CHAPTER - X

Summary & Conclusion

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10.1 A BRIEF OUTLINE:

A good number of studies are being conducted on women’s issues. Being a vulnerable section of the society, women are facing numerous problems. The problems of women are being studied separately i.e. violence against women, domestic violence, women entrepreneurs, women and divorce, dowry system and its impact on women, problems of unemployed women, problems of the working women, women’s empowerment, so on and so forth. But none of these studies provide a clear and direct solution as to how these problems can be tackled. Despite plenty of studies, the researchers continue studies in this field of women’s issues in order to provide further clues and evidences, as the role of woman is in a stage of transition. (Consistent with this research movement on women’s issues, the researcher has attempted to bring to light the role and role conflicts of the employed middle class women. The study has been conducted in the city of Bhubaneswar on a sample group of 300 respondents.

With the middle class employed women being the study group in this research proposal, the areas that are highlighted in their study are (1) their role at the familial and extra-familial level (2) the conflicts between their dual roles and the ensuing stress and strain (3) their perceptions regarding various issues related to their role (4) the changing scenario and its relation with role and role conflict.

10.2 THE ROLE IN TRANSITION:

Influence of the changing society, its values, ideas and usages has created a new circumstance for women. The role of woman is no longer confined to that of a daughter, wife, mother, housekeeper, etc. She is an earner, a social activist, a professional, a coordinator, a decision maker, a
friend, a competitor, member of an organisation, an employee, an employer and so on. One can understand a role when it comes to be related to roles of other individuals. Each role carries with it a set of attitudes, expectations and feelings. It is when the expectations of a particular role are not satisfied that one may experience some strain. In the case of employed women, it has been observed that, they are engaged in innumerable roles. For instance, a woman may be a wife, daughter-in-law, mother, relative, homemaker, cook, a lecturer, head of a department, secretary of a woman’s organisation, member of a club, voluntary member of a social work group and so on.

The roles that the women are performing or are ascribed to her as the member of a family are her traditional roles. Besides this traditional role, women’s employment has made them acquire a new set of roles. These roles we may call as her achieved roles. Precisely it may be said that an employed woman has to perform two sets of roles i.e. her Traditional roles and her Achieved roles.

The achieved role of women are dependent on the kind of occupation they choose. The occupational role or job role has transformed the role of women. Women who are employed are no longer full time engaged in meeting the expectations of their traditional roles as their time gets distributed in meeting the responsibilities of both the roles. All total an employed woman’s dual roles are responsible for changing the whole personality of women. While men have been the traditional providers in a family, the women as providers have got recognition and increased only in the recent times. Men are yet to take up the traditional roles of women, just as the women have taken up the men’s role of provider. Studies do show that a section of the men are sharing the household activities with
their employed wife. But this cannot be taken as leading to transformation of men's role, as this sharing of women's traditional roles is not coming whole heartedly. In fact, the men are yet to be socialised to acquire some of the traditional roles of women. On the other hand the women are being socialised to become educated and career-oriented so that they can become providers in the future. At the same time she is also being socialised with her traditional roles.

The finding in this study shows that the traditional roles of women continue to be maintained but have been simplified to a great extent. The simplification has been possible with the utilisation of mechanical appliances like washing machine, dish washer, refrigerator, mixer, microwave, gas stove, vacuum cleaner etc. As a daughter, wife, mother, sister etc. women have been assigned certain responsibilities and duties since ages, which continue to be maintained even today. Inspite of the fact that women have taken up other responsibilities beyond the house.

Beyond the home responsibilities refer to the extra-familial roles of the women. The middle class women in this study were employed in various professions. As employed women they were observed to be handling their responsibilities with dedication and efficiency. Being a role that they have achieved, the women gave as much importance and sometimes more importance to it, than to their familial roles. The achieved role had a number of responsibilities and at the same time some new roles came up due to these responsibilities. The respondents were known to be not only employed in a profession but were also members of a club, a union, an association, a womens group and so on, which became a part of their personality due to their wider communication with people from various backgrounds, professions and life-styles.
From the trend of giving importance to personal choice in various matters, most significantly in mate selection and dressing style among the unmarried respondents goes on to establish the fact that economic independence resulting from their employment has made these women self-conscious and self-assertive. The familial roles of the unmarried respondents were same as that of the married respondents. That is, they had to lend a helping hand in cooking, washing, cleaning, shopping, caring etc. But then being unmarried, they were observed to have fewer responsibilities than the married women and even many a times they were observed to enjoy greater freedom and greater support from family members.

It is observed that marriage for the women brought numerous responsibilities. Both as a wife and as a mother, women are meant to be responsible for handling all kinds of household activities, needs of husband, children, in-laws and other relatives depending on the kind of family they live in.

The respondents belonging to the nuclear family had greater control over financial matters than those from the joint family. The study shows that the organisation of the joint family is such that the women do not get much scope to be involved in controlling the family assets, budgeting and bills. On the other hand 30.80% women from the nuclear families were largely involved in these activities together with their husband. While 21.48% of the women were handling this matters by themselves. This justifies that economic independence is changing the role of women at the familial level.

The amount of time the married respondents had to spend in managing their house in observed to take up almost all the time that is not spent in
doing one's job. The familial role of home management was observed to be considerably less as we go higher up in the income level. Those respondents from the lower income level had 67 respondents who were burdened with household work for more than six hours. While this was the case with 13 of the middle income respondents. *The higher income respondents had lesser physical labour even if they had to spend more than six hours in home management.* In fact, their role at home involved less of personal labor and more of supervising those who were working for her and managing the household duties. The outcome of women having to give a lot of time in household duties after their job hours was observed to be exhausting and a strain on them physically and mentally. The lower is the income the greater is the household responsibilities, due to insufficient money to keep a servant. Thus role conflicts were observed to be higher in the case of women who are employed due to economic necessity.

It is observed that the employed mother gives first priority to her child or children and then anything else. In fact, employment for these women is a means of meeting the requirements mainly of their children. *Negligence* on their part to carry out the responsibilities related to their role as a mother *leads to guilt feeling.* Most of the modern mothers in this study expected their husbands to participate in child care. This sort of role reversal is the result of their lack of time in being full time mothers. Over excessive effort is put in by these mothers to manage home, children and job leading to tensions, physical exhaustion and moodiness.

Divorced and widowed women in this study were observed to have traditional roles similar to the married women. But then they were also involved in carrying out all the activities that their husband would have done. The respondents who were mothers among the divorced and widowed
had a hectic life. For most of them living in nuclear families had to handle everything single handedly.

Work place efficiency of women is hampered due to harassment and exploitation. It has been observed that maximum number of respondents from all the income levels accepted that the decision making power of women is respected at their work place, though rest of the respondents felt otherwise.

Employment and the activities related to it bring the employed women in contact with numerous individuals. Their role gets broadened due to their widened social contact and involvement in various other activities besides their job. When their extra-familial roles take up the time that could otherwise be utilised in carrying out their familial roles or when the household activities prevent the employed women from concentrating efficiently in their extra-familial roles, tensions and stress over take these women. Thus the gap between official responsibilities and familial expectations are positively correlated with stress and strain.

10.3 THE BURDENED WOMEN: ROLE CONFLICT THE CONSEQUENCE

'Double load' i.e., what seems to be the best term that can express the situation that arises due to women’s dual engagements. Under such a circumstance it is observed that they find it difficult to concentrate on the requirements of either of their roles. While it is expected that with their employment, women’s household responsibilities would be shared by others in the family, the chances for such a change are usually minimal. In fact, most respondents noted that help was forthcoming not as a permanent solution to the problems arising from meeting the demands of their dual roles, but rather as temporary relief from the burdens of household responsibilities.
Employment, economic independence and position as an earning member of the family do not in anyway change the view of the society, that the woman should be freed of some of her traditional roles. The respondents in this study did say that they were getting help from various quarters. Sometimes it was the husband and children, at times it were the relatives in the family who were helping the respondents in their household chores. Yet the household chores are still considered to be the responsibilities which women should take up, even if they have other roles to perform. Under these circumstances the women are burdened with the duties of their dual roles. The expectation of women that they will be given support and help in the family due to their 'Double load' resulted in disappointment when they were let down.

From the study of the kind of assistance the respondents got in their routine household activities, it is found that role conflict resulted when the respondents could not handle the heavy burden of their dual roles. While maximum number of respondents accepted that due to their economic involvement, their family members who were also employed or in some cases not employed were ready to share some of the household chores. But at the same time, there were a substantially large number of women especially from the middle and lower income categories who were toiling hard at managing both home and job without much help.

A situation that came out during the study, is the extent to which the respondents stressed themselves in attending to the demands of their family members. One of the respondents says “I come from office, take rest and then attend to my household activities. At night I am the last to sleep because I feel ashamed to go to bed before my kids and husband. There is this feeling that they may need my attention or something may go wrong
because of my negligence. These thoughts keep me awake in spite of my tiredness.” The responses obtained from the unmarried respondents show, that they are less stressed up by their familial roles. Even though a few of them complained that they have to start doing household activities immediately on reaching home, yet they always had lesser responsibilities and even got help from their mother, sister or even brother at home. This could be the reason that the unmarried respondents are less frustrated and stressed than the married respondents, when they are unable to pay constant attention to their ascribed household responsibilities.

From the experiences of the respondents it is observed that there is a gap between official responsibilities and familial expectations which leads to stress and strain. Social factors such as stress due to familial disturbances, anxiety regarding children’s exams, quarrels with husband, problems between parents, illness of husband, children or parents, misunderstanding among family members all affect the women mentally. Sometimes the respondents even cited restrictions on their movements by husband or in-laws leading to disturbing mental and physical illness.

Respondents were also noted to complain of mental conflicts due to lack of time to spare for achieving one’s career goals. Women feel the strain of their dual roles when they are unable to meet their goals in either of their roles. Rather, women continue to do what is expected of them, than do what they want and can in their assigned roles leading to role conflicts.

It is observed that the respondents in the sample study are not only independent but also status conscious. Women are preferring jobs that will give them more money and fame rather than those that will be comfortable to adjust with their familial roles. The interviews show that
the respondents were facing problems in their place of work in the form of exploitation, harassment, character assassinations, less pay and more work, compromises with their life style to achieve career goals, competition, overtime work, unusual schedules, night shifts etc. The frustrations and mental tensions due to their work place problems are carried over to the family. This has a negative effect on the behaviour and mental situation of the respondents.

The psychological tensions of the respondents from the nuclear family were observed to be comparatively greater than those from the joint family. Neglecting the family is one common reason for psychological tensions. Irritability, stress and strain, inefficiency, fatigue, hypertension etc. are all responsible for making women negligent in their dual roles.

The study shows that the respondents are not ready to make compromises with their job-role for meeting the expectations of their familial roles thus, the gap between official responsibilities and familial expectations is positively correlated with stress and strain.

Education for women has increased their occupational opportunities. At the same time they have also become aware of the problems they can face due to jobs being incompatible with their educational qualifications. A number of respondents pointed out that they were suffering from mental tensions due to their qualifications not matching their occupation.

From some of the queries it has been brought out that women were seeing marriage as an obstacle in the progress of their career. Due to which women are in support of higher marriageable ages.

It is observed that the higher the income of the respondents the greater is their job satisfaction. Only in some cases, where the work environment was pointed out to be unhealthy, did the respondents feel
dissatisfaction. Maximum number of respondents from the various educational levels were happy due to their participation in economic activities. Those who were unhappy among the lower and medium educational levels were dissatisfied due to their expectation of higher incomes and perks remaining unfulfilled. Under these circumstances they feel dissatisfied that they are not getting a good salary on the one hand and they are also not able to handle the family responsibilities due to their job. As such their growing expectations are directly responsible for their greater dissatisfaction, as per this study.

Conflict of authority between husband and wife is an area that is also responsible for causing stress and strain among the dual roled respondents. It has been observed that the higher income respondents had lesser conflict of authority. But those from the medium and lower income have greater conflict of authority. As a whole the study shows that from all the income levels maximum number of respondents said that they were not having conflict of authority with their husband. Mrs. Elizabeth Zakharia is one such respondent who says that “Where there is mutual understanding between husband and wife, conflict of authority is unlikely.”

The study shows that the employed women did not think that it is too difficult to get a suitable husband. But then, to find a person who supports the travelling timings and unusual working hours of the respondents could pose as a problem in getting a suitable husband.

Women in the joint families were observed to have a lesser say in family matters. Though they found themselves protected in the joint family, their share in their own earnings according to them is considerably less. While the respondents from the nuclear families claimed greater economic independence.
In spite of problems of role conflict, maximum number of respondents have stated that they were able to do justice to their roles. While the married respondents gave maximum importance to their familial roles, the unmarried gave maximum justice to all their roles. Maximum number of widowed respondents were noticed to give highest priority to their role as career women than to their other roles. This is probably due to their sense of insecurity.

53.33% of the respondents were comfortable with their dual rules. But the rest i.e. 41.34% of them were struggling with the status they had achieved. Conflict situations are greater among those who were dissatisfied with their present status.

10.4 CHANGING LIFE AND WOMEN:

Women in India have been migrants since centuries. They have been migrating to the place where their husband is employed or resides. As a part of this process when men started migrating to the cities or urban centres, the women too accompanied them. As such the women were not economic migrants at first. But today the scenario has changed. For women are migrating to avail job opportunities. This has a significant effect on the socio-economic and cultural situation of any society. It also has been observed to have caused changes in the life and employment of these women.

The experiences of the respondents reveal that globalisation is having an impact on the traditions and customs of the society. They also agree that their changing role is the result of the impact of market economy, media, information technology, life style and leisure time activities that is the outcome of globalisation. The study shows that the respondents who are better educated are more aware of the impact of globalisation. In fact some of these respondents were able to pinpoint that the innovations that
globalisation of the economy has brought into our society is responsible for evolving a consumer culture. Which in turn has had an impact on their life style and relationships.

The researcher has been able to observe the growing problem of role conflict among the respondents as a result of increased economic opportunities, changing pattern of consumption, mobility of professionals changing cultural values, cultural modernisation etc. The effect of these forces has been on women wanting to live and move with the trend of the time. Being a full time homemaker without any scope for economic independence leads to diminishing tolerance. A situation has arisen, where the respondents want to enjoy the fruits of their economic power and at the same time they are not ready to take full charge of their familial roles. The lack of reciprocation with their expectations, by family members lead to dissatisfaction.

The tug-of-war between their dual roles leads to role-conflicts. Evidences show that women are giving priority to their job and at the same time do not hesitate to make compromises with their familial roles even if it means a constant guilt feeling that “I am not a good daughter” or “a good wife” or “a good mother.” Hence the hypothesis that strong job commitment and professional interest among the working women has made the women to give more importance to their professional role than their familial role stands justified in this context. Further on, there were respondents who were engaged in professions that had unearthly time schedules. These women continued in their profession for the money that they got, even though they had to suffer not only physical disturbances but also mental disturbances both due to neglect of family and also due to tensions of job commitments.
Club and party culture has become a way of life for some of the respondents. They see it both as a leisure time activity and also as a means of meeting and communicating with like minded individuals who can be potential clients of their business. As a leisure time activity going to clubs or parties serves as stress relieving according to the respondents. Though most of the employed mothers gave time to their child or children and their household chores maximum importance, during their leisure time, yet they managed to set aside particular days, when they gave first priority to their leisure. Though the sample respondents agreed that when they were unable to carryout their household responsibilities, they felt impatient, yet they did not miss a chance to go for outings, attend get togethers, parties and other social activities during their leisure. This proves the hypothesis that the employed women are more likely to spend leisure time in social activities than in household chores, when they get a chance.

The married respondents in this study felt the strain of role conflict more than the unmarried respondents. For, the married respondents are made to believe, that any household activity whether it is small or big requires their attention. So, according to the study the married respondents were always alert regarding their household responsibilities and duties. Even when they are supposed to be enjoying a good time with their friends or were on a tour, the thought of their children, husband and in-laws, makes them keep in touch with them constantly. As one of the respondent says “It is thanks to the modern communication system, which allows me to keep in touch with my children, when I am on tours.” At the same time, it has been observed that the unmarried respondents were less stressed up in such a situation. Not that they did not have to bother about their parents when away from home, but then; they were found to be free enough to carry on with their official responsibilities without much, mental tension.
Hence it is observed that role conflicts are higher in the case of the married respondents than that of the unmarried respondents.

10.5 SUGGESTED CHANGES FOR CONFLICT RELIEVING:

The strains resulting from role conflict among the employed women can be reduced according to the researcher if the following changes are made in the life style and attitude of the respondents themselves and then the persons, enterprises and institutions that are responsible for the dilemmas in their life. Hence, based on the experiences and evidences obtained from the study of the sample respondents the researcher suggests that:

1) The respondents i.e. the employed middle class women should learn the art of time management. So that there is a proper distribution of time between their dual roles and then they too won’t feel that they are focussing on one role more than the other.

2) The women should learn to accept that they are not super humans, who can do every task all by themselves. As such they should make a note of which tasks require their personal involvement and which tasks can be delegated to others. This can reduce the burden on the roles whether it is at the familial or extra-familial levels.

3) The married women should stop thinking that the entire burden of their family is on their shoulder and that they are lower in status to their husband and hence cannot expect their husband to share some of the familial responsibilities.

4) Women should not allow their family nor their work place bosses and colleagues to take them for - granted. It is only then, that they can expect some positive change in the attitude of the society towards them.
5) *Daily exercises and yoga* are the best way of de-stressing and reducing fatigue among the hyperactive women according to the researcher.

6) *Sharing and helping* the employed women in their household chores should become a routine activity not only among the husband but also the other male members in a family.

7) One very essential thing expected from the employment agencies is that they should *maintain a congenial environment* that does not harm the dignity of their female employees.

8) Holding special *classes for stress management* among the employees should be a part of any employing agencies strategy to increase the efficiency of its work force.

9) Getting involved in *jobs that can be handled from home* could be a life saver for women interested in being economically independent and at the same time wanting to manage their family matters.

10) *Change in the attitude* of the family members regarding women’s role in the household activities can bring the greatest difference to reduce role conflict.

These suggestions as per the researchers view can go a long way in reducing the tensions and conflicts arising from the imbalances of the dual roles among the employed middle class women in an urban city like Bhubaneswar.