

STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN IN PUBLIC SECTOR UNIT (With special reference to Bharat Electronics)

J. P. PACHAURI¹ AND USHA RAWAT²

¹Department of Sociology, H.N.B. Garhwal University, Srinagar Garhwal

²Department of Sociology, H.N.B. Garhwal University Campus, Tehri Garhwal

Received: 10.8.2010

Revised: 28.09.2010

Accepted: 15.10.2010

ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted on women to find out the contribution of employment in their status-role sets and how they were able to adjust their dual responsibilities. The study is descriptive one and based on the changes in the status and role of the women due to their gainful employment in Bharat Electronics, Kotdwara Garhwal of Uttarakhand situated in the foothills of Himalaya. 50 working women were selected by random stratified sampling for the present study. The socio-economic background was assessed in terms of caste, age, marital status, education, occupation and number of children etc. Majority of women (54%) under study belonged to age group of 27-29 years and 22% were in the age group of 24-26 years. The caste of working women was considered as per reservation criteria.

Key words- Working Women, Public Sector, Bharat Electronics

INTRODUCTION

Indian women proved not only that they were second to none in proficiency of doing any work earlier meant for men but they also proved to be so by doing all sorts of work effectively, under all circumstances and any time of history.¹ Independence and India's partition gave an opportunity to Indians to frame a secular, democratic Constitution and this advanced the cause of women. After 1947, there was an acceptance of professional life for women. The increase in number of industries, a result of the creation of public sector undertakings by the government, gave more women an opportunity to work.

According to J. L. Nehru, 'the creation of Public Sector Undertaking by the Government proved the greatest revolution in the country which affects the status and living condition of its women.'² As per the data in 1971 there were only 19 lacs women who were working outside but in 1993 their strength increased to 40.7 lacs of which 24.7 lacs (68%) were working in public sectors and 16 lacs (32%) were having job in private sectors.³ Public sector employment is mainly provided by the State Governments, local bodies and public undertakings.⁴

The present study is viewed in the perspective of wider process of this social change in the country. The women whose status and role was traditionally well defined and almost fixed are experiencing the impact of change. So, this study is conducted to find out the contribution of employment

in their status-role sets and how they are able to adjust their dual responsibilities. This study is descriptive one and based on the changes in the status and role of the women due to their gainful employment in Bharat Electronics, Kotdwara Garhwal of Uttarakhand situated in the foothills of Himalaya. 50 working women are selected by random stratified sampling for the present study.

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE WOMEN

In the present study, the socio-economic background of women was assessed in terms of caste, age, marital status, education, occupation and no. of children etc. In this study majority of women (54%) belong to age group of 27-29 years. There are 22% women who belong to 24-26 years. The present sample consists of the working women of all castes as per the reservation criteria for different castes. As the fig 1 reveals, majority of women (80%) belong to higher castes while 20 % of them belong to lower castes of SCs or STs. Data regarding religion of the women also collected for the present study. As the figure 1.0 shows a bulk of the women (96%) belong to Hindu religion while only 4% of women belong to other religions. There are only 2% women belonging to Sikh religion and 2% women belong to Christian religion.

Marital status is an important variable in understanding women's status in society. As the sample consists of the women having age group from 24 years to 45 years, majority of the women (80%) are married. There are found 16% of the women who are unmarried and 4% belong to the other categories i.e. of widows, divorcees or separated.

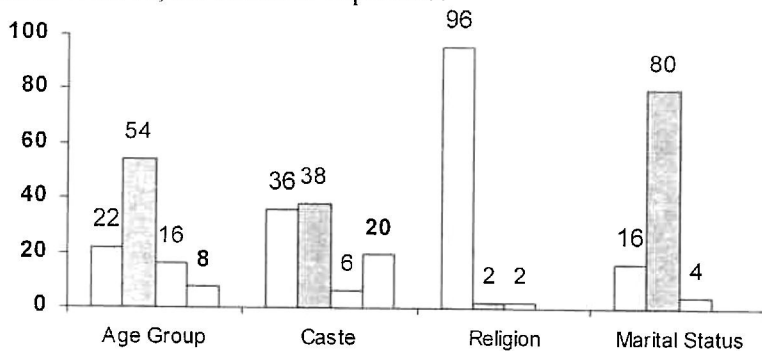


Fig. 1: Social Profile of the Women

Education is a basic tool for opening up the opportunities for women to enter in the world of productive work, to participate in the development and to change their life accordingly. It has enabled them to procure job and supplement the income of the family and achieve social status.⁵ Regarding educational qualifications of the women data reveals that working women are well qualified. Education up to high school was a precondition for getting a job in electronic industry, but women in the present sample are found high qualified. Data shows that 82% Women have joined the post of 'Radio Wirers' for which minimum qualifications was high school with science subjects. After the analysis of the data, there is found difference in educational qualifications of the women at the time of joining

company and while data collection. In fact they continued their studies along with their job Fig. 2.0 shows only 56% women were educated up to intermediate while joining company but 38% acquired higher qualification and only 18 % did not study further to increase their academic qualifications. It is also found that there were only 6% women who got post graduation degree while joining company which increase to 34% now. So, it is analyzed that women have had positive attitude towards education.

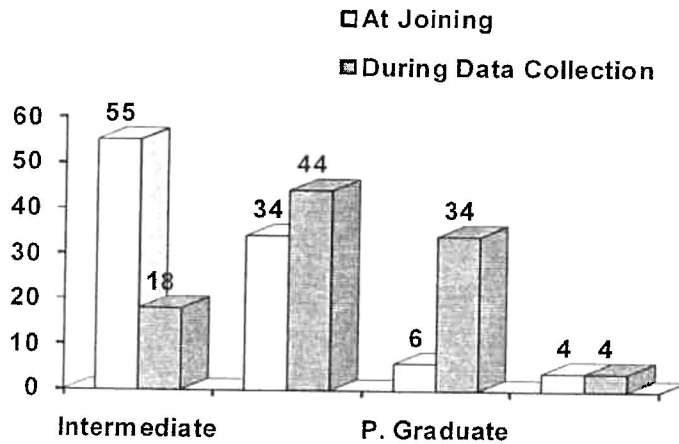


Fig. 2: Educational Status of Women

Data concerning structure of women’s families also collected for the present study. It is found that 54% women reside in nuclear families while 46% women have joint families. It proved the fact that industrialization also affects the structure as people have to leave their native villages for the job and have formed nuclear family.

Occupation, very often, shapes and influences the value system of a person.⁶ And in case of male family members, occupation is true index of social stratification in India.

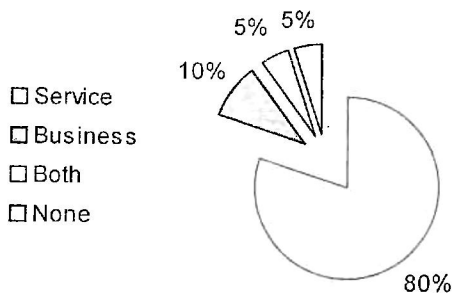


Fig 3 : Occupation of Husband

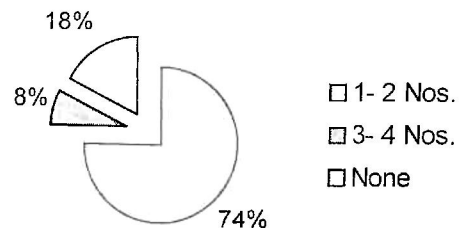


Fig 4 : No. of Children

Data regarding women's husbands also collected in the fig 3. As 40 % women are married, so it is found that 80% of their husbands are serving government or semi-government offices. While, there are 5% women whose husbands are also running business along with their paid jobs. There are also 5% women whose husbands do not have any occupation. So in these 5% of families women are single earner.

The present sample consists of 80% of married women of which 82.5% women are having children. According to number of children women are distributed in five categories as the fig. 4 shows. It is found that 75% of the married women have one or two children. There are 7.5% of the women who have three and four children. 17.5% of the women who do not have any child. So analysis of the data reveals that working women believe in small family. It is also found that women who are aged and less qualified and working as ayas are having three to four children.

As the maximum number of women migrated here from their hometown for gainful employment, they are either residing in company quarters or in the rented house in the town. As the table 1.1 shows 26% women are allotted company quarters and they are residing in it. 32% are living in rented house and 36% are found living in their own houses. These are the women either living in their parental home in the local area or have constructed their own house after joining the Unit. 6% are the women who are living with their relatives.

Table 1: Classification according to residence of the house

S. No.	Type of residence	Number of women	Percentage
1.	Company Quarters	13	26
2.	Rented House	16	32
3.	Own House	18	36
4.	Others	03	06
	Total	50	100

Family income is the main factor which determines the economic status of the family. In the present sample of the study the monthly income of the women is quite good as most of husbands (95%) and wives are doing the job. Fig 5 reflects that majority of the women belong to middle class as 66% of the women have monthly family income up to 20,000. 10% of the women have monthly income is more than Rs. 20, 000. There are only 4% women whose monthly income found less than Rs. 5000. This percentage comprises of the ayas of the company, working as temporary employees.

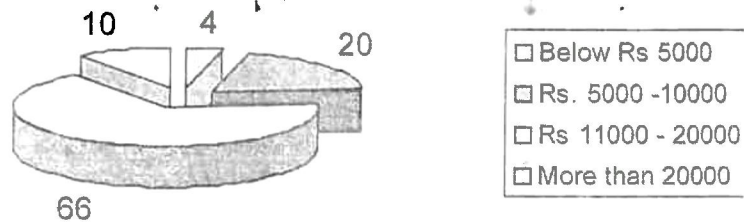


Fig. 5: Monthly income of the women

Working conditions and company facilities

The working hours in a factory are generally for 8 hours a day. The operations of the factory are also performed in three shifts for optimum utilization of the resources. The women employees usually work in general shift from 9 AM to 5 PM. In exceptional circumstances they may be summoned in 'A' shift. They can not work in 'B' or 'C' shifts as in no case they are forced to work beyond 7.00 pm. They have to punch their attendance cards and late comers have to deduct their salary after coming late or on early departure. So, they are paid according to their attendance in the factory. There is no relaxation on factory timing for women workers.

However, they are enjoying harmonious relationship with their seniors and colleagues. And there was found no incident of sexual harassment etc. in the factory till date. The working conditions more or less are the same for both men and women working under same roof. However, women employees did not feel and edge of discrimination. They are found satisfied as long as they are not treated disrespectfully. All the women more or less found satisfied with what they earned under the given situation of skill and education. Women are asked in the present study about working conditions of the unit, 40% of the women consider it as good and 60% viewed it as normal working environment of company. Salary wise it is found that they draw a decent monthly income and have a reasonable level of social security too. Being a public sector unit, Bharat Electronics provides many facilities to its employees. They are getting all the facilities as per Factory Acts. Every employee and his/her dependents get many facilities like medical facility, crèche facility, leaves including special leaves, housing facility, LTC and canteen facility. Besides these facilities, uniforms are annually distributed to all employees. Stitching and footwear charges, washing allowances are paid to them accordingly. Apart from it, company has provided various amenities in its colony for employees and their dependents. There is a community centre and a club in the colony. There are many parks and play grounds, tennis, volleyball and basket ball courts in the colony premises. There is a library and a big auditorium in the community centre to organize various functions.

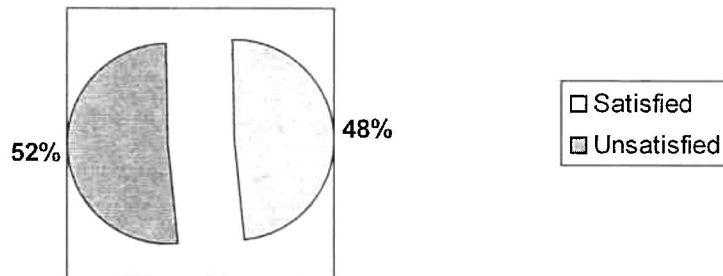


Fig 6: View towards company facility

In the present study, women are also asked about these facilities. It is found that 48% (Fig. 6) of the women are satisfied with company facilities 52% are found unsatisfied with company facilities. 70% of the total satisfied women favor the medical facility as the best. Analysis of the study shows that 92% women have to take leaves without pay after their maternity leaves of 84 days to look after their infants and also for their good health. So long working hours, less holidays and deductions on every short minute in the factory lead to dissatisfaction among them.

Status and Role of the working women

Studies proved that women perform a much greater variety of tasks than men.⁷ we are in the state of transition where women are increasingly sharing the responsibilities of breadwinning for the families but retain charges of most of the household chores.⁸ A woman has many statuses in the family. She has to perform various roles according to her different status in the family. The status of the woman in family mostly depends on her occupation and economic condition. If she is working in higher post than husband/ brother and earning more, her status ultimately becomes higher and at times she may feel it. Women in the present study asked about their status in the family. Table 1 reflects the status of women in their families with respect to their husbands.

Table 2 shows that 85% of the married women are enjoying status equal to their husbands. While 10% admitted they are not treated equal to their husband in the family, 5% told that their status is higher than their husband. These women are the women whose husbands do not have any gainful employment or business. Data are separately collected from women who are unmarried or divorcees or separated. 100% of them agreed that they are enjoying equal status in the families with respect to its male family members.

Table 2: Status of the women in their family

S. No.	Status in the family	No. of respondent	Percentage
1.	Higher than husband	02	05
2.	Equal to husband	34	85
3.	Lower than husband	4	10
Total		40	100

Woman as a home maker

The primary role of women in our society is still considered as wives, mothers, child bears and rears, whatever may be their level of education and professional career.⁹ Data are also collected in the present study about household responsibilities taken in the women's families. It is found that 50% of the married women took chief responsibilities of their household activities. While in the case of 22 % women's families both women and their husbands share the household responsibilities. In the families of 7.5% women their husbands have to take household responsibilities. There are 20% women whose other family members carry out their household responsibilities.

The studies of Dube¹⁰ and Jacobson & Wadley¹¹ have proved that important decisions are taken by men but with the consultation of their wives. It is a truth that most of the working women enjoy better status in their families. So they are mostly involved themselves in families' important decisions. Data in the Fig. 7 shows that 44% women have full participation in the important decisions taken in of their families. While 48% women have 50% share in these decisions. It means 84% women have share in the decision making process fully or with the consultation with their elders or husbands. There are 16% of the women who do not have any say in family matters. Analysis of the data reveals that this percentage includes all unmarried women whose parents take important decisions of the family.

In the present study data are collected regarding responsibility of children's care and education. In the present study, there are total 33 women who are having children. So, as the Table 3 reflects 60.60% of the women take care of their children's education and health. While 21.2% cases women's husband has to look after their children's education. There 18.2% of the women whose other family members like mothers in law look after women's children.

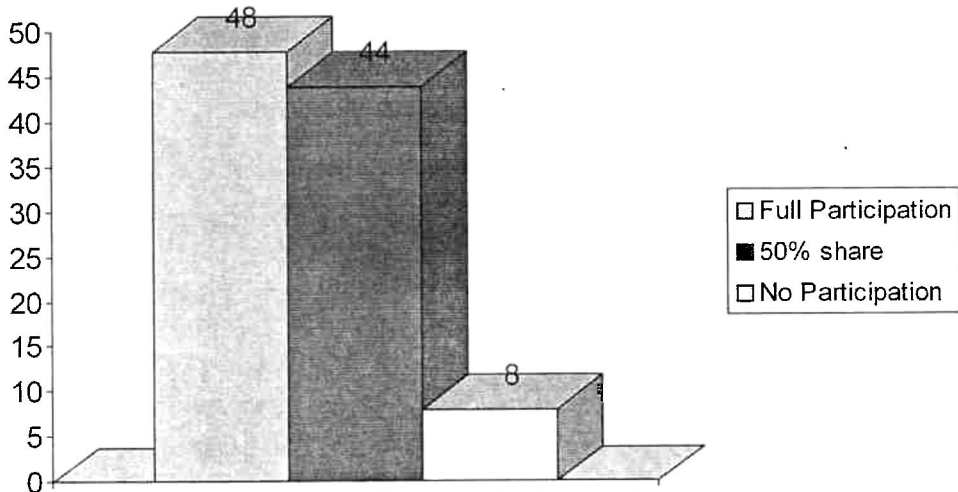


Fig. 7: Partipation in important family decisions

Table 3 : Responsibility of children’s education & care

S. No.	Children look after by	No. of women	Percentage
1.	Women	20	60.60
2.	Husbands	7	21.20
3.	Other family members	6	18.20
Total		33	100.00

Woman as a worker

To enable the functions of various departments, employees are absorbed for different capacities of work. The women are however absorbed for light and intricate jobs in various functions. In the present sample women are selected for different types of job in the industry. As the Table no. 4 shows 86% of the women are employed for the technical job. While 14% are engaged with non-technical jobs i. e. clerical, Ayas, lady searcher etc. 6% women who are working as ayas are employed temporarily while remaining 94% women are working as a permanent employees in the Unit.

Table 4: Classification of women according nature of job

S. No.	Nature of job	No. of Women	Percentage
1.	Technical		
a.	With Degree/Diploma	02	04
b.	Without Degree/Diploma	41	82
2.	Non-technical		
a.	Permanent	04	08
b.	On daily wages	03	06
	Total	50	100

Traditionally, the role of the women confined to the house but the pressing needs, the education of women and the changing trends of outside jobs has enabled women to seek employment opportunity. In the present study qualification of high school passed and age of 18 years was the basic requirement for the job. So, as per the data collected majority (84%) of the women joined the company at the age of not more than 25 years of which there are 56% of the women who joined the company at the tender age of 18-20 years. Although most of the women (48%) joined the workforce due to the economic needs of the family and majority of them continue to work to maintain the level of living. While all the divorcees/ separated and Ayas looked upon their job as socio-economic security. 28 % said that they are doing job to raise their living standard. Women are also asked how they invest/spend their salary. It is found that 94% women spend their pay on their house and child care and education. Only 6% unmarried women told that they spend their pay in savings and to fulfill their general desires.

Participation in trade unions and official committees shows that women are more or less empowered as they represent their women workers and may discuss their problems with management. But the present study proves the report¹² of the committee on the status of women in India and the study of Azad¹³. According to it, trade unions in India did not involve women in substantial numbers till later. The Unit has two trade unions of which 92% women are members. 6% women who are working as temporary employees could not be its members. So, only 2% of the permanent employees are not the members of any trade union. Membership does not necessarily mean active participation in union activity. The women workers recognized the fact that they had benefited from being union's membership in terms of better working conditions, good welfare and solving their personal problems too.

Regarding participation of women in unions, their participation is not very satisfactory. Yet, both unions have reserved at least two posts for them in it. Data regarding their participation in unions and other official committees and councils/ seminar are collected in the study. Table 5 shows that 6% of the women has participated in unions, while 10% of the women has worked as a committees members. There are 4% of the women who has been the members of the official councils and same percent of the women has attended national level seminar of women.

Table 5 Participation of women in Unions and other official committees

S. No.	Participated in	No. of women	Percentage
1.	Trade Unions	03	06
2.	Committees	05	10
3.	Councils	02	04
4.	National Seminar	02	04
Total		12	24

So, it is analyzed that there is low participation of women in these committees. It was due the fact that there are fewer seats for women and also lack of interest of women in these activities due to hard pressing of time. In the present study the performance of the women workers are also assessed. Women generally do the light work of mounting, soldering the PCBs and wiring. So as per their inspection reports most of them do it quite sincerely. Their yield is also found better than male workers in the factory.

Dual responsibility of working woman

A woman worker obviously plays a double role; the traditional feminine role of housewife/ mother or daughter and that of a worker in office. "Her role of housewife/ mother often takes up a lot of her physical and mental energy and leaves very little strength invest in her role as a worker except for working in factory or office a stipulated number of hours"¹⁴ Women take up work outside to escape the drudgery of domestic work and with the hope to improve their status by financial independence while at the same time contributing to family income but end up in sharing double responsibility.¹⁵

In the present study, women are asked whether they have to carry out household chores or not. In the present study data shows 96% women have to do their house work. Only 4% answered in negative. These are all unmarried women who have parents and elders to carry out these activities. It is further analyzed that who assisted them in their house work. Data in the Fig 8 shows that in case of 40% women's families their husbands assisted them in household chores. While in 36% of the women's families their other family members helped them. There are 20% of the women who have to do their

housework themselves and nobody helped them. Only 4% women hired servants to carry out their house work.

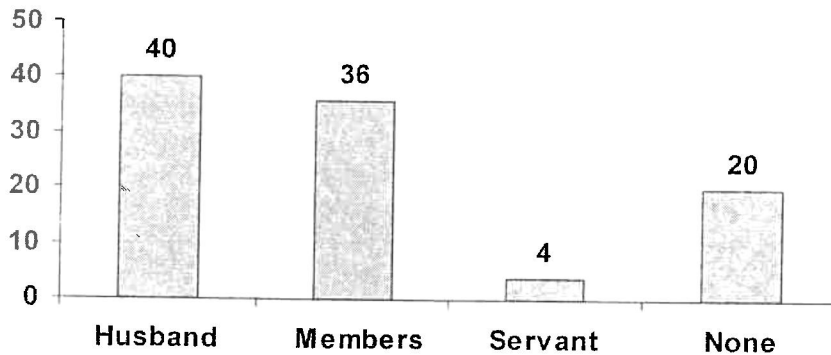


Fig. 8: Assistance in House work

Neglect of household duties for the sake of career of the women is worth noticing. As the working hours in the factory is 8 hours daily, they have to leave many of household works to avoid absenteeism and late timing. In the present study, 54% of the women residing in nuclear families, so they are more responsible for carrying out their household duties. The effect of job on their dual responsibilities and vice-versa is noticed in the present study. In study 68% women accepted the fact that due to their household responsibilities their punctuality and presence are affected. While, 32% denied that they do not have to face such situations due to their house work. This percentage mostly includes unmarried and childless widows.

The effect of office job on their household responsibilities is also studied in the present study. It is found that 90% of the women's household work is affected by their gainful employment. out of which 58% of the women's household duties are occasionally affected by their job. While 32% of the women have to frequently neglect many of their household duties. There are 10% of the women mostly unmarried women accepted that they do not face such conflicting situations.

Role conflict occurs when a person has to play two roles simultaneously within a limited frame of time. The overload of responsibilities and expectations creates situation of imbalance and conflict. In the present study data related to stress and strain of job on their home and vice-versa are collected. Being subjected to dual demands and work she faces crises of adjustment. Often she faces conflicting situations and has to sacrifice the interest of her family for the sake of career and at other her occupational jeopardized because of heavy family responsibilities. The magnitude of household responsibilities varies with the size of family, the number of children and family's financial position.

However, analysis of the data in the present study shows that women are trying to cope of their conflicts by ignoring some of their duties. To resolves the situation they are found devoting more energy and time to their office work in comparison to their traditional role of housewives. They are

found fully aware of the fact that they are neglecting their children and house for the sake of career. So, a working woman is under great mental and physical strain because she can not escape from domestic duties.

For the working women, striking a balance between her family and career is a constant battle against time. Even after splitting her whole day between tough and exerting jobs, working women's duties are never finished. A landmark study reveals that on an average, "women worked roughly 15 hours longer each week than men. And over a year they work an extra month of 24 hours. And even after all this toil, she ends up the day with the feeling of guilt for not effectively satisfying the needs of her home and office.

So, the position of women is not satisfying. There are two solutions to these situations-

1. A social climate reinforced by educational institution and media emphasizing sharing of household work by all members of the family i. e. men, women, girls and boys.
2. Working women to be considered as a special group and to be given favorable working conditions such as flexible working hours, transportation and other welfare facilities.

Conclusion

In the present study, the composite index of social status of the working women reveals that women are enjoying better socio-economic background in their families as well as having favorable conditions in their office. It is also fact that due to establishment of this public sector unit in the backward area like Kotdwara Garhwal, it creates an opportunity for young women to have gainful employment in their local or nearby town.

The present study proved that women got employment to get financial liberty and for minimizing the responsibilities of the unpaid household chores. But none of their purpose of them is seen fulfilled in the present study. In the present study it is found that most of the women found spending their earnings on the house and 96% of the women have to carry out their household jobs of health and home. So, carrying out these dual responsibilities, they faced a problem of role adjustment between their multi roles which led to mental stress among themselves. So, it is found that to adjust their major roles, they have to neglect many of their household duties and in office, they could not be regular and punctual too. Data reveals that 90% women have to neglect their household responsibilities 68% women accepted that their punctuality and attendance are affected by their house hold duties.

The rigorous working hours at home as well as in the factory daily, takes off a lot of physical energy and mental peace in them. They are getting good salary, having favorable working conditions and good facilities but middle class working women are found unsatisfied with their dual demands of home and office. Although, they gave priority to their office work, yet they suffered with a sense of guilt for neglecting their home and children for the sake of their paid job. As per the report in Times of India, 'Most women feel that they are taking something valuable away from their children and that is time.'¹⁶ Thus, they suffer from the sense of guilt for their negligence of household duties including children's care.

It is also found that present educational level of women is good. 82% of them are graduates and 20% of them were having degree and diploma in computer or teaching. So, as per recent data

collected, there has noticed a slow but steady exodus of female employees from the factory. It is found that 10.58 % women have resigned from the company of which 6.34 % got teaching or other official jobs in central of state government. While 11.64 % have got transferred in some other offices of the company in the cities where working hours are quite relaxed.

But the problems still persists with the women employees who have had neither of the options and have to continue their paid job in the company to meet their both ends meet. So, it is the moral and social duty of the men's world to give their women due recognition and favorable working conditions whether it is home or office. Only then she will be able to face challenges ahead.

REFERENCES

- 1.Kiran, Devendra, 1994, 'Changing Status of women in India', Vikas Publication's House Pvt. Ltd. Delhi, p. 44
- 2.Nehru, J. L., 1946, Discovery of India, p. 160
- 3.Jain, Vijaylaxmi, Awareness in Rural Women – A survey, Yojana, Nov 1997, Vol 41 P. 19
- 4.Census of India, 1974, Report on Resurvey on miscellaneous studies, Paper 1, New Delhi
- 5.K. Shanti, 1998, Education Empowers women', in Empowerment of women by Rajkumari Chadrashekran, Anmol Pub. Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, p 78
- 6.Rajeshwari, A., 1996, 'Panchayati Raj in Empowering People-Issues & Solutions, G.Palouithurai, Kanishka Publishers, New Delhi, p.112'
- 7.Sharma, Rajeev & Sharma, R. K., 2000, 'Women & Work in Urban India–An Analysis', Labour & Development, Vol. 6, No. 1 & 2.
- 8.Pore,Kumud,1991, 'Women at work' in Mrs. Nirmala Banerjee (Ed.), 'Indian women in changing industrial scenario', Sage Publication, New Delhi, p.220
- 9.Snehlata Panda, 1997, 'Political efficacy and political Participation', Susheela Kaushik, Women's Participation in Politics', , Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, p 81
- 10.Dube, S.C., "Men's role and Women's roles, A Sociological Review, in B. Ward ed.), Women in the new Asia
- 11.Jacobson, Doranne & Wadley Susan S., 1986, 'Women in India' Manohar Publications, New Delhi
- 12.Report of the committee on the Status of Women in India, Govt. of India, (1975)
- 13.Azad, Nandini, 1997, An Assessment of the Impact of the Womens Movement' in 'Women in Decision Making' by Ranjana Kumari (Ed.) Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, p. 110
- 14.Pore, Kumud, Ibid, p. 226)
- 15.Panda, Snehlata, 1997, 'Political empowerment of women', in Indian women, p 101
- 16.Ascent, Time of India, May 5, 2010. New Delhi