CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study began with a brief look at the problems of women worldwide and, in particular, India. The importance of family and other socio-cultural factors led us to the postulate that there are primary factors which influence a woman manager's career path in India rather than traits or attitudes of women per se or the organisations structure and context.

The scope of the study was outlined in section 1.3. Its elements were constructing a profile of women managers, understanding workplace problems and factors outside the workplace (gender stereotypes and dual career families). To study these factors we outlined the methodology of our study. The questionnaire (included a psycho-social part) and the case method, were the two tools to be used in acquiring relevant information which could be analysed appropriately.

In chapter 2 we saw the various theoretical approaches which had been developed in American and Canadian universities to highlight the relative importance of what factors really determine a woman manager's career path. International management as a peculiar situation throws additional light on the problems faced by the women in management. We also found that the Indian studies have so far lacked explicit use of such theoretical approaches and have not been subject to any empirical analysis using either
Chapter 3 discusses our field survey and the policy implications derived thereof in terms of law and company policy were discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 3 helped us develop an understanding of the Indian woman managers in two ways:

- number crunching, using responses to the questionnaire
- look for significance in the various statements made during my field work

The first gave substance to the profile of a woman manager and a ranking of factors which determine her career path: the second helped me to get some contextual insights.

Indian women manager is a young woman between 26 to 35 of age highly qualified and professional. More likely to be married than single and is undoubtedly a career woman. She has taken a managerial job not as a stop gap but is there for good.

She is from the middle and upper class of society, likely upper caste, carrying with her all the strengths and uncertainties of her background. In a manner of speaking, her problems are that of her class, coping with change which modernisation of society brings about. Emotional need to actualise herself expresses itself in her wanting to move out of the mould of a housewife to be an earning member of the family. Economic need (a better material life) makes a job doubly welcome. But brings its own
Having got a job on her own strengths (many women managers are academically as bright as men, sometimes better) she is beholden to none.

In spite of her competence (very few in my field work called them incompetent), she is a new comer to her workplace and is yet to fit in or influence the milieu in her favour.

The workplace is not hostile but it is not comfortable either. Her job is not the result of a planned effort on her part. She thinks it is a responsible one, not a mere routine.

But her progress at work is not smooth. The attitude of those around is mostly good. There are exceptions. There is harassment, but not serious. Uncomfortable it certainly is, but she seems to know how to cope with it. Not always successfully. Sometimes she gets side lined.

Her worry is not the Casanova at the next table or a leering boss in his cabin, but the neglected child (hers) at home whom she is not able to pay the attention she feels she should.

Her main worry is family obligations which goes beyond nuclear family concerns. It affects her performance at work adversely. What is the family obligation? "why does it become so oppres-
sive: This is the most fruitful line of enquiry in this area.

This is not only her perception of her problem. It is also the view of her men colleagues: that family responsibilities shackle her.

A married woman manager seems to enjoy one set of advantages, social acceptance, personal respect. Her men colleagues feel less threatened. An unmarried person has a more difficult position but has been successful nonetheless.

If marriage brings in acceptance, children bring in added worries. Juggling travel schedules and the demands of motherhood is not easy and creates tension which spans both her work and home life. She, as was said, does a double duty shift, burning the candle at both ends.

Prejudice against women managers is not closing the doors of entry and promotion but expecting her to be an exceptional performer on two fronts at work, at home. One mistake she is caught out. This is the tight rope she walks.

Her battles seem to be those which are within her. How to share the burden of family obligations and also keep work schedules.

She has her bad patches, disappointments. But she (eight out of ten) still feels that in the next few years the Indian women manager will be recognised for what she is, her merit. She is an
optimist seeing light at the end of a short tunnel.

Feminism, the protest of gender which spanned every aspect of womanhood - the politics of reproduction, sexuality, house work, marriage, family, parallels between other oppressed like race and caste does not find a ready support. She finds it western (so needs adaptation) and understands it as a method of establishing equality and fighting discrimination: no more. It is not something that can inspire and rally her round to fight her battles.

She feels strongly for her sex, finds them discriminated against and would like to fight for them but she has few opportunities at the work place considering her level in the hierarchy.

But she seems to be more bound by the ethos of the work place (the male ethic of management): no positive discrimination. She would help women in a sympathetic but impartial way. Not to her the crusading zeal of helping another woman right or wrong: sisterhood is not enough.

She is a loner. It is said that she is not overtly friendly with her gender colleagues. She is not a part of a gender network, nor a pressure group. She is a part of a minority which does not as yet seem to seek a voice. May be she will in the future. May be not.
Her first priority in life is her family, next her career. In contrast, for her male colleagues it is his career and then his family. The priority reversal sets the Indian woman manager apart.

But like him job satisfaction comes high in her priorities.

Some women are in top management but for an average woman manager it is not an entirely useful role model: unless she has also squared her dual responsibility satisfactorily.

She is visible in the corporate world though not numerically large, small numbers do not seem to daunt her; because she knows they are growing.

Does the above description fit any woman manager in the world? Or is the Indian context different?

There is commonality to the extent, that an Indian woman manager is numerically small, not yet well represented at the top decision making levels, has work place problems and difficulties of adjusting to dual roles.
There are differences. For example the situation, the stage of modernisation Indian society finds itself; the changes in the institution of family, the sexual stereotypes, the organisational culture of industry, the Indian woman managers sense of optimism and perhaps most important, her unique mind set.

Some of the differences identified are vast areas of investigation in themselves, like modernisation, the state of Indian family relationship. I will confine my comments to the others.

Global literature deals extensively with sexual harassment of women managers with legislative and organisational protection as a counter measure. In the organisations I have studied, there are accusations of sexist behaviour, unfair advantage taken by men in power and the price paid by those unwilling to give in.

But the intensity seems to be much less. There could be a number of reasons

- the Indian male manager is less randy or
- he is more subtle than his western counterpart or
- social sanctions organisational penalties for deviant behaviour are more onerous or
- a woman manager can handle the situation better or
- she is more tolerant than her western counterpart.

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It is a problem that can be coped with, thus removing a major irritant in the life of a woman manager. What is said applies to the present generation. One does not know whether it will change in future, reflecting the possible influence of modernisation leading to uniformity of behaviour.

The organisational culture of Indian industry with respect to gender has some distinguishing features. In ownership it is mostly either state owned or family owned.

State owned industry is statutorily forbidden from showing gender discrimination. Both recruitment and promotion has to be transparent and it is open to judicial scrutiny. While marginal cases can be passed off as managerial discretion, blatant ones are unlikely to be attempted and if attempted get set aside on appeal.

Family owned business on the other hand is in a different situation. They are run more opaquely, but they do have a tradition of family matriarchs taking critical business decisions. They are not anti women in that sense. They may not want to share decision making process with outsiders but that is not because they are women.

Thus I find that Indian industry has no anti women bias or a feeling of inferiority of women as decision makers.
This situation may not exist in the West.

The most significant of the differences is the unique mind set of Indian woman managers. Take for example, their concern about family responsibility. Why does it become such a demanding issue?

Most of them on their own admission have supportive families, likely supportive spouses and coming from well to do (relatively) families, housework is not a burden (servants do it). Unlike in the West. Working women again are not uncommon in the family. The problems should have been tackled many times before them.

Why is there this crushing burden? Is it because of demands by the families or is it a result of the cultural tapes which women carry, defining for themselves, right conduct?

It is likely it is a combination of both. External factors are more easily dealt with but what is in the mind is a different proposition.

The changing pattern of responsibility sharing in families is documented in research and, unlike in the west, family support makes it easier to deal with role overload.
My proposition is that the essential solution to the problems of Indian managers lies in understanding their mind set. What is it they consider non-negotiable in the handling of dual roles.

My field work is not designed to look into this problem. The tools used are inadequate. But it has thrown up what I feel is an interesting proposition that WIM literature has not delved into.

It is likely that in future the intensity of concern about family obligations could lessen in India, relieving much anxiety. But it is likely to happen? I do not know.

There seems to be something deep rooted in this. Will amelioratives like flexi times, help? What is needed is an understanding of the Indian woman managers mind. Western parallels may have limited use here.

The perceived role of a wife, mother and an active member of the larger family is uniquely culture specific. Looking at women managers problems as that of an under privileged group could be too simplistic.
In this connection, I would like to make a suggestion that GOS approach (gender organisation system) while being perhaps the most holistic research model still emphasises on the question of relationships and the context. If my hypothesis has a meaning the centrality needs to be given to the mind set of the women manger which is a product of many influences. That is where the battles (attempts to adjust and cope) are fought: not only in the work place or in relation to external societal relations.

I do not have the skills to probe into the area. But I see it as a necessary paradigm shift. I am saying that understanding an Indian women manager which is the sum total of her roles plus is critical. That plus goes deep into history on one hand and primordial instincts on the other.