

URBAN WORKING WOMEN IN THE REFLECTION OF INDIAN SOCIETY

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Urban working women in the modern India are well-educated, independent, employed, alert and far more energetic. They are marching ahead to men in all the fields. Though they are struggling high by maintaining a balance between the duties and obligations, but still a question always comes to my mind that How far in reality a woman has achieved gender equality and empowerment? In my daily routine, I come across different situations where a woman is well educated, settled, sincere and dutiful but still she faces numerous challenges and problems in life due to the dual responsibilities and expectations. In some of the cases practically witnessed by me, I feel sorry for the creator of the world-The lady. Hence, this paper made an attempt to pen down the problems and issues faced by working women in India. The objective also includes the key attributes and the factors that have made the life of a woman, so miserable. A mixed approach is used for the research of this article like self- experiences face to face interviews, daily discussions, news headlines etc. At the end the paper provides certain solutions that can reduce the challenges and conflict in the life of a working women.

INTRODUCTION

The life of women has been subject to considerable changes from the ancient to medieval and from medieval to the present times. In modern times Women are far more independent and are aware of their rights and duties. But, it is still confined to the urban areas only. In the rural areas a majority of women remain unaware of their rights and duties, so the empowerment of women in India is highly unbalanced and with huge gaps. Though the constitution of India has given right of equality, dignity, and freedom from discrimination to the women and she is given the right to get good education, work like men, enjoy high social status and equality in the society, but how far it has achieved in reality? The woman in India is continuously facing stiff challenges and social resistance even in the 21st century. No one can deny that Indian society is still patriarchal in nature, and men are still considered the sole “bread-winner of the family”. In this paper an attempt is made to find out the problems faced by urban working women in India. The main focus is confined to the middle and lower class working women as they are the great sufferers.

Indian women though is putting her complete efforts to be like men, independent, educated, self-earning, joining hands with her partner everywhere but still she is a women, a house maker, a cook and nothing else. All men now wish to have a working wife to share his responsibilities but he never wishes to share the responsibilities of his wife. Ultimately it is the women’s duty to take care

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of the entire family despite she is working like men. Hence, working women who constitute more than half of the world's work force are facing wide problems. The emergence of middle class women as working women is a recent phenomenon. The problems of working women are multidimensional and they differ from person to person. The women living in joint, nuclear, modern and orthodox families suffer from different problems.

Her responsibilities and challenges have raised and toughened her life. Though she is multi-tasking, struggling between career, managing family, husband, house, society, maintaining personal health, dreams and desires, balancing between so many duties and challenges, a woman faces abundant troubles every day. In a nutshell working women can only work if she is strong enough to face all the challenges and without attending the useless talks of the people around.

Fogarty and Rapoport (1971) in their study on the family and working life of qualified women in top jobs found the following dilemmas.

- 1) Dilemmas arising from sheer overload.
- 2) Dilemmas produced by conflicts in relations due to expectations.
- 3) Dilemmas due to demands of different relations at different times.
- 4) Dilemmas caused by conflicts within ourselves to be a good mother, good wife, good daughter and so on.

Promilla Kapur (1974) in her study, found that the problems are of 3 types. Environmental, social and psychological. In each of them the problems arise due to strained situations at home and at workplace. In turn, they are due to two factors; one is the concern, and other is the practical difficulty of combining the dual commitment. The author broadly divided the problems faced by working women into two spheres:

- (a) Problems at home.
- (b) Problems at work place.

(a) Problems at home

Women is considered equivalent to men in the constitution of India. The contributions of women to the nation and the society cannot be measured in figures. The urban working women all over the country have excelled men in all the spheres. Despite the fact they are discriminated everywhere. Today in the world of inflation, it is very difficult for men to provide basic facilities and to fulfill the desires of the family single handed. He always needs a helping hand from her partner to support him. So he prefers to have a working partner to live a comfortable life. Moreover Life is a precious gift given to humans by God so the utilization of one's life lies in his or her own hands. All the creatures have been made special by the creator only we have to search our talent and make the best use of it. As women are not inferior to men so today every women wants to excel like men, but she forgets that first she

is a women. The double income does liberate financial constrains and self-denial but creates many problems too. So the basic problems of working women start from her own home.

(i) Dual Responsibility: The major problems for working women arise out of the dual responsibility. She has to take care of all the house work and at the same time be careful in office work too. Though the employment of women is accepted but the duties of the women at home are not totally ignored. The household people didn't want to share her duties. So right from the morning till night she is busy will all the household works like preparing breakfast, packing lunch, dressing the children, taking care of other household works etc. and at last she is free to move to the office. In the evening again it is her duty to prepare tea, attends her children and other family members, prepare dinner and again ready for the morning schedule. In the meantime other rubbish talks from the in-laws family, their demands, expectations and many more. All this unhealthy environment of ego, interference and jealousy are the major issues that really cause a great depression in the life of a woman. If the husband is helping and feeling sympathy with his wife, he is blamed as a "henpacked" husband (Urmila Patel, 1988). The rude behavior of the family with their own son creates a great chaos and ultimately affects the married life. Women all over the world have to face problem of adjustment among their varied role expectations. Due to the dual demands of home and work they are liable to face adjustment problems. These types of circumstances require the redefinition of duties, roles and expectations. Moreover both the husband and wife have to take their personal decisions by introspecting the circumstances of their life. A woman can only perform the dual responsibility well if she will get cooperation from the family otherwise the problems will definitely become worse.

(ii) Dual Role Demand: A woman has to perform dual roles at different places. The workplace treats all employs at equal state and the demands and expectation at the workplace are according to the profile at which one is working. They are least bothered about the gender whether men or women. So to perform duties according to the desired position one has to be efficient, courageous, firm, independent, confident, competitive, and hard too to meet the targets she is expected to behave like an officer straight forward and non sentimental. In addition to all this a women is expected to be soft, tender, gentle, non-commanding, adjusting, not too intelligent and Domestic. So a kind of conflict arises while performing the duties at two different places. Further religious rituals and customary practices are expected to be preserved and perpetuated by the women (Krishna Chakraborty, 1978). The typical women though she has move out to earn like men but it is very difficult for them to adjust life by balancing the both. It is always a life of compromise. The two roles, the role of employee and of a home-maker, are distinct and different in nature. So the solution to this problem is the maintenance of balance between the two roles. Every working women who will perform both the duties at

different places with the required features patiently can live a stress free life otherwise conflicts can never be solved as she is living in the male dominated society.

(iii) Children: Children always have to face many problems in life if the mother is working. The crucial state of the women is at the time of her pregnancy, baby birth time and early time of the growth and development. During her pregnancy, If she is not feeling well she will take a leave without pay and deduction in salary again creates stress. Moreover the problems before & after delivery also creates tension. Once you give birth to a child that is the most amazing time you wish to enjoy that period. Than a small baby never allows you to enjoy that period. Than a small baby needs her mother all the time. where working women can't afford so takes the help of some family member, maid or crèche .So all the decisions are taken only and only under compulsion .The children are taken by moms from the crèche or other places in the evening. When she is fully exhaust from the workplace and again her duties starts. If the children are grown up then getting up early with mothers. Taking breakfast in Tiffin and lunch and sometimes even the dinner is packed in the morning itself. So those children prefer to go for out snacks which really spoils the health of children .So the women has to take right them from her duties towards children and it can only be done by taking a sour sip. But to the inner soul of a mother always hurts one as to hear it and adjust to the situation. The children whose mother are working can't enjoy those facilities as compare to the house mothers. It is also seen in many cases that a hired mother has not that efficiency and patience in the evening to spent time with her children where now she is burdened with the household work. So all those situations creates a feeling of guilty, anxiety, depression and health problems due to dual concern and commitment.

(iv) Restriction of Movements: One of the problems faced by married working women is that they cannot travel or go on tours without having to answer uncomfortable questions by most of their friends and family. This is especially true for married women, who also have a flourishing career. Their professional obligations often depend on the support and understanding of family members. A married man can go on long official tours outside his home city, without raising eyebrows and questions from his family members and peers, but his equally-successful wife would face disapproval. As a result, women often have to opt out of jobs than involve travel or settle for not being promoted as a result.

(v) Time Problem: The working Women always faces the shortage of time. She always lacks time for her relaxation, amusement and entertainment. She is a multi-tasker. I have often seen working women watching TV while washing clothes or by working in the kitchen. She lacks time to take care of herself. She even does not have time to spent with her relatives and friends. Sometimes she is helpless when she is not even able to spare time for her loving ones at the time of their

illness, occasions, ceremonies etc. (Anil Dutta Mishra, 1994:51) All this leads to health issues, mental Stress, Depression and at last early ageing. So it is difficult for working women to find time for herself growth and development too.

(b) Problems at Workplace

The atmosphere at the workplace, attitude of the fellow workers, kind of work, timings of work, distance from the house are the key factors that creates a lot of problems in the lives of working women (Ibid, 56).

(i) Relationship with colleagues: The efficiency of a working woman is always suspected especially in the upper class cadres, even though other qualifications are equal, men are preferred. The authorities are doubtful whether she would be able to handle male subordinates, take independent decisions, cope with crisis and manage her duties. Even though she has proved her efficiency, they think twice before promoting her. Even if she is given a chance, There is always a remark that she has been taken because she is a woman. The male co-workers in the office cannot mentally accept the superiority of the woman's work. They take extra pains to ridicule her. In this situation she feels helpless and often breaks down. This further leads to the misconception that women are not fit for outside work.

(ii) Office and family: There is another type of problem which arises when a woman has to work over-time to complete her work. In certain Govt. jobs the woman employee also faces transfers; she finds it difficult to go, having the family behind. If she is married, she cannot go leaving her husband and children. In such a situation, generally she has to give up the job. If she is unmarried, the parents would not permit her to go alone. If she is married and working, she has to leave the job if her in-laws do not approve of her working. In some cases, Women have to leave the job, When the children are too young and there is nobody in the family to look after them. Unfortunately, in our country the system of part time jobs have not developed yet.

(iii) Not much choice: Another notable problem for the working woman is that they do not get jobs in the fields of their interest. They have to accept the work they get. The professional woman have their own problems. As she is professionally trained, she aspires to utilize her skills, to put up the best performance and to earn a proper income. But the in-laws do not accept her working. In this way many women Doctors, Engineers and Technicians leave their profession after marriage or do work for limited hours for pleasures only. The composition of staff at the work place also creates problems. Some traditional families in India, for example, would like their women to be posted exclusively in a girl's college or school.

(iv) Problem of transport: The present transport system is far from satisfactory; generally women have to suffer the worst due to misconduct or eve-teasing by co-passengers. Sometimes they have to wait for hours on the bus stop to board a bus. Even when the bus comes, due to it being over-crowded she is not

able to catch it. Even in the train the position is not good. At the present there is only one ladies' compartment in local trains in cities like Bombay and Delhi, and that too, is often occupied by men. In short the above mentioned problems are the major problems which are faced by urban working women in India.

CONCLUSION

It is thus concluded that the working women, married or unmarried, belonging to middle class, face varied types of problems at home and work places. Almost all of these problems are not of her own creations at all. Much of it is based on the continuing notions of the society, its patriarchal values as internalized by men and women, and their expectations of the women's contribution to home work. Her notions of duty for the children, are borne out of the values and expectations built into her from childhood. The responsibility of solving them, hence, should belong to the men and society though the working often tends to believe herself to be responsible. The need of the hour is that the man should come forward and give up their male ego and should make women free from exploitations.

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