Contribution of Integrated Technology services in Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Modern Indian Women: Social and Financial Perspective

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Abstract

Indian women have slowly ascended to leadership roles in all sectors of the economy. Though, many of the issues for these women are same, from questions of male domination to secret dialogue, to discrimination to pay inequalities. Because the fields and agendas in India are so diverse, no one simple, set of answers resonates across the board. It is generally believed that Integrated Technology Services is one of the best equal opportunity areas that 'provide wider opportunities for women to enter and succeed in this industry'. Nevertheless, the validity of these claims is yet to be established through empirical analysis particularly in the comparatively backward states of India. For such a transition in

attitude towards gender to take place, certain prerequisites have to be met.

Keywords Integrated Technology, Women Workforce, Economic Empowerment, Feminization.

The term integrated technology is extensively used in modern advancing world. In the general sense, integrated technology is the use of computers and software to manage information. The Indian IT-BPO industry has emerged as the largest private sector employer in the country with the direct employment of about 2.41 million professionals. The IT sector in India has created employment opportunities in areas such as telecommunication, banking, shopping, education, health and business. In addition, the internet has also generated new jobs in areas like the design, maintenance and management of sites on the www etc.

The emergence of IT sector in mid 1990s has unveiled a potential employment opportunity for women inIndia too in this innovative sector. The development of IT in India has enabled women of being empowered. This sector has, undoubtedly, enhanced social mobility and higher work participation of women employees in catching up with the direct opportunities provided by IT. It has further enhanced the financial autonomy and bargaining capacity in the household decision-making process for the women of the state.

It is believed that the proportion of women into various IT based industries in India is in the order of 28% in the ITES;

18% in the software industry; 30% in the telecom industry; 38% in the BPOS; and 68% in the airlines. The good rate of women employees (almost 28%) in the ITES sector is a welcome trend. Women in position of authority in the IT industry have improved their social position. Undoubtedly, the massive incorporation of women into paid work has increased their bargaining power and undermined the legitimacy of men's domination as providers of the family.

The important factors that encourage women workforce to participate in IT sector are for embracing a white-collarjob with comparatively high salary, easy international mobility, gender-neutral policy based on knowledge centric skills, possession of flexible work routine and physically less demanding work process in comfortable indoor work environment. The economic empowerment of women in India is an ongoing struggle that is played out in several fields in the society.

The gateway of getting into IT sector is through higher and technical education. As such growing female participation rate in this sector has raised the claim that it has encouragedwomen of the state into professional, technical and higher education like other developed Indian states. High employment potentiality in this industry inspired a large number of girls to go for professional education, especially for the computer engineering courses. It is evident from the NASSCOM, 2013 report that only 5% to 8% of female engineering graduates were in the IT industry in 1980s

whereas this figure has shot up considerably to 20% to 25% currently.

Over the years the proportion of women workforce at entry level as well as middle level management has increased considerably in Uttar India but there is lack of adequate representation of women at the senior level. High potential women in IndianIT sector begin their careers as equals with men, but then become victims of gender gap, according a report of catalyst, a global non-profit organization expanding opportunities for women and business. "Despite very promising start, a gender gap soon results women earning less and receiving fewer opportunities that lead to advancement, conditions that contribute to fewer women in critical senior-level positions and a pay gap between women and men that expands overtime" said the report (From www.business-standard.com). It suggested that women earn less, receive fewer development opportunities that lead to advancement, and bear more responsibility at home compared to men. These lead to a lack of female talent in critical senior level positions in Indian technology sector.

The demands of high responsibility may also play a role in keeping women away from accepting such jobs. Women of the state have traditionally shied away from sales responsibilities because it involves a great deal of travel. The bulk of the significant selling in the software industry, for instance, happens overseas. The BPO industry which is a subset of the IT industry has its own unique conditions that

pose impediments to achieve a good work life balance for women. Offering a reason as to why women professional tend not to rise above a certain level, we may say that marriage, more or less, forces women to quit night shift operations.

The IT industry may be extremely significant for the employment of young female professionals, the responsibility to create nondiscriminatory and comfortable workplace environment should fall heavily on the largest and most economically significant companies in the software sector, as they have the opportunity to set precedents not only for the rest of the industry but for the employers of the country as a whole.

The economic empowerment of women in India is an ongoing struggle that is played in several fields in the society. The IT sector has to play a vital role in this struggle. Successful women have a responsibility to help other women in this sector. When one woman helps another, amazing things can happen. Professional careers leap forward. No matter where they are in their professional development, or what technology- related field they are in, they should offer a broad range of support, programmes and resource to advance other women in technology. Women careers would consequently stretch over many more years than otherwise, the dream result being greater female presence in corporate boardrooms, tomorrow. IT sector, through its employment, contributes substantially to women empowerment. However, overall satisfactory gender-neutral pursuit by this sector, an optimal

level of gender inclusivity is still to be achieved, especially to the senior level. In the context of U.P. about 50% of the state`s manpower i.e., women have tremendous potential to contribute in the economic development of the state and IT sector has to play a major role in empowering women. For women specialized support institutions hardly exist in the state to provide to their specific needs. Thus, technical training, advisory and information programmes regularly have to be carried out within a non-conventional setup. Undoubtedly, information integrated services have created innovative types of task that favour women because the technology enables work to be brought to homes and allow for better accommodation of work and family schedules. However, there are a number of significant factors preventing rural women in India from reaping the benefits of IT sector. Without developing access models that can address these factors, the rural women will be left far behind urban women who are closer to opportunities in IT sector.

The status of Indian women has been subject to many decisive changes over the past few decades. In modern India, women have adorned high offices and Integrated Technology Sectoris no exception. Nevertheless, women`s role is considered inferior because of employers predetermined notion of women`s primary role as homemakers. As a result of this discrimination women are concentrated in the secondary sector of IT industry. They are low paid and their contribution in the industry lacks potential upward mobility.All possible

measures have to be taken up by the Indian government and other IT sector development agencies for getting momentum in feminization of Integrated Technology sector in India.

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