

# CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS OF WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Accepting a woman administrator at the same level with the opposite gender at any level of hierarchy is difficult. It is a challenging task for any women administrator to demand recognition at par with their male counterpart. On one side there are traditional roles to be managed and on the other newly acquired job roles challenge the capacity of the women administrator in achieving goals in expected direction. Even though the targets are same for any administrator, the ways of achievement becomes different for administrators of different gender. Ways of working also do not appear to be same for all. A woman administrator has to prove much more than her male counterpart in order to satisfy the authorities in a formal way. Prevalent opinions about the role of women in societal functioning are causing severe impediments in the way of a woman to prove herself an able administrator. This is similar at all levels of working and more vigilant at higher levels. Even though we find examples of success at higher levels they are so scanty to be satisfied as achievement of targets specified. The number of women up in the ladder is very low compared with their male counter parts. When we ask females to open out with their problems, it is highly difficult to make them speak. Where lays the exact crux of the problem? Is it the societal attitude or the person or elsewhere? This paper is attempting to make a discussion on these attitudinal aspects of the real nature of women administrator's problems.*

## **Keywords:**

*Women Empowerment, Women Administrator, person centered perspective, structure centered perspective, culture centered perspective.*

## **Introduction**

Women's contribution to the national development is significant, even though it is not measured in an objective manner in society. Women's work is always considered as menial and not of much importance in the development of family. Only male's contribution is counted in financial terms. Women's contribution through taking part in household chores, helping men in agriculture and other field works, taking care of family members is

not taken seriously due to the attitudinal upbringing of people in society. In every society, the women has always made a significant contribution to the social product, which enables the society to live and grow, their labour contributes a substantial part of wealth that is produced in every society. Gender equality is a common feature of social oppression existing from times immemorial. In the present days of more contribution of women in national development though attaining education, empowerment and employment, it is more important to recognize the contribution of women in the economic and national development in order to plan for the future of the nation. Gender contribution in relative analysis, the social relationship and distribution of power between the genders in private as well as public sectors can prove to be helpful in understanding how such inequalities among genders are created in households, markets, states and societies. Particular reference to contribution of Women force in organizations at all level, the women work force is spread not only at the lower rung of the administration posts but also higher levels even though in a smaller portion.

## **Women and Empowerment**

The planning process of Indian government gradually shifted from women welfare and development to empowerment during 1990's. Empowerment of women means, removing the discriminatory barriers that are frequently obstructing them, or cautiously maintained as an integral part of prevalent social practices though legal processes. The identified ways of empowerment for women are-access to education, opportunity to earn through empowerment and a legal share in possessing resources to sustain life. Provisions were there for educational opportunities and employment opportunities and even to provide property and power sharing rights by governments. As a result one can witness and increasing number of women in educational institutions, employment organizations. Education is a prerequisite for women's development because over the period it has acted as a catalyst to bring a distinct change in a person or within a social situation and is perceived as a liberating instrument. Involvement of women

in developmental process depends upon their educational attainment. Education is the basic minimum requirement for creating awareness which itself is vital for the accelerate and effective participation of women. In fact, more and more of the developmental efforts for women, adopted all over the world, face the obstacle of women not being equal and effective partners. If national development and women's development have to be purposeful and relevant, women have to be full-fledged participants. Their role in development of organizations and families is recognized also. Still problem is felt with sharing of power and resources at equal status with women particularly at higher administrative levels.

### **Women and Administration**

Even though women represent a significant portion of workforce at all fields of national development, their representation is mostly seen in large number at lower rungs of the administration. The patriarchal values of society believe in providing the power and authority portions to male counterpart mostly. The top positions of authority and decision making positions are accepted to be male dominated. The convenient jobs for women were thought to be those posts where following order from authorities forms the major portion of the work. As per HDR, 1995 during 1990s the share of women as managers and administrators was just 2.9 percent in India and as professional and technical workers their share was 21.4 percent of the total percentage during the same time period in the South Asian countries. The participation of women in the process of decision making still remains a distant dream. Gender disparities in building human capabilities through education and health though significant are much narrower than the disparities in decision-making opportunities.

'The causes of women's low participation in higher administrative jobs could be attributed to the stereo type gender biases of policy makers and women have conditioned and tuned their job choices according to the cultural norms, social and normative role demands (Varghese, 1990, as cited in Agarwal, 2006). Women are denied access to power all over the world. The National Policy on Education (1986) in India recognized that the educational system must play a "positive interventionist role" in chancing social values and attitudes that obstruct women's rights and equal participation not merely in all aspects of development but even in education. "The National Education System will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new values" (GOI,

1986). Even though increasing number of women at administrative level is witnessed in today's social order, the question still unanswered is whether they are enjoying a status equal with their male counterparts. As one moves towards higher level of empowerment, there is bound to be resistance and conflict, as a threat for exclusive male privileges are felt. Their lesser representation indicates gender dominance. It shows that women's requirement and priorities at this front receive the least attention. Gender equality is a prerequisite for effective participation of women in strengthening the institutional structure of democracy (HDR, 2002). The Gnanam Committee on Alternative Models on Management set up to suggest on the administrative structure and functions of the University as a system had recommended promoting women's participation in the planning and management bodies of the departments/faculties of the universities' (Agarwal, 2006).

Singh (2002) has categorized three perspective to explain the dearth of women in semi administrative positions, namely, 'person centered', 'structure centered' and 'cultural centered'

a. The 'person centered' focus attributes the paucity of women to the psychosocial attributes, attitudes and behavioral pattern of women themselves. Women's tendencies are found to be more generous, helping out and taking over additional tasks not recognized in career terms, less ambitious and lacking motivation, often due to inadequate social support, nature of perception of women's role, reinforced by society which is inherently patriarchal, and other factors.

b. 'Structure centered' or 'Institutional centered' paradigm is a result of the disadvantageous position of women in the organizational structure-few women at top, less power, limited access to resources, bias in recruitment and promotion, and so on.

c. The 'cultural centered' approach relates to the process of socialization, carrying irrelevant gender based roles to the workplace, women's role at work place being seen as secondary to her role as homemaker and nurturer, and 'overt' and 'convert factors' that obstruct women's career paths.

The above discussion makes it clear that many perceptions loaded into the minds of people in patriarchal society influences the attitudes, motivational and interests of the women themselves while choosing the positions at organizations. We can also say that the prevalent opinions rooted deeply in the society also affect the selection procedures towards one gender most of times. A discussion on the problems is given in the following sections.

### **Problems of Women Administrators**

Socially a woman's role is seen prominent in raising the family. Society place more important on this role. So naturally women are brought up with an attitude of giving up their professional roles for family roles. Even otherwise under pressure they have to resign from the positions in the absence of support from family and others. This fear of non-corporation restricts the option of opting for the positions by themselves on part of women.

Gender biased bringing up of the women in society develops a lower level of self-concept in them. The paths of upbringing from the birth are such that male folk are given an upper hand and women folk are made to believe that they are the part of order following group. The attitudes of elderly people especially women to control the boundary of younger generation is further reinforcing the inculcation of the same values through generations. This also develops an attitude of following the views of elders to act and decide their roles of family or profession. They may be encouraging or discouraging to the women, they have to obey it.

How far a professional and educational qualification acquired by women is recognized at equal level / at par with the male counterpart at work place is a doubt. In public domains also when time of decision comes it will be mostly in favour of one gender due to patriarchal patterns percolated down from generations. Women are not able to control others attitude in this field. Even there are some shortcomings they are seen more serious in case of women than men. Even though occupied with household work, women who are coming out to work are seen relatively free than those restricted to home and so are expected to know everything in perfection. All these situations hamper the progress of women at lower rungs itself so what to talk about administrative posts. This does not mean that women's work at home is considered pious and given more recognition than those working folk coming outside. Along with qualifications, recognition of professional achievements is also not measured in a sincere way. It is same for other gender if their support level is not strong. Security problems of gender biased nature also prevent women folk to aspire for positions of higher level. It may not of physical nature but of mental nature also. Technical and technological matters are mostly controlled by male professionals. The present day of technology integrated working environment makes it difficult for women folk to easily adopt as they are not equipped either education-wise or gadget-wise to use technology more in working environment and have to be depend on their male subordinates. It is natural for women who are loaded with house and office related responsibilities to avoid new ways of working conditions like use of technology as they cannot concentrate on technological requirements

of new employment responsibilities. They prefer to follow old method of manual work. For some it is a natural tendency to avoid change due to attitudinal or pressure to be born for learning and managing other responsibilities.

The above situations are making women reluctant to accept positions of higher level. The pressure and conditions that are cropping up due to these situations make them run away from more responsibilities at least from working situations. However, the problems to be faced once a woman is given the administrative level position where power and decision making roles occupy importance are somewhat different. Expected docile nature of female even of positions of decision making roles hampers the development of the gender equality. A women administrator has to adopt a possible route of work, taking into consideration the opinions of male counterparts in spite of the relations maintained by them. Strict dealing with higher ups/colleagues in matters of administrative sensitivity is not possible unless she has strong support from administration side. Influence possessed by the person holds the key here. Just like the counterparts there are problems related with professional jealousy from other lady colleagues. Through them male colleagues can attempt to make the situation worse for the women administrator. An independence nature on part of woman to work with confidence is not tolerable to almost all sections of society. Many women feel that if a woman administrator is introducing a change, it is acceptable to male colleagues only after initial resistant and at times, they try to create hardies in the implementation of these changes which is not so in case of male administrator. But many of them feel that the woman should have the ability of convincing the staff. For this, different strategies have to be adopted by them. They face the problem as individuals and also as woman. Hence, patriarchal values have an impact on the functioning of women administrators.

**According to Agarwal, 2006**

- Women administrators felt that a woman as administrator is not easily acceptable to male staff members particularly when they are seniors. This is one of the attitudinal problems of patriarchal nature.
- Women teacher administrators are underestimated even by the non-teaching staff concerning their knowledge about rules and regulations. However, this can in the longer run be overcome by women's ability of getting the work done and knowledge about the rules and regulations. In any case, this amounts to extra



efforts on the part of women to prove their ability as administrator. Some women (nearly 10%) even feel that women can be very strong administrators if they are aware of the rules and regulations.

- Female teacher administrator for a non-teaching position is acceptable to non-teaching male staff with relatively less reluctance compared to the teaching staff.
- Class four workers (that is peons, sweepers, etc., irrespective of gender) do not easily accept a woman as administrator. They are more obedient to male administrators than to the female administrators. However, traditional socio-cultural factors play a positive role in developing a harmonious relationship and environment between the woman administrator and students.
- Women administrators do make efforts to introduce changes. Sometimes the staff is even hostile to these changes but most of the time the male staff is either non-cooperative or indifferent if the administrator is a woman.

The above findings related to women administrators in universities more or less supporting the nature of problems explained so far in general. Gender bias coupled with other general difficulties at par with their counterparts make the working of woman more difficult.

**Suggestions:** One cannot change the situations at once. Through generations of education of patriarchal values women themselves are not aware of the exploitation they undergo. They take it as a general way of life and resist the efforts of other women to come up and exercise the rights in proper way. A change in attitude of society may come gradually. The patriarchal pattern has been evolved though matriarchal forms of earlier society. But here the author's intention is not reestablishing the earlier form, but a society where both genders enjoy life with equal responsibility. Women have to adopt a stance to face the situations to come up in the ladder and also help the other woman to do so. Equipping with changing situations through development of skills of work and management makes this possible. A reservation policy in organizations may help to improve the situations. This will make administration compulsorily invite women to take up administrative posts just like Panchayatraj provisions for seats for women in specific locations. Women known as sincere, hardworking and committed to work can get a better working environment with these provisions. A better role to merit in selection must form one of the criteria of selection.

### **Conclusion**

It is not a cakewalk for any individual to maintain an administrative position with confidence without

help from authorities and colleagues. Failure on part of the administrators is not accepted in any case. But the situation is more vulnerable for a woman at administrative position because of gender. If the situation is also coupled with other variables like region, language, religion, caste it is more complicated. Womenfolk are coming out of homes to study and to earn through employment to fulfill the economic needs of other not theirs to large extent. How much they are free to select work and use the money they earn for their wishes is still doubtful in many cases. The increased educational opportunities and preference to working girl is accepted norm of the society not because of attitudinal change of gender. It is now needed fact to get a girl married and is felt comfortable by male counterpart to run a family so education and employment are sought after for women. The changed situations are not because of change in attitude to society towards women empowerment. How far as woman enjoys the fruits of achievement in all forms is the major issue. A real empowerment of women can be said to be occurring when all earning sections of women decide on their use of, accession of their earnings. When these situations occur with all the intentions of good cause of women one can expect the real empowerment of women.

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