Chapter 2

Status of Women employees: Past Scenario & Present conditions

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Status of women employees: Past Scenario & Present conditions

Concepts:

Women possess unlimited potential energy in the form of physical, mental and social capacities. Existence and survival of home, society, nation and even human may collapse without women. Various studies have proved that women are more sincere, honest and loyal towards their work and duties. Optimum utilization of this potential can help any economy in attainment of sustainability up to a high degree. Working women handles all the complexity of household and working life and yet give best of their performance. This has reversed the age-old hypothesis of men women theory.

Women Through ages:

India is country with a varied cultures and societies. But through all its regions status of a female seems more or less
same. Balanced on the perception of freedom, more earthy than spiritual, more wise than sensitively emotional, the urban women of 21st century is no longer enmeshed in the world of fantasy but is more practical and down to earth. She is more aware about her caliber, technical, managerial and other working skills and is moving towards new achievements in all directions of productivity, efficiency and efficacy.

But the picture is not the same for semi urban or rural females. They still in their hearts and minds have a thinking that they are on the earth to manage and perform all household activities and their identity is by performing all the duties for their husband, children and other family members and their life is meaningful if they die prior to their husband (?).

Since initiation of civilization and corporate world; women are working along with men with a high degree of changes in working areas, working methodologies, technologies and tools. Since Pre Vedic period females are contributing in one or the other way to the growth or sustainability of economy and most of holy books give evidence to that by its stories. Females have gone through various changes in working areas and conditions. In Indian scenario conditions have not much changed since independence especially for the female and their work areas.
They are still afraid of moving to technical areas or the work areas where usual shifts are not granted. Now the trend is changing under the current economic reforms captioned by three words Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG)- currently in the second phase. There has been a slight increase in the total female population of the country, from 407.1 million (48.1 percent of total population) in 1991 to 495.7 million (48.3 percent ) in 2001 and growth rate of female population for the decade 1991-2001 was 21.79 percent which was .86 percent points higher than that of total population. Literacy or the ability to read and write is the first step towards formal education. Female literacy rate is continuously improving over the years. Literacy level of females in India has risen from 39.29 percent in 1991 to 54.16 percent in 2001, yet gender gap in literacy continues to be very high at 22 percent points. The female literacy rate in rural areas is 47 where as it is 73 in urban areas. ¹

Women as Human Resource:

Remember Human Resource is no more a commodity. Increased literacy rate has made female more thoughtful about using their
working skills that has increased female work participation rate from 19.7 percent in 1991 to 25.7 percent in 2001, still it is much lower than the male participation and there are wide regional variations amongst various states of the country. Women share in the organized workforce has also shown an increasing trend. Following tables shows the rate of female participation in various sectors during past three decades:

Table 2.1

**Women in organized sector** (Figures in Million)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>2.8 (12.2 %)</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>3.8 (14.1%)</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>4.8 (17.2%)</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Primary Source: Director General of Employment and Training, Ministry of Labour, GOI, New Delhi.
Table 2.2

**Women in Public sector** (Figures in Million)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1.5 (9.7 %)</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>2.4 (12.3%)</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2.8 (14.5%)</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Primary Source: Director General of Employment and Training, Ministry of Labour, GOI, New Delhi.

Table 2.3

**Women in Government sector** (Figures in Million)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>1.2 (11.0 %)</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1.6 (14.6%)</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Primary Source: Director General of Employment and Training, Ministry of Labor, GOI, New Delhi.
Above tables shows that females have increased in total number in various sectors of organized work force but the increase is marginal if compared with men population in these sectors. Females are still more towards organized sector and government sector work areas. Reasons may be many like easy scheduling of work; comfortable working conditions; regular jobs and good economic status provided by these sectors, yet these figures are very low, compared with number of educated females in the country. The representation of females in decision making through premier services viz., the Indian Administrative Services and Indian Police Services, which stood 5.4 percent in 1987 raised to 7.6 percent in 2000 that again shows a marginal increase which is not satisfactory in comparison to male population as well as in comparison to number of females educated during this period.

**Working Women in India:**

If we trace the history it can be very well judged that women has passed through the transitory stage leading to its complete transformation from illiteracy to education (Professional/Non Professional qualification) through literacy.
Education has been identified as a major tool for rising the status of women and dynamic changes in attitude towards female education has helped in motivating females to think about their being working in increased number.

Despite a large number of women going out to work in industries though selective industries are still not able to use their potentials due to lack of job security. A large proportion of female workers are associated with the units where trade unions don't exist.

The study entitled “industrial restructuring and women worker lives” divided female workers into seven major categories, namely, Protected secure, above minimum wage standard; Protected secure, within minimum wage standard; Unprotected secure, above minimum wage standard; Unprotected marginally secure, within minimum wage standard; Unprotected insecure within minimum wage standard; Unprotected insecure below minimum wage standard; and destitute worker. Destitute workers are defined as temporary; contract and home based workers with no written contract; no legally entitled benefits and no trade union organizations.\(^2\)

In India approximate 50% of the total population is constituted by female, the business world is still dominated by males. In
India, since ages, women have been managers of kitchen and household activities; general attitude is that female should work in non-technical and soft jobs.\(^3\)

The current Dataquest-Jobs Ahead study—conducted among 1.5 million Indian IT professionals—found that women constitute over 19% of the total workforce at lower levels (up to three years of experience). The number drops to 6% of the senior workforce that is with more than 10 years of experience.

The IT industry is one of the largest employers of women and has seen a significant increase in the number of women making a mark. One finds that the going is smooth from the fresher to the team leader and project leader stage.

Due to non-availability of equal education opportunities there is great disparity between male and female literacy rate. This factor doesn't let female population to be aware about use of their working skills. Educated class of females is usually are employed in teaching, medicine, law, public service, fine arts, literature, sports and other such professions which are less challenging. A rural woman who works in farms constitutes almost 70%-80% of female population in India. Significant increase is there in employment of middle classes, who are working in secretarial, administrative capacity and other alike.
services requiring less technical skills. Why there are just a few women at the top can be explained to some extent by the fact the number of women joining at lower levels itself is quite low. The demands of high responsibility may also play a role in keeping women from accepting such jobs. "Women have traditionally shied away from sales responsibilities," says Gita Dang, head of technology practice at Korn & Ferry, "because it involves a great deal of travel." (Data Quest Survey)⁴. 

Economically, women are making progress but it is not remarkable. The majority of females earn on an average three fourth pay of males for the same work. An ILO report in 1980 states that, "Women are 50% of the world’s population, do the two third of world’s work hours, receive 10% of world’s income area and own less than 1% of world property. All because of an accident of birth".⁵ "A good work-life balance would be most critical for encouraging women in pursuing their careers instead of abandoning them early," says Anu Sharma, V-P, HR, Quintant Corporation.⁶ 

"Women make up nearly 70 percent of world’s poor and 65 percent of the world’s illiterate. Women work longer hours and are paid an average 25 percent less than men, but have made significant gains in entering formally male dominated jobs in
the global labor force”, says a new report by the International Labor Organization.

In 1990, the Commission on the Status of Women decided to include "Women in international decision-making" on the agenda of its thirty-ninth session in 1995 as the priority theme under the rubric "Peace".

It is estimated that the invisible work of housewives contribute nearly one third of India’s Gross National Product. The household activities are not counted in the list of economic activities and therefore not counted as employment. Over the last few decades’ women are increasingly being conscious of their existence, their rights and their work situation. They are getting away from the beaten track and are exploring new avenues of economic participation.

Talking about the unique work demands of an industry like BPO, Arjun Vaznaik, chief operating officer of Tracmail says: "It is not uncommon for companies to provide facilities such as childcare during work hours."7

The biggest challenge for organizations is to be sensitive to family and social pressures under which women have to work.

"Organizations should be sensitive to the needs of their women employees. They are wives, mothers and homemakers amongst
other significant roles that they play. Various organizational policies must be drafted with these points in mind," says Rajashekhar.8

Finally, despite all the good work that HR department may put in to create truly women-sensitive work environments, the decision to quit still lies with the woman herself. And this is where her personal choices and ambitions come into play, something which HR departments can influence only to a limited extent. The above findings emphasize women as a gifted resource existing and developing as asset to the organization.
References:

1. Aruna Goel, Organization & Structure of Women Development & Empowerment, P 16.

2. Industrial restructuring and women worker lives, report published in Hindustan Times, June 1997

3. Statements in the commission on the status of women General debate at United Nation; Statement by Asha Das, Secretary, Deptt. Of Women and Child Development, March 6, 1998


7. ibid

8. ibid