



Problems Faced by Working Women in India - An Overview

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ABSTRACT

Social attitude to the role of women lags much behind the law. This attitude which considers women fit for certain jobs and not others colours those who recruit employees. Thus women find employment easily as nurses, doctors, teachers the caring and nurturing sectors, secretaries or in assembling jobs-the routine submissive sectors. But even if well qualified women engineers or managers or geologists are available, preference will be given to a male of equal qualification. A gender bias creates an obstacle at the recruitment stage itself. When it comes to remuneration the law proclaims equality but it is seldom put into practice. The inbuilt conviction that women are capable of less work than men or less efficient than men governs this injustice of unequal salaries and wages for the same job. The age old belief of male superiority over women creates several hurdles for women at their place of work. Women on the way up the corporate ladder discover that they must be much better than their male colleagues to reach the top. Once at the top male colleagues and subordinates often expect much greater expertise and efficiency from a woman boss than from a male boss. Conditioned by social and psychological tradition women colleagues too don't lend support to their own sex. Working in such conditions inevitably put much greater strain on women than what men experience. These problems tend to make women less eager to progress in their careers. This article based on secondary data. In this article I have try to explain the real condition of Indian working women and also make an effort to clear main problems of working women. A woman's work is not merely confined to paid employment. She has to almost always shoulder the burden of household chores as well. A woman could still bear up with these problems if she had control over the money she earns. But in most families even now her salary is handed over to father, husband or in-laws. So the basic motive for seeking employment of getting independence is nullified in many women's case.

KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION:

The financial demands on the Indian families are becoming raise day by day. 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 centres or BPOs.

Working women in India are faced with lot more challenges than their counterparts in the other parts of the world. In India men do not share on most of the 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 more harder. They have to take up a 9 to 5 job plus handle all the household chores that they handled as a homemaker. Men's role has not changed much. 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 harassment's 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.

PROBLEMS FACED BY WORKING WOMEN IN INDIA:

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.Discrimination at Workplace:

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.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.

3. Safety of Working Women While Traveling:

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.

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.

CONCLUSION

Technological advancement results in retrenchment of women employees. No one thinks of upgrading their skills. Maternity leave is seldom given. 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. 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. This typecast role model continues to 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.

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