUTE THESE VOICES. AND SADLY HE DOES THE SAME. THE MAIN REASON WHY A WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION GOES UNNOTICED IS THAT THEY ARE PRESUMED TO BE WEAK, PASSIVE, DEPENDENT AND PEOPLE ORIENTED UNLIKE MEN WHO ARE CONSIDERED TO BE STRONG, AGGRESSIVE, INDEPENDENT AND THINGS ORIENTED.

WOMEN SINCE AGES WERE DENIED ACCESS TO QUALITY LIFE, EDUCATION AND HARDLY HAD ANY CHOICES IN MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN. BUT WITH THE INCREASE IN GLOBALIZATION, IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY, MEDIA & OTHER CULTURES, IMPACT OF SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CROSS CURRENTS OF THE WORLD, WOMEN EMPOWERMENT STARTED GAINING GROUND AND AS THE AWARENESS IMPLIED THE REAL WORTH OF A GIRL CHILD SPREAD. WOMEN BEGAN GETTING ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND BEGAN MAKING THEIR CHOICES. ONE OF THE IMPORTANT CHOICES WAS TO WORK TO EARN MONEY RATHER THAN KEEP AT HOME. THERE ARE NUMEROUS REASONS TODAY TO WHY WOMEN STEP OUT OF THEIR HOME TO WORK AND TO EARN. ONE REASON MAY BE THE VISION OF AN INDEPENDENT IDENTITY, TO EARN A LIVING, TO RUN HER FAMILY OR TO SUPPORT HER HUSBAND FINANCIALLY. BUT IN A MALE DOMINATED SOCIETY AND CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT, FAIR OPPORTUNITIES DO NOT EXIST FOR WORKING WOMEN. WOMEN ARE PAID LESS THAN THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS FOR THE SAME TYPE AND AMOUNT OF WORK. THE CAPABILITIES OF WOMEN ARE OFTEN QUESTIONED WHEN CONSIDERING THEM FOR ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGERIAL POSITIONS. BUT PEOPLE OFTEN FORGET IT THAT THEY

ARE EXPERIENCED IN MANAGING ONE OF THE MOST COMPLEX ORGANIZATIONS IMAGINABLE- THE HOUSEHOLD WHICH HAS NUMEROUS HUMAN INTERFACES. WOMEN HAVE LEARNT OVERTIME THE EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES OF NEGOTIATION & RECONCILIATION. THEY HAVE AMPLE QUALITIES OF PATIENCE & UNDERSTANDING ALONG WITH AN INHERENT QUALITY OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE. ALL THESE SKILLS CAN BE BROUGHT TO BEAR UPON THE WORKPLACE WHICH CAN HELP IN CULTIVATING A RICHER WORKING ENVIRONMENT.

The harsh truth is that the working women face many problems at workplace just by virtue of their being women. The quality of work that women do is of prime importance. Women find employment easily in the caring and nursing sectors and routine submissive sectors like nurses, doctors, teachers, secretaries, assembling jobs, call centres, etc. For technical, administrative and managerial positions, preferences are given to men of equal qualification. Thus this evil of gender bias begins from the first stage of recruitment. The belief of male superiority over women makes it necessary for a woman to be much more advanced and skilled than her male colleagues to be at the top of the corporate ladder.

Even in the 21st century, when women have reached the Everest and have made it in the corporate world by taking up the challenging roles of executives, directors, marketing professionals etc, the age old image of woman the homemaker has not much changed. Even if she works, comes home tired or has to leave early for her job, she is expected to cook food, take care of her kids and justify her role as a housewife by handling other household activities. The male counterpart does help but holds no compulsions & responsibilities. It becomes even miserable for a woman to work when her own family gets in her way. A woman could still bear up with all the problems at workplace had she been given the choice to manage her salary. But as per the norms of the society she has to hand over her salary to her father, husband or her in-laws. These depress her morals to work.

WORKING WOMAN & HER HOME:

Home is the topmost priority of a woman now and forever. This is because it is SHE who makes a home into a home by her love, care, devotion and hard work. This truth has been accepted by one and all today but it has also given rise to many problems. Just because the woman goes out of her home and works outside. Today's woman is educated and it is this education that has made her capable to shoulder the responsibilities of life exquisitely. But this has also led to a catastrophe at her home. The reason for this is – Once the woman is capable of earning she chooses to make her career. In doing it she begins neglecting her household duties and even thinks of doing it below her dignity.

In India this is the crux of the problem created because of working women. Once she moves out of the house and begins working, her home starts getting neglected due to different reasons. The first reason is that after having worked for the whole day, she is left with no energy to go home & work – MOST GENUINE REASON. Secondly she begins to lose interest in the work at home. She does all those minimal things to run the family but without any interest in making improvements. As she is working she starts behaving like a man or like her husband who was the privileged bread earner till now. This thinking of hers makes her lose interest in her family & she just focuses on raising her career prospects. These reasons have given way to multifarious problems.

PROBLEMS:

The women cannot give enough time to her children. This results in disobedient & undisciplined children who are selfish & careless as there is no mother around to teach them the finer emotions of life. Secondly in a home where the woman is working it becomes difficult to have elders/ guests as there is no one to look after /entertain them. Care of children, elders, family members & guests is just out of place in the busy schedule of a working woman. It is true that a working woman adds to the income of the family & even helps to improve the standard of the family. She enhances her image but at the cost of many unsolved problems created in the family & society. As she has become equal to man in all aspects, the ego of the man is hurt & he revolts at home, in the office and in the society. Man feels challenged by the working woman as now he is no more the uncrowned king of his home, family & society.

III. WORKING ATMOSPHERE

The atmosphere at work places is not so congenial. The male colleagues consider women as scapegoats for their sexual gratification. Incidences of touching intentionally, using double meaning words, poking their noses in her private affairs & unwarranted comments are examples which cause irritation to the woman making her defensive. She has to put up with the one sided sexual advances by the boss, dirty stares at her body, trying to lure her for promotions in return for all this things are very common for a working woman. As she has entered newer fields she to face dangers like sexual advances, eve-teasing & transfers.

The male dominated society cannot accept WOMAN as an INDEPENDENT identity. Top of this a woman cannot break the stereotype roles of mother & wife. She has to manage with childbearing and child rearing without any ifs & buts. There is no end to the work at home. A career woman has endless problems which are peculiarly different from place to place, & person to person. It is very much essential to strike a balance between home & work duties to save the career oriented woman from their daily increasing hardships and health problems which are a result of this stress.

It is only the man's attitude towards woman which can make a difference irrespective of any laws which are made for women. Because no law however strict it may be cannot help in changing the conditions of working women unless and until man changes his attitude towards working women. The Indian male dominated society is gradually digesting the changes. Absence of joint families & financial independence of women have made man absorb the change. Government initiatives on eve teasing, sexual harassment of working women has also helped favorably. Despite of all hardships we must understand that women have battled a great war and are still continuing on their own against the hardships in their life have achieved remarkable success in every sphere of life.

IV. CONCLUSION

In the wake of the 21st century, women have awakened to realize their real potentials. They have decided to live their real potentials. They have decided to live their lives in their own terms. Financial independence, if not the sole reason, is a vital parameter in deciding the quality of their life. They have moved ahead of criticism and comment and have learnt to communicate their needs and aspirations in the male chauvinist society. By being financially independent, she not only earns money to feed the dependent mouths, but has also earned the

independence of making decisions that concern her life. They have successfully taken over the role of bread winners along with the traditional role of a home maker. They have already portrayed their excellence in main stream professions like teaching, nursing, corporate business and politics. Even in the offbeat arena they have successfully made it as chefs, dancers, singers, organizers, motivational speakers, athletes, painters, designers, and everything you can imagine rather women can imagine. At present there may be fewer women actively involved in the corporate world of finance but it is better than the past when there were none. Men have more or less accepted the changing norms of the society wherein she is a *working woman*. That trend is not far away when every house will have a woman working to earn a better living.

She is like a brook, recently melted out of the glacier, the orthodox society. Her path is filled with huge rocks of protocols which require her to submit her desires, but the women in 21st century are well acquainted with the art of persistence and patience. She will slowly and steadily cut down these rocks and will move down the valley to make way for a new river of opportunities for herself and the rising women behind. It would not be wrong to call the 21st century as the century for rising women and merrily the dawn has already set in to spread the light over the equally opportunistic world for both men and women.

REFERENCES

- [01] Essay on Women Working outside homes – www.directessays.com
- [02] Working Women Essays – www.exampleessays.com
- [03] Essay on the hardship faced by working women – www.preservearticles.com
- [04] Essay on Working Women & Family Life – schoolworkhelper.net
- [05] 21st Century Working Women in India.
- [06] Examining today's Working Women – firstread.nbcnews.com