CHAPTER NO. 4

WOMEN IN I.T. INDUSTRY
Women in IT Industry

India being a developing economy has seen major changes in the social and economic status of the women in the last few decades. Today women are not content with playing the role of docile and dependent individuals. Rather they want to assert their independence and explore their complete potential. This has led to their seeking careers outside and they have now practically dominated almost every field of economic activity. They have made considerable contribution not only in the fields of economic activities but also in the social and cultural spheres.

I.T. industry is one challenging field where the women have made entry. They have equipped themselves with the necessary qualifications and the technical skills. They have made their presence felt at all the levels of the I.T. industry.

Interestingly the impact the women have made in this area could be seen from the NASSCOM study. The men – women ratio in the Indian software industry was 76:24 in 2006 which has increased to 65:35 in 2007. So women in I.T are here to stay and more are expected to join. The success of women in the sector attracts more women to join the industry. Some statistics will make this evident. In Wipro technologies ratio of women rose to 21.22% in 2005 compared to the figure in April 2004 i.e. 18.75%. Infosys quoted
steadily increased in number of women employees from 19% in 2003 to 22% in 2004, and 24% in 2005. According to the latest information, the male–female ratio in HSBC Technologies is 3:1.

The I.T. is one sector which helps women attain an equal status with men. Multi task abilities and collaborative team work skills are some of the core requirements of I.T. industry. Women seem to have excelled in this. The basic qualities in a woman such as dedication to work, patience and tolerance can be used in the smooth functioning of the sector. Women are expected to be more stable and less prone to job hopping.

Excepting the current phase of downturn, I.T industry in India has witnessed a spectacular growth. Companies were facing the problem of attaining the headcount. Still they are on the lookout for self confident, smart and talented I.T professionals. Here comes the relevance of women entering I.T industry.

But it is not all a cake walk for women. Apart from facing the challenges of a highly competitive professional field, these women are facing the problem of balancing the responsibilities of mother, wife and the home maker with that of a career in I.T sector.

In the workplace there are the challenges and tasks such as meeting the dead lines, the conflicts, pressure of work and sometimes misunderstanding. Women have proved themselves capable of meeting these challenges with men.
But women are rising up to the situation and effectively meeting these challenges. In every field of I.T. they are competing with men and proving themselves, whether it is working late hours, updating the skills, observing odd timings and accepting and dealing with foreign assignments. In fact many I.T women professionals are encouraged by their family members to accept a career in I.T. and are indirectly helping them in facing and meeting challenges.

Not only family members, but it will be interesting to look into some of the measures undertaken by the corporate sector itself to provide a stress free work atmosphere and comfortable work environment to the women. Companies define themselves as playing the role of an extended family taking care of the dependents of women employees to relieve her burden.

The measures taken by the companies begin with personal safety. Companies ensure the safety of women traveling by cabs, especially those who work in night shifts. The credentials of the cab drivers are checked by the company. They have devised a system in which the first person picked up and last person dropped home is not a woman. Some are even using GPS track devices in their vehicles.

Similarly when a team works late night, consisting of female members, the senior male member is instructed that, he should drop all the women employees first even if it causes delay.
To ensure continuous development of women employees, companies like IBM, ITEL conduct forums internally to encourage them to develop their leadership abilities.

Infosys has set up an Infosys Women's network, a forum that looks into various issues facing women in the organization. It provides them an opportunity for development as well as enables them to criticize management policies to ensure that the work place is inclusive and open to ideas that women can contribute.

At CISCO, it is the women's action network (WAN) which cultivates mentoring and career development opportunities for women. Networking helps women find a sense of community. Members are also involved in volunteering and outreach activities.

Zenser has launched a round the clock employee help desk system called E-Care with the purpose of providing global support for all HR and finance related issues for the employees across locations. It has also started Women of Excellence Forum (WE) to foster a leadership among women employees.

The Indus Entrepreneur, the industry body that encourages entrepreneurship, started a women's forum to encourage a start up culture among women technologists.

IBM at its work-life balance initiative is sponsoring "Fun and Learn activities" for employees and their children. It also sponsors "Young Explorers" summer camp that it has opened which is first of
its kind of child care centre. It has launched $50 million global work-life fund. It is a partnership between “Your kids R our kids” as per school and day care centre recognized by the Indian Ministry of Elementary Education. This fund launched in 2000, focuses on dependent care programmes that help employees respond to the child and elder care responsibilities.

Accenture has a unique programme to support women employees “Kids at work day”. Here employees are encouraged to bring their kids and families and enjoy events organized by the company. Cognizant has also similar type of programme.

To handle work related stress, walk in policies are adopted by companies. This allows women employees easy assess to their seniors at any given time to discuss their problems. It relieves them immediately from work related stress.

Infosys has set up satellite office on M.G.Road, which intends to provide expecting as well as young mothers to cut down travel time from their residence. Women constitute 30% of the 80,000 strong workforce at Infosys on Oct.2007. Company has also introduced structured career breaks for employees who became parents. The first person to avail of benefit was not a new mother but a new father. This shows attitudinal change. Child care is not the domain of women alone.
There are companies like Unisys in Bangalore and ADP at Hyderabad has launched initiative called “Work from Home town”. This stops displacement to cities and encourages women to take up the jobs.

Many companies are following flexi and telecommuting model. There is increase in trend of a graded re-entry of women employees into workforce, post maternity lasting over a period of 6 to 9 months.

Companies are also encouraging middle aged educated women by offering four hour job schedule. Large numbers of virtual offices are also coming up.

Thus future seems to be with a lot more initiatives of support to the women employees and employment opportunities in I.T sector. Thus it can be seen that companies are encouraging women to take up jobs by introducing various programmes and measures.

A survey was conducted on the various policies and programmes undertaken and implemented by various companies. The results of which are given below.
Graph No. 1 Facilities for women in IT

- It is observed that flexible working hours to suit the individual requirements are being offered by maximum 78% of companies.

- Concept of part time work is yet to become reality as just 50% of the companies are providing this facility even to women employees.

- Percentage of providing regular fixed working hours even to women employees looks difficult in this industry. Only 44% of the companies surveyed are providing this
facility. It is because all projects have deadlines. Delay in completion of any project may mean loss of client and consequent loss of the revenue and reputation of the company.

- 'Work from Home' concept is yet to become popular in India, but still 33% of the companies are providing this facility.

**Graph No. 2 Problems & Measures for women in IT**
- 83% of the companies allow women employees to attend to emergency family problems. This shows humanitarian approach of the company towards women employees.

- 38% of the companies make arrangements for family visits. Though percentage is less, it indicates good beginning. The families as a whole feel proud of their mother, wife or a daughter. This not only motivates concerned employee but leads to good familial relations.

- In spite of above measures, 22% of the surveyed companies take additional special motivational measures.
Graph No. 3 Problems & Measures for women in IT-2

- 44% of the companies have established a separate cell to deal with mental and physical abuse.
- 39% of the companies have a separate cell to deal with grievances of women employees in addition to providing a separate cell for abuse.

All the above graphs indicate that companies are very sensitive towards their women employees and are taking utmost care to make them comfortable in all respects including their safety and honors.
Social and Cultural Changes Observed

1) Effect on marital relations due to work pressure and long hours of work. 60%
2) Married yet desiring not to have children. 20%
3) Unable to give quality time to Children. 75%
4) Fear of neglect of children 60%
5) Belief that without families support, couples cannot work in this sector. 80%

Table No. 2

- 60% of the employees feel that marital relations do get affected because of long working hours. This may lead to increase in the rate of divorce.
- 20% of the women are reluctant to have family as they feel that they would not be able to give enough time for up bringing of children. Though the percentage of women not opting to go for children appears to be low it is setting a new trend which is against Indian culture.
- A vast 75% of women employees strongly say that there is a lack of rapport with children as they can not spend quality time with children.
• 60% of the women feel that they would always carry the pressure and fear about future of children due to neglect of children.

• 80% of them employees feel that without family support both parents cannot make careers in this industry.

In spite of companies taking various measures to make women employees comfortable it is still observed that the fear of women employees about their marital status and upbringing of children remains their prime concern.

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<tr>
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<th>Social &amp; Cultural Changes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Adoption of Western Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Self centered attitude</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Unable to relate with rest of family</td>
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Table No 3: Social & Cultural Changes

• There is total change in dressing and food habits. 67% of them agree to this fact. This is one of the visible impacts seen.

• 58% of the women employees feel that self centered attitude gets developed due to lack of time as well as
competition. But this is definitely taking them away from social realities. It is not that they get detached only from the society but even from extended family.

- 83% reported that on family gatherings and other occasions they are not able to relate with rest of the family members, may be due to change in life style. This shows how certain sections of the society are becoming unsocial.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Believe in institution of marriage</th>
<th>86%</th>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do not support live in relationship</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sharing of household responsibilities</td>
<td>60%</td>
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Table No. 4 Social & Cultural Changes

- 86% of them have faith in marriage.
- 86% does not support live in relationship.
- 60% of them have reported that household work is being shared by spouse. In fact they have introduced good change at home.
This shows even though women in IT have adopted western food and dressing habits still on certain aspects of culture they have not changed.