Chapter-8

Conclusion
This is the study of the impact of information technology development on the empowerment of women in which women’s empowerment is the process by which women move from a condition of relative powerlessness to relative power. Empowerment refers not only to a change in power relations so that there is more equality but also the ability or capacity to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy by participating in decision-making. There are two perspectives among sociologists about the significance of Information Technology (IT) for women’s empowerment. According to the first perspective, Information Technology opens up new avenues of economic participation of women leading to their empowerment so that they can negotiate for greater equality with men in the family, community and work place. According to the second perspective, this possible empowerment of women is circumscribed by existing values, cultures & institutions and so Information Technology may not neutralize the inequality between men & women but may reproduce it. This is because women are embedded in a patriarchal context and so Information Technology may not lead to the empowerment of women. This study was an evaluation of these two perspectives on the impact of information technology development on the empowerment of women working in the ITES-BPO sector in Delhi.

The case studies of 32 women employed in the ITES-BPO sector in Delhi reveal that information technology (IT) brings women out of their home and leads to changes in their lives and their attitudes which bring about a change in power relations so that there is more equality in the family and in the workplace. This change in power relations so that there is more equality is shown by the fact that although they do not get sufficient time to visit friends or relatives and this job has
cut down their social circle but it has given them greater self-confidence and more freedom to take decisions for themselves, and more respect in the family and society and she has time to spend on her own. The change in power relations so that there is more equality is also shown when women can decide about their education and employment and the freedom to choose their job to become financially independent or to support their parents or husbands financially or the attraction of the brand name of the company or to earn money with stability, dignity and respect. Since all the women said that their parents supported them in every way from education to employment shows that the change in power relations so that there is more equality is not possible without parental support. The fact that all women say that as much money should be spend on the education of girls as on that of boys and almost all women say that they give equal preference to both male and female child and only one or two give preference to male child show a change in power relations so that there is more equality in their attitude. This change is also shown by the fact that they regard the ‘Domestic Violence Bill- 2005’ as very good measure and a step in the right direction which should be implemented very strictly and only a very few women are not aware about this Bill. The change in power relations so that there is more equality in their attitude is also shown by the fact that almost all women think that a husband is not justified in punishing his wife if she does not obey or neglects the house or children because he is equally responsible for taking care of the house or children and very few women feel that a husband is justified in punishing his wife if she does not obey or neglects the house or children. The fact that most women have their bank account as single in their own name and those who have their bank
account as joint without exception have assets and self acquired property in their own name also shows the change in power relations so that there is more equality. The fact that most women express satisfaction with this job and do not want to leave it but want to make this job as their career shows the change in power relations so that there is more equality in their attitudes in the workplace as also the fact that they consider their future prospects in this job as very high and want to get promotion to a very high position in the same call centre. This is supported by the fact that all the women say that their colleagues have very friendly and co-operative attitude towards them and they say that the management of the call centre also has very co-operative and motivating but formal and professional attitude towards them. Almost all women regard themselves as independent, confident and capable of interacting with others as compare to non-working women and more efficient and hardworking in comparison to their male colleagues as they perform dual role and this shows a change in power relations so that there is more equality in the work place.

The case studies of 32 women in the ITES-BPO sector reveal that there is a change in power relations so that there is more equality for all the women but all of them have not been able to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy. The compatibility of job with the life of married women and their ability to balance their job with the performance of household chores indicates the ability to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy. The case studies of 7 married women reveal that their job is compatible with their married life and they are able to balance their job with the performance of household chores. They get sufficient time to spend with their husbands because their
husbands or other family members help them in the performance of household chores. These 7 married women are able to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy because of their ability or capacity to change their role of performing household chores traditionally assigned to them. Some of these women are those whose husbands work in the same call centres or have the same office timings. Their husbands have positive and encouraging attitude towards their job because their income is needed by the family as a supplement to their husband’s income. The case studies of 3 married women whose job, according to them, is not compatible with their married life because they do not get sufficient time to spend with their husbands and they find it difficult to balance their job with the performance of household chores. Their husbands do not help them in the performance of household chores and they are unable to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy because of their inability to change the role of the performance of household chores traditionally assigned to women. These are the 3 married women whose husbands have different and long office timings and they do not have positive and encouraging attitude to their wife’s job because their income is not needed by the family as a supplement to their husband’s income. The case study of one married woman with child (case study number 12) shows that her job is not compatible with her married life because she finds it very difficult to balance her job with the performance of household chores and rearing a child. She does not get sufficient time to spend with her husband and to look after her child. Although her husband helps her in the performance of household chores, she does not have the ability to challenge the structures of male domination or patriarchy because there is no change in her role of child rearing traditionally
assigned to women. All the unmarried women revealed that they do not find it
difficult to balance their job with the performance of household chores. They get
sufficient time to spend on their own because their family members share the
household chores. All the unmarried women are able to challenge the structure of
male domination or patriarchy because they do not have the role of performing
household chores traditionally assigned to women.

The freedom of movement to visit friends or relatives without prior
permission is also an indication of the ability of women to challenge the structure
of male domination or patriarchy. Traditionally, women did not have freedom of
movement and were required to be accompanied by their husband or other male
family members to go out. This is an example of the structure of male domination
or patriarchy which has been challenged by the employment in the ITES-BPO
sector which requires women to go out without being accompanied by their
husband or male family members. This freedom of movement results in the ability
of some married women and some unmarried women to challenge the structure of
male domination or patriarchy. The 7 married women whose job is compatible
with their married life and who are able to balance their job with the performance
of household chores because their husbands help them in the household chores say
that there is no such restriction on their freedom of movement. The one married
woman with a child finds that her job is not compatible with her married life and
she finds it difficult to balance her job with the performance of household chores
because she has the responsibility of rearing a child, there is no such restriction on
her freedom of movement. All these married women are thus able to challenge the
structure of male domination or patriarchy. The unmarried women who live in
nuclear families have no restriction on their freedom of movement and thus they are also able to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy. The 3 married women whose job is not compatible with their married life and they find it difficult to balance their job with the performance of household chores because they have to manage them on their own. For these three married women there are restrictions on their freedom of movement. The unmarried women who live in joint families also have restrictions on their freedom of movement. All these women who have restrictions on their freedom of movement are unable to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy. This is the reason for unmarried women to show preference for living in nuclear families.

Having a say in family matters and who takes decisions in the family about how much to spend and on what is also an indication of the ability of women to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy. The case studies reveal that this job has given some women more say in family matters and the decisions in the family about how much to spend and on what are being taken by mutual participation. These are the seven married women some of whom are those whose husbands work in the same call centres or have same office timings. Their husbands have positive and encouraging attitude towards their job because their income is needed by the family as a supplement to husband’s income. There is also one married woman with a child whose husband also has positive attitude towards her job because her income is needed by the family as a supplement to her husband’s income. The unmarried working women living in nuclear families have more say in the family matters and the decisions about how much to spend and on what are being taken by mutual participation. All these women have been able to
challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy. However, there are other women whom this job has not given more say in the family matters and the decisions in the family about how much to spend and on what are being taken by other family members. These are the 3 married women whose husbands have different and long office timings and they do not have positive and encouraging attitude to their wife’s job because their income is not needed by the family as a supplement to their husband’s income. The unmarried women who live in joint families have no say in the family matters and the decisions in the family about how much to spend and on what are being taken by other family members. This is the reason for unmarried women to show preference to live in nuclear families. All these women have not been able to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy.

Thus the case studies of 32 women working in the ITES-BPO sector in Delhi reveal that there is change in power relations so that there is more equality for all the women in the family and in the workplace. However, only some women have been able to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy. Only those women who have the ability or capacity to change the role of performing household chores traditionally assigned to women and who have the freedom of movement to visit friends or relatives without prior permission and who have a say in family matters and the decisions in the family about how much to spend and on what are being taken by mutual participation have been able to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy. In this way, it was found that 7 married women and one married woman with child and 13 unmarried women living in nuclear families have been able to challenge the structure of male domination or
patriarchy. It was also found that 3 married women and the 8 unmarried women living in joint families have not been able to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy. This shows that out of 32 women working in the ITES-BPO sector only 21 have been able to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy while 11 have not been able to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy. The economic and social obstacles that have emerged in these case studies which prevent women from challenging the structure of male domination or patriarchy are that of whether her income is needed by the family as a supplement and whether the family is nuclear or joint.

These case studies of 32 women working in the ITES-BPO sector in Delhi revealed that while there is a change in power relations so that there is more equality for all the women but all the women have not been able to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy. Employment in the ITES-BPO sector does not bring about the empowerment of all the women and the economic and social obstacles which prevent the empowerment of women show that women are embedded in a patriarchal context and so Information Technology may not lead to the empowerment of women. It is likely that existing inequalities between men and women will be reproduced in the new society being shaped by information technology which is called ‘information society’ or ‘network society’. The possible empowerment of women is circumscribed by the values and structures of the old society so that there is continuity between it and the new society and there is no break with the past. The findings of the study are in agreement with the second perspective which was given by Webster. The findings of the study are not in agreement with the first perspective which was given by Bell and Castells.
However, the fact that some women employed in ITES-BPO sector have been empowered to the extent that they have been able to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy shows that this sector has the potential to bring about the empowerment of women and the information and the network society may ultimately bring about fundamental change in relations between men and women.

Empowerment refers not only to a change in power relations but also the ability or capacity to challenge the structure of male domination or patriarchy by participating in decision making. Thus in the case studies of 32 women employed in the ITES-BPO sector in Delhi, the empowerment of women is there for 21 women and not for 11 women. In these case studies, the economic and social obstacles, which prevent the empowerment of women, are that of whether her income is needed by the family as a supplement and whether the family is nuclear or joint. Since 21 out of the 32 women have been empowered, it shows that employment in ITES-BPO sector has the potential for the empowerment of women.

This study is concerned with the use of exploratory research design to find the extent of empowerment of women working in the ITES- BPO sector in Delhi. The exploratory research design has been followed because the area was hitherto un-explored. This research enabled us to gain familiarity with the new phenomenon and to give new insights. Further research is needed in this area by drawing case studies from various parts of the country and from other sectors of information technology for a comparative study. These can then form the basis of precise hypothesis about the impact of information technology development on the
empowerment of women which can be verified by using surveying research design and sample drawn from different parts of the country and from different sectors of Information Technology. Such a broad study will use statistical methods and quantitative analysis different from the case study method and qualitative analysis in this study.