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WOMEN IN EMPLOYMENT AND THEIR NEEDS

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ABSTRACT

At present, in India, there are women in employment in many fields including education, agriculture, economics, banking, political science, computer science, science, technology and media. Whatever may be the field, certain facilities have to be provided to women in employment in order to work with happiness and pleasure. The environment, in which women are working, should be pleasing in nature and character to work peacefully. At the workplace, they are to be encouraged to express their opinions freely and frankly. Regarding pay and allowances, they have to be paid, keeping in view their qualifications and experience. Insurance, pension and such other benefits have to be provided to them. In short, happy working conditions have to be provided at the place, where women work, for better output. It is true that women in employment, face several problems. In this regard, it is useful to recollect the advice given by Dr. Sheela Nambiar: "Stop playing the victim. Stop getting in the way of realising your potential". (*THE HINDU, MAGAZINE*, 2 Mar. 2014).

KEYWORDS : Women, employment, needs, education, best practices, encouragement.

Introduction

Balancing multiple responsibilities, tight schedules and high targets with domestic and family commitments is an incessant challenge. The traditional caretaking role assigned to women further impedes their career ambitions and success. (*THE HINDU, OPORTUNITIES*, 7 Mar. 2012)

The biggest challenge women face today is to be judged. Unfortunately, most of them try to defend their position, when they don't need to. As grown up, educated and evolved individuals, you need not justify your decisions and choices to all and sundry all the time because it leads to a vicious cycle of guilt, self- doubt, defiance and anger. (*THE TIMES OF INDIA, TIMES ASCENT,* 17 May 2017)

Traditionally, women in India, in general, used to devote their time and energy to their families and to domestic works. But, today, for various reasons, women are showing interest to do jobs of different kinds. Many observers condemned working mothers as selfish, unnatural and even dangerous to their children and society (Wilson, 2006). But many women have put in many years of service in the organisations, where they have been working. When both spouses work, it may be necessary for the mother to retain her job, if she has insurance benefits and if she wants to retire with better retirement benefits (Edelman, 2002). Such women think that their income provides them with social security. They feel that they have economic independence. Also, there are women, who work to supplement family income and to raise their standards of living. Many women, especially in the unorganised sector, work long hours for their survival. Almost all women, who perform duties related to their employment, do domestic work also. Domestic work includes among others, cooking, cleaning the house, caring for children, old people and the sick. These jobs require extraordinary energy and patience. To perform their jobs well, women have to plan in advance. About involvement of women in planning and policy- making, Nagalakshmi Vepakomma, a Ph.D. in Pharmacology and a women entrepreneur, says that women in Andhra Pradesh should get involved in planning and policy-making and address the problems they face in their careers. (*THE HINDU*, 28 Nov. 2014) In fact, the needs of women in employment are several. **What about the need for education? What about the need for capacity building? What about sufficient work and regular income? What about the need for a house? What about the need for insurance? What about the need to take care of health? What about the need for nutritious food and clean water? What is the conclusion and what is needed today?** All these significant and current issues are discussed, in detail, hereunder.

Discussion

What about the need for primary education to all women?

Education plays an important role in promoting equality and justice enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Education enables expansion of horizons of opportunity for women and disadvantaged groups. The Government of India has committed itself to primary education and literacy for all women and men. Previously, primary education was not considered a security. Later, women considered primary education as a necessity for themselves and for their children. Today, women opine that primary education for themselves and for their children is not enough. They want to get access to better opportunities in education and employment. They want better prospectus. They wish to pursue higher education.

What about the need for higher education to women? What is the role of the University Grants Commission (UGC), in this regard?

Women in employment want to improve their educational and technical qualifications. They want to join the colleges and universities for this purpose. To cater to the educational needs of women and men, several open universities are established. These open universities enable women and men to study and secure higher degrees without attending colleges universities every day. Several women and men have made use of such opportunities.

The role of the University Grants Commission (UGC) regarding higher education of women and men is crucial. Promoting equity through higher education has been at the heart of the agenda of the UGC. The UGC has been trying to preserve democratic praxis in spaces of learning and promote gender equality. The UGC has been doing whatever is necessary to ensure the freedom, safety and security of girls and women, in particular, and of the youth, in general. The UGC has been striving to ensure zero tolerance of harassment of any kind, of girls and women on campuses. The UGC has been working to make gender education and sensitisation an integral part of the university curriculum in all subject domains.

What about the need for capacity building?

In addition to education, women desire capacity building for themselves. In other words, women desire to develop more knowledge and better skills. They wish to upgrade their skills in general education and in technical education. For women, the organisations in which they are working, are also the places to learn the required skills. The skills required , in the main, are the skills of running and managing different institutions and organisations. In reality, several women have improved their knowledge by using computers and modern devices. They have gained access to markets and they showed progress in increasing productivity. However, there is a need for creating more opportunities to women

for their capacity building.

What about sufficient work and regular income?

Many women in the unorganised sector say that there is not enough work for them throughout the year and that there is no regular income. They may be marginal formers or agricultural workers or construction workers or street vendors or self employed persons. They say that they need enough work throughout the year. So, necessary steps have to be taken to find suitable work, which yields income to all of them, throughout the year.

What about the need for a house?

Women need a house for living and for looking after their families. A house provides them and their families physical security and safety. A house is not just four walls and a roof over them. A house is not just a shelter. A house is more than a dwelling place. In a house, infrastructure like water, lighting , sanitation and drainage is necessary. For some women and casual workers, the house is used as a workplace. When women have a house of their own, they can concentrate on their job and they will be able to do justice both to their families and to their careers. As such, it is necessary to include housing as part of social security.

What about the need for insurance?

Women need insurance because it provides them security, in the event of natural or social disasters like floods or riots and personal disasters like illness or death. An insurance is the act of insuring property, life against loss or harm, in consideration of a payment. At present, in India, there are insurances like Life Insurance, Employees State Insurance (ESI) and Group Insurance Scheme.

What about the need to take care of health? What about the need for nutritious food and clean water?

Women have to pay particular attention to their health and well-being. If health is not taken care of, they cannot do enough work and it leads to loss of productivity and loss of income. In the absence of healthy body and mind, one cannot lead quality life and one cannot take care of one's children. Women require adequate quantity and quality of food and clean drinking water for themselves and their families. In India, there is Public Distribution System; there is also commercial agriculture; further there are many local systems of food security. All these systems, related to enough food and water, have to be studied and due attention has to be paid to each system. Moreover, women have to be provided with accessible health care at minimum cost. Also, necessary facilities have to be provided to their children in matters of wholesome food, education etc.

What is the conclusion and what is needed today?

The number of women in employment is more today than in the fast. Of course, they have their own needs. However women are more economically independent and socially autonomous. In some organisations, inequality is continued, in respect of pay and allowances. It is necessary to bring about necessary changes in practices and attitudes within the organisations and within the society in order to provide equality and to encourage women in employment. **What is needed today is:** (1) to know that women want to understand the world around them, (2) to help women to come up further in their life, (3) to remember the words of Prophet Mohammad about the rights of women: "The rights of women are sacred. See that women are maintained in the rights atributed to them" and (4) to give due importance to the words of Payal Chanania about the best practices regarding women in employment.

Best practices range from realistic workloads, child care facilities, flexible work options (part-time, telecommute, job sharing, customised schedules), healthy work/life balance, maternity leaves and facilitating return to work to financial planning services, concierge services and other thoughtful benefits. The supportive, gender-inclusive and anti-discriminatory tone of the policies provides a much-needed platform for women to enhance their potential and carve successful careers. (*THE HINDU, OPPORTUNITIES* 7 Mar. 2012)

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