

Developing Women Leadership: Cases of Indian Women

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Abstract—This paper attempts to understand the women leadership cases with special reference to Indian Women. These women who have risen to the top and have succeeded are the ones who have faced a lot of challenges and problems. However being in the organized sector where they were working overcame those challenges and made a niche for themselves.

Keywords: Women Leadership, Challenges

1. INTRODUCTION

India is the second most populous country in the world, with over 1.27 billion people (2014). It is developing in every aspect ranging from education to infrastructure to social equality to soaring economy but it still demonstrates the image of male dominating country where very few number of women are allowed to work beside them so that they can retain their domination in the society.

Men, who have been brought up by their mothers, have grown up with their sisters still have ego issues with female boss. If Indian trends were to be analysed, it will be found that women score far better marks and have more impressive CVs than men. They are placed well compared to male counterparts in the beginning of their careers but as soon as they start posing threat to male dominance their growth is suppressed, their promotions are delayed and in this quest they soon start losing their zeal to work. In fact, there is a huge gender pay gap which further derives women from their work. Even if a woman reaches all this and manages to find her on a respectable position, her authority is constantly questioned and lewd remarks are passed on her.

The challenges and problems faced by women in workplace is not only limited to women in unorganized sector but in formal organizations too. For instance, out of top Fortune 500 companies, Microsoft and Google are all-male companies. A survey by Catalyst found that 10% of Fortune 500 companies employ zero women on their board. Currently women hold only 4.6% (i.e. 23) position as CEOs in Fortune 500 companies. The main question of this study is how long these

businesses can be successful if they are hiring only from half of the talent available.

Right now, Indian society is at a confused stage where men prefer a working partner but do not want to participate in household chores. Women have to work twice as hard as men at work place along with managing the household all by themselves. They are working in highly pressurized environment to make a balance between their personal and work life and this kind of lifestyle builds stress. A recent survey by Nielsen Pvt. Ltd revealed that Indian women are most stressed out in the world: 87% of Indian women feel stressed out most of the time.

In the last few years women empowerment is a burning issue. Both educated men and women are coming together to break the long run notion of patriarchy and to attain equal rights for both genders. Everyone now, is in support of feminism. In Year 2014 and 2015 promise of gender equality seems closer. A new report by Pew Research Centre shows numbers and statistics of women leaders came up in last few years. It is tempting to read the report. Numbers are increasing but they are still staggeringly low. But still not only are women subjected to exploitation but are also tortured physically, sexually and mentally.

2. MENTAL HARASSMENT

It's an old conviction that women are less capable and inefficient in working or earning money as compared to men and this attitude holds her back in the work place. In spite of so many constitutional provisions and legal laws gender biasness still creates obstacles in their recruitment. Plus this attitude also governs injustice of unequal salaries for the same job, thus making them less eager in their careers. The purpose of employment to have independence is crushed in different ways.

3. SEXUAL HARASSMENTS

Today, almost all working women are prone to sexual harassment irrespective of their status, personal characteristics

and the types of their employment. They face sexual harassment on way on transports, at working places, educational institutions, and hospitals, at home and even in police stations when they go to file complaints. It is shocking that the law protectors are violating and outraging modesty of women. Public transport system is overcrowded and women become easy targets for physical harassment. Most of the women tend to be concentrated in the poor service jobs whereas men are in an immediate supervisory position, which gives them an opportunity to exploit their subordinate women. It is a difficult situation for woman if the higher officer demands sexual favours. If refused the boss takes out other means to make her life miserable. There have been several cases of sexual harassment recently involving even the senior women officials. If a woman is praised for her work or promoted on merit, her colleagues do not hesitate to attribute it to sexual favours. This psychological pressure can easily lead to a woman resigning from her job. In our society, most cases of sexual abuse go unreported because of the trauma and the social stigma attached to it. In the recent past, various guidelines, resolutions have been made to broaden the definition of sexual exploitation. There must be gender equality which includes protection from harassment and right to work with dignity. Sexual harassment of female at the place of work is incompatible with her dignity and needs to be eliminated. Appropriate steps must be taken by employers or persons in charge of workplaces, public or private sector, to ensure safe working atmosphere for women. Appropriate work conditions must be provided in respect of work, health and hygiene to further ensure that there is no hostile environment towards women at workplaces. If we want to see a society free of sexual harassment, there is need of changing the mind-set of the society. Simply enacting laws is not sufficient. So, the political structure should be altered to achieve the goal.

Not only these, Then there are the structural problems involved with women having children. In Brigid Schulte's fine book "Overwhelmed", she describes some of the double-standards mothers' face in the workplace. Research has found that pregnant women are perceived as "less authoritative and more irrational, regardless of their actual performance". Mothers are often seen as less committed to work than non-mothers. Fathers, meanwhile, are not only viewed as equally competent as men without children, but also significantly more committed to work. As a result, while mothers are often penalised for their family commitments, fathers tend to be "recommended for management training more than men without children." Researchers describe this phenomenon as a "motherhood penalty" and "fatherhood bonus". And this is without considering some of the complications of parental leave and child care, which disproportionately affect female workers.

In the light of these problem how it is possible that we our having such long discussions and debates on female leadership. It is hard to account for the discrepancy between the research and the reality. Plain sexism isn't a satisfying

answer since people actually seem to think women *are* competent leaders. Perhaps it is biasness in our mind that our actions still haven't caught up with our enlightened views. We *claim* to hold equitable views—they know these are the right views to have, much like most people will certainly say they are not racist. But converting such views into practice is another matter entirely

This is loss for women of course. But it's also a social and economic loss for people and business generally. Research shows that everyone does better when women share the reins of power. Ms Sandberg and Mr Grant hammer this in "Start-ups led by women are more likely to succeed; innovative firms with more women in top management are more profitable; and companies with more gender diversity have more revenue, customers, market share and profits."

4. INDIAN WOMEN AT THE TOP

1. Indra Nooyi

This superstar CEO and chair of PepsiCo has earned a top-20 spot on the list of the World's 100 Most Powerful Women since 2006. Last year she returned \$5.6 billion to shareholders and net revenue grew 14% to \$66 billion.

2. Chanda Kochhar

As the MD and CEO of ICICI bank Kochhar oversees nearly \$125 billion in assets and recently announced an 18% increase in profits over last year. She has been credited with leading a remarkable transformation at the firm, which experienced major setbacks after 2008 financial crisis. Under her stewardship, the ICICI Group crossed the Rs 10,000 cr net profit mark in 2013/14 and is clearly back on the growth path. Now Kochhar, who has got a three-year extension, is not averse to inorganic growth.

3. Kiran Mazumdar Shaw

CMD, Biocon Ltd

In January, her company's partnership with Mylan helped launch a bio similar and a targeted therapy to treat certain types of breast cancers in India, a first of its kind in the world. In June, she became the fourth Indian to be awarded the Global Economy Prize for Business by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy in Germany.

4. Zia Mody

Managing Partner, AZB & Partners

She has been called "an institution in herself" by Chambers and Partners. Merger market ranked Mody's law firm as the most active Indian legal advisor by volume for 2013. In the first quarter of 2014, AZB & Partners has already helped facilitate deals worth over a billion dollars.

5. Renu Sud Karnad

MD, HDFC

Under her leadership, the company reported a net profit of Rs 5,440 cr in FY14, up 12 per cent from the previous year. She is also among the highest paid women heads of a company with a compensation of Rs 7.16 cr during FY14.

6. Preetha Reddy

Executive vice chairperson, Apollo Hospitals Enterprise

She was the MD until recently when her father Prathap C. Reddy announced new designations and roles for his four daughters. He has always maintained that his eldest daughter Preetha, 57, will be his successor. Though not a medical doctor like her father, what may work for Preetha is her approach to work with the doctors rather than leading them.

7. Rita Bhagwati

Board member of GE Shipping. She is Indian advisor on economic and finance for the Washington based Bower Group in Asia. Before BGA she served as the regional economist for South Asia at International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank's private sector arm.

Recently loss making Tata Teleservice revamped its board and inducted 3 independent directors on its board and 2 of them are woman. In February 2014 SEBI has given directive to 200 BSE companies to include woman director on their board. This story of first-time-woman directors on company board is not only of grit and passion but of a large talent pool being noticed for the first time

Such results seem to support gender equity, but clearly numbers aren't enough to change corporate behaviour. We resist letting femininity and power go hand-in-hand; a female leader still strikes us as unnatural on emotional level. At the end of the day, we simply lack enough compelling models for what female power should look like. This should change as more women manage to break into leadership roles. Soon, perhaps, a powerful woman won't appear threatening or aspirational, but simply normal.

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