THE ROAD MAP FOR TOMORROW

ABSTRACT

"The Road Map for Tomorrow", looks at the woman and the workplace within the Indian context. The authors discuss the paradoxical situation in India, the complexities of the country, the vast differences between rural and urban India and the baffling mix of tradition and modernity. The seemingly conflicting demands of the workplace and of motherhood and other societal roles is explored with a view to finding a 'Golden Mean', a new paradigm which may be possible in tomorrow's world, given the advent of enabling technologies and globalization. The crucial role that women can play not only in the organizational context but also in the process of nation building is discussed. The importance of Education and "Teacher Leaders" is emphasized. Women can play a vital role in this process of social transformation. The old saying, "The Child is the Father of Man" can be replaced by "the Girl Child is the Mother of Mankind".

Indian women carry the legacy of a civilization thousands of years old. This legacy is a mixed blessing, in that it is both a burden and a source of inspiration. The challenge is to distill the best from the past, transform ancient wisdom into modern day paradigms and not be shackled by the bondage of age- old dogmas and beliefs. The new millennium may well usher in an era, where not only women, but the entire human race can more easily achieve self-actualization and both professional and personal satisfaction. The leaders of tomorrow should be identified not by their gender, but by their capability and merit. The paper ends with the hopeful note that men and women will both create spaces and roles to enjoy multi-dimensional lives which are fulfilling at work and home and which allow for individual choices for personal and professional growth.

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Introduction: Women Executives in Transition

This paper is an exploration of the 'Woman' within the context of the 'Workplace' and the 'Country', all of which are undergoing fundamental transformation at the dawn of the new millenium. At a macro level, the country with its 5000 years old culture and history is still to come to grips with the modernism of the new century. Ruled by foreign invaders for centuries and by a well-entrenched internal bureaucracy during the past half century, the nation has been searching for an identity, its place in the sun and an international standing commensurate with its vast population and democratic traditions. The sheer complexity of the country, its heterogeneity, the mixes of tradition and modernity have baffled most observers. In the past decade the country has significantly opened up to trade and commerce and to new ideas, to the 'e' revolution and also to woman issues. On the other hand the divide between the privileged and the dispossessed, the rich states and the poor states, the urban woman and the village woman has paradoxically widened. Moreover, inhuman practices such as child labor continue especially in certain States. On the other hand, Indian women with the privileges of education and global exposure have excelled in business, in the arts and in the sciences. However, their less fortunate counterparts struggle in an environment where infanticide, deprivation, slavery and inequality continue as before.

In this complex backdrop, the India of today, let us examine the 'organisation', the ' woman' and the ' woman in the organisation'. The Indian organisation, be it a multinational, an Indian company, a small business, an NGO or an academic institution is a microcosm of the complexities, paradoxes and conflicts that have been detailed earlier for the country at large. The paternalistic traditional organisations and the exploitative small businesses co-exist with Indian companies and MNC s which have global perspectives and the young Turks who are driving the 'e' revolution in India and the world. Given this diversity, complexity and dichotomy, it is hard to describe a

generalized work culture for the Indian organisation. However, one can examine trends and changes that are occurring, bringing with them the opportunities and the problems endemic to globalization of the economy. Surely the trend is towards greater meritocracy, transparency, dynamism and technology-driven progress. On the flip side, the human aspect, 'human-centric' development, can potentially suffer. On balance, women can gain from this new environment in terms of open competition and adequate rewards for merit-based performance. However, this can only occur in the context of socioeconomic transformation. Clearly, only a 'Superwoman' can be a full time CEO of a corporation, a mother of several children and a dutiful wife! For women professionals to fully blossom, we have to not only create a level playing field at the workplace, but perhaps more importantly, an equitable context in the home and in the society. In other words, husbands and families who partake of the women's equity in the workplace have to start contributing to household chores and to child rearing. The technological revolution that has swept through the workplace has also to affect the home front and alleviate the inequitable workload on the working woman. We believe that the future holds unprecedented opportunities for women at the workplace due to changing societal attitudes, globalization of the economy and technological advances. However, these opportunities may be tempered by the relative inflexibility of family structures to adapt to new realities.

Attitudinal Changes among Women Executives - The Search for New Directions

Participants in interviews conducted by the authors (paper 2) were asked to address the issue, "Where are the women of today headed?" The interviewees shared their thoughts and experiences. The authors have attempted to examine the views of the participants in order to distil contemporary trends and concerns. We hope that this will lead to a better understanding of changing attitudes - both at a societal and at an individual level and an exploration of new directions that working women in India are taking.

Education has been a major reason why today's Indian women have made significant progress. Increased job opportunities have become available and women have tried to break the shackles of the past and proved themselves. According to one participant, it is

more important to prove to oneself, 'I can do it' than to prove oneself to the external world. This will make women assertive and confident and create role models for younger women to emulate. A marked increase in assertiveness, independence and career focus was noticed in interviewees from the new generation. Many of these women are better qualified than men and have the ability to professionally excel even in erstwhile male dominated organisations. Women know their rights and due to education, work opportunities, and exposure to the media, women have become more open in their thinking. "Self" has increasingly become important for the women of today, according to one of the participants in our survey. Many have adopted a highly individualistic approach to life. Women are ready to meet the demands and challenges of the workplace. This gives them satisfaction, confidence, emotional and financial security and an identity of their own. The authors believe that the new generation of women executives are assertive rather than fatalistic, ambitious rather than contented and are willing to take the risks inherent in leadership positions rather than accepting the *status quo*. We expect this to lead to a correction in the male dominated power equation within Indian organisations.

Sweeping changes are occurring at a societal level where the family is being redefined. Today the role of wife and mother is but one of many roles that a woman chooses. The family is not necessarily the only nucleus for today's woman whose world revolves around multiple nuclei. This paradigm shift has resulted in emotional replenishment being also found at work. Self-growth has become important for many women. The concept of 'I, me and myself' is becoming predominant and some women find relatedness at work more than what they experience with their friends and relatives. There has been a marked increase in the big cities and the larger towns in the number of working couples. This is sometimes driven by the economic need of having a dual income and/or the woman's unwillingness to interrupt her career for personal objectives, especially motherhood. Urban women in particular are choosing nuclear families, late marriages and postponement of childbearing. A small percentage of young couples do not choose to be parents whereas others choose to delay having children. As women become independent, some have started questioning the institution of marriage. They find it 'commitment with no growth' in comparison to the workplace where they find that 'commitment rewards them with success and growth'. Weekend marriages, single

parenting and childless marriages are becoming common in metropolitan centres. Women must strive to attain a situation where they can co-hold and balance both roles successfully. The conditioning and upbringing a woman receives in her childhood is crucial in determining her success. The main ingredient being the realisation of the power she has within herself in achieving her dreams. If she feels empowered within herself, it can go a long way in helping her to face any situation.

In view of the above, the family becomes a place where the role of working women becomes more complex than in the past. Difficulties in balancing dual roles can result in guilt and conflict. In our survey, this was especially true of women who had inadequate support systems at home or at work. Guilt is experienced due to neglect of parental duties resulting in grandparents and helpers raising children. Women are undergoing a transition, and have acquired a 'transitory identity' to which they are holding on, together with the 'identity of the past' which they do not want to let go. So on one hand although they find their dreams getting fulfilled, on the other hand the collective psyche of women which they inherit keeps reminding them of their traditional role, which culminates in guilt. Women were torn between the cognitive and the emotive facets of their personality. Today at the macro-level, women have changed, educated themselves, ventured into the professional world successfully. But at the psyche level or the micro level, the belief systems have not changed. When it comes to performing the traditional role, women have still not been able to break the shackles and it cannot be predicted when the change will come. For change to happen at the micro level inner growth and transformation are required. The challenge is for women to become both emotionally and financially independent, find happiness in themselves and not depend on others for their happiness.

On the flip side, today's women in search of individual identity, tend to become self-centred, ruthless, aggressive and rebellious. It would be useful for women to learn the art of being gentle and yet assertive. Moreover, some of the women in organisations tend to ask for special privileges without necessarily qualifying for them. Some women tend to seek emotional satisfaction from organisations and are disinterested in making a contribution to decision making. These attitudes are detrimental to women's interest in

organisations. Also, women who have stepped out in the professional world and achieved success tend to look down upon women who have not chosen to work to pursue professional career. Depending on each individual's priorities it may also be rewarding to be a successful homemaker. It is not necessary for women to be exclusively work- driven or home oriented.

Fortunately nature has made women strong. They are compassionate, sympathetic, understanding and caring. They have inborn and inherent qualities such as endurance, patience and responsibility towards work. They are tenacious and can handle pain and suffering better than men. They have the ability to struggle all their lives trying to achieve a balance. Today's progressive world is better allowing women to attain a balance. A number of working women can handle job- related responsibilities and can do well even without family support. Men on the other hand have not had the experience of running a house as well as having a career. Men are less able to manage their life without family support and are emotionally pampered. Women appear to be more focussed and organised than men especially in handling multiple roles. Today's working women need to leverage these inherent strengths and find their feet within the context of the organisation. Their new found assertiveness coupled with structural changes within the organisation and at the societal level will enable them to successfully evolve from their current 'transitory identity' towards a better defined identity that recognises their work as well as their personal life roles.

Transformation in the Socio-cultural Milieu

Social transformation not only pertains to redefining Motherhood for working women but also to male managers examining their role as fathers and finding synergies between the two roles. Marjosola.I.A., and Lehtinen.J.(1998) have examined the question," How can one get over one's narcissism, partly generated in childhood ?and how can one prevent the problem from being transferred to the next generation ? The focus has been on the impact of parental relations on the childhood of a male manager where his current family life and the father's role has not been recognized. This is probably because private life and parental duties have been seen as separate from professional life. If male managers

can recognize their importance as fathers, they may learn something important from their parenthood for their work as leaders. This means valuing social fatherhood in addition to biological fatherhood as part of a man's life, that is, also as a part of a male manager's life." The authors further state that " the image of managers, of fathers and of masculinity are under re-construction. Being a father and learning social fatherhood from it, may strengthen and diversify the gender identity of a male manager. The images and mythology about managers will be challenged on several levels if we begin to look at male managers not only as heroes of the economic society, but at the same time as parents to their children."   If one goes back to the traditional beliefs of child rearing, parenting and schooling, one can better understand the male - female dichotomy at the workplace. Parents were used to appreciating independence, aggressiveness and competitive spirit in boys and believed that the qualities of gentleness, submissiveness and service to others were female virtues. This lead to gender stereotypes becoming entrenched. Due to these past reinforcement patterns, boys and the girls carried with them a gender-related map which superimposed upon their behavioral patterns in adulthood (Powell, 1988). According to Brandt .B. and Kvande.E. (1992)," If a male manager takes parental leave and stays at home to take care of his child, this may break the mythology of what it means to be a real man or a real manager. Parental leaves for males are a way of challenging and reconstructing fatherhood and at the same time they may change ideas and stereotypes of masculinity itself."

Clearly, a fair-minded evaluation of the strengths and constraints of both the sexes is required. There is a need for a mutually agreed to workplace paradigm that enables optimal manpower utilization for the organisation as well as individual job satisfaction and fulfillment to both male and female stakeholders in an organisation. The Woman's Liberation Movement that became extremely prominent from the 1960's onwards was a reaction to discriminatory attitudes towards women. Those times are now behind us (although unfortunately not for rural women), and this is an opportune time to break free from the pendulous shifts between oppression and rebellion. We believe that it is possible to evolve a new paradigm with creativity, boldness and the ability to think afresh. Given the monumental technological progress that has been achieved in the Industrial Age during the last century and the present Information Age, it may be possible to progress towards a 'Human Age' where Technology is harnessed for the

holistic development of each individual. Following the successful revolution triggered by the Woman's Liberation Movement, the time has come for women to occupy their rightful place in the workplace and in the society. If "the Child is the father of Man", then perhaps "the Girl-child is the mother of Mankind." The challenge is to achieve Liberation in its true sense in one generation of women, which will then become a self-perpetuating phenomenon.

An excellent article " Women and Households in a changing world" (1991), further elaborates on the need for a holistic concept of human development and the need for social transformation. The authors in the article argue that " the most fundamental attribute of the household as the basic living unit is its ability to meet the material and non material needs of its members. Changes in the form of internal or external relationships, which inhibit the household's capacity to do this, must be considered inimical to the goals of social stability and personal well being. Those that enhance the household's capacity and flexibility must be considered beneficial". The article further mentions that " Obsolete stereotypes and attitudes are a major obstacle to the flexibility that facilitates adaptation. Attempts to modify these through socialization and education will only be successful if attitudinal change is encouraged by real options for new behavior. Women's ability to cope and adjust is constrained by their subordinate position in households and society. Measures which enshrine legal and rhetorical recognition of their rights as individuals, and value of their role should be accompanied by practical steps to support and enhance them. Equitably shared domestic responsibilities and equal access to the economic opportunity would strengthen all households of all kinds and reduce their vulnerability in transitional phases". A recent study by Kinnunen .U. and Mauno .S., (1998), examined the prevalence, antecedents and consequences of work-family conflict among employed men and women in Finland. Using a sample of 501 employees in four organisations, results obtained from the data showed that "family-work conflict was best explained by family domain variables, (e.g., Number of children living at home) for both sexes, and work-family conflict by work domain variables, (e.g., full time job, poor leadership relations) among the women and by high education and high number of children living at home among men. Family–work conflict had negative consequences on family well-being and work-family conflict, in particular on occupational well-being. The findings suggest that improvements in working life are needed to prevent

problems in the work-family interface." We are unsure of the relevance of this in the Indian context and this would be an important topic for local study. However, it is worth noting that the trends observed in this study may be indicative of Indian metropolitan cities and that workplace issues need systemic corrections for the benefit of employees of both the sexes.

Participants in interviews conducted by the authors were asked how the society and family were responding to the New Age women who want to balance the demands of home and career. In general, women were respected by their family members, including husband and in-laws and there was no significant opposition to their assuming a dual role as homemakers and working women. In situations where the family assumed an unnecessarily orthodox stand, women asserted themselves and fought for their rights. Although there is general acceptance of working women within the family and an appreciation of the benefits of dual income, the familial demands on women are unreasonable.

While the current corporate environment is quite supportive of working women the society at large is still patriarchal. This is particularly so in joint families where the woman is expected to be a dutiful wife, mother and daughter-in-law. Some of the participants in our survey reported a feeling of resentment towards the working women on the part of the older generation women in the family (who may have themselves not had the opportunity to pursue a career) and also subtle differential treatment towards the working son versus the new phenomena—the working daughter-in-law. The traditional Indian mindset expects woman to be a dutiful wife and mother, with scant concern for the efforts she has to put in at the workplace. Moreover the definition of duty according to an elder person in a family is usually inconsistent with a working women's concept of being dutiful. This results in familial tension and stress and a further widening of the generation gap evident in extended families which are still quite common in India.

A large majority of men in organisations have non-working spouses. Many of these women are either uneducated or restrained from developing their careers due to familial

pressures. The husband working with women colleagues often leads to insecurity for the traditional wife. Many men do not take the responsibility of mentoring or guiding their wives to a path where she gains an identity. For some men to accept a women in office is easy but to see their own wife working is difficult. Most men still feel, "why should my wife work? what is the need for my wife to work since I can run the house comfortably?" Few see the working woman as a person in her own right, giving expression to her individual identity. The need of the hour is an attitudinal change on the part of society, in terms of accepting a woman as she is, and not as they think she should be.

Clearly, this is a transition phase where women who perform the roles of mother as well as working person need to be supported by husbands who also could learn to perform two roles. In a joint family situation increased fair play and sensitivity towards the needs of the working woman are needed. Although working women get a lot of encouragement and support from their husbands, they do not get any domestic or household help from them. The challenge before the women of today is to bring up their male progeny in a manner that they also learn to manage multiple roles right from the formative years. Our research showed that times are rapidly changing during this transition phase and the environment is becoming more liberal and accepting of working women. The prototypical Indian mother-in-law is also changing and cannot be stereotyped. Women have started voicing their feelings. Openness and communication is helping them to build bridges at home with in-laws, hopefully heading towards a brighter and better tomorrow. Women increasingly know what they want, where to reach and are exercising their right, to choose and shape their own destiny. Women have also become more independent due to financial security. In many cases, the husband is now perceived more as a friend who feels proud to see his wife progress in her chosen profession. Although women are capable and efficient at the workplace, the problem arises when they are also expected to play their traditional household role without additional support from the family. We believe that realism should be brought to bear on this situation and that new balances have to emerge within the home and work settings. Changes in the upbringing patterns of children and education will be the drivers of this transformation for future generations.

Education and the Information Revolution as Drivers of Change

The way forward lies in education-centered societal transformation. This is particularly relevant in the Indian context given societal disparities, social taboos, widespread illiteracy and the pre-dominance of rural women. Dr.Mashelkar, R.A., (Director General,Council for Scientific and Industrial Research) in a Presidential address in the 87th Science Congress meet held at Pune on January 3, 2000 proposed a five-point agenda focussing on child-centered education where the role of teachers and schools is stressed as being important in molding the children of tomorrow. On one hand we have the technological revolution, but on the other hand our systems of education are archaic. The Indian child instead of being molded by " discovery and experience ", is being taught by " rote and repetition ".   The inherent creativity in the child therefore stands diminished. Individuality and imagination are inadequately nurtured in our current education system. India's hallowed tradition of *"Guru- Shishya parampara"* has been significantly compromised in recent years. Many Western societies today have become centers of learning due to their respect for Education, and even more so for Educators, who by definition are not only educated but educate others. Indian society today has degenerated to the point where criminals win elections from prisons, corrupt businessmen are revered and gangsters rule the roost. India, the ancient seat of learning for the world, today witnesses frantic cues of youngsters outside the U.S embassy to flee the country for a better education and a merit-based environment. The Indian teachers of today, underpaid and undervalued are also contributing to the self-fulfilling prophecy that is our deteriorating educational system.

We would like to submit that it is not the teachers who are at fault, they are after all a by-product of the society and its value-system. The mother, the child, the father and the teachers make up this system and are in turn shaped by the system. Perhaps the best way to break this negative cycle is to create a new generation of "teacher leaders" with strong values and a mission to shape the generation of tomorrow. We quote excerpts from a speech by Mrs. Anu Agha (Chairperson, Thermax Ltd) at the Eklavya Excellent Award function held on Sept 5, 1999 in Ahmedabad. According to her, "Teaching is a human activity. Intellect does not teach intellect. People teach people. No matter how

factually accurate and time-tested our data, true learning emerges only when we honor the human factor. If we can emotionally reach out to every child –their interest in learning will be created. The teacher's job is not to separate the gifted from the ordinary, but to find gifts in the ordinary. The worth of a student is far beyond academic brilliance. Most schools take an easier option and have strict entrance exams before they select a student, and later weed out poor performers rather than concentrating on upgrading skills of the teachers. Teachers must believe in the unlimited potential of every student. Potential is invisible to the superficial gaze. It takes patience and faith to discern it. Each student is a material for a work of art and a beautiful piece can be sculpted out. On the other hand, if the teacher does not believe in the student's potential, it sows seeds of doubt in the student's mind. Picking up negative signals, students withdraw and stop taking risks. When this happens everyone loses. Teachers must have the humility that there is a lot that they know and that they need to be continuously in search of knowledge and remain student themselves. They also have to realize that there are many things that they can learn from a child. Education needs to move away from teacher-centered learning to a student -centered approach. In teacher-centered learning, the teacher is the expert and the students are sponges that passively absorb whatever is doled out. To make education student-centered would require a lot of creative preparation by the teachers and a high degree of emotional involvement with the students."

In today's Information Age, a child's impressionable mind is significantly influenced by the media. The messages conveyed by the omnipresent TV serials often reinforce gender stereotypes. Although today's Television takes cognizance of the working woman, the role stance typically adopted by female characters is reactionary. Even though such role profiles are not entirely inaccurate, children receive stereotyped messages of woman. For e.g., the mother being portrayed as a submissive housewife or at the other extreme as a ruthless, career-oriented go-getter who ignores her family. A wholesome depiction of a person, male or female, is infrequently found in present day media which seems to thrive on a diet of stereotyped stories and jingles. These coding derived from the institutions of family and school and also from the media are inevitably carried into the workplace by both men and women employees (Powell 1988). This baggage of the past usually comes in the way of creativity, originality and effectiveness

at the work place. Thus, the negative energies that are expended at the workplace in re-creating role plays based on these stereotypical coding of the past need to be re-channeled into creative actions and fresh thinking.

Redefining the Workplace: Responsibilities for Creating a New Tomorrow

We have examined in this paper, 'a road less traveled'. Women across three generations have come a long way in terms of gaining freedom of expression and action which was always rightfully theirs. The past few decades have also witnessed various experiments in terms of working women balancing their professional and personal dreams and responsibilities. In both men and women, there has been change and transformation, sometimes through pro-active processes and sometimes through traumatic conflict situations. New paradigms have evolved at the workplace, many of which are creative and flexible rather than being rooted in past dogmas. Mattel Inc. has for the first time positioned Barbie doll as a working woman, who carries a brief case and works at a computer terminal in her private office. The working version of Barbie also comes with a gold credit card of her own depicting that Mattel's Barbie is no longer just a pretty face, (Business Week, 1985).

Participants in our survey were asked," how are organisations responding to entry of more and more women at the workplace?" It is observed that men are increasingly accepting of women in the more enlightened organisations. In some cases female bosses have also found acceptance, although such situations are still the exception rather than a norm. It is now possible in some cases for women to surpass their male colleagues at the workplace. HRD departments are increasingly learning to leverage the inborn talents of their female employees in terms of inter-personal skills, crisis management and overall ability to manage diverse roles. The better women managers have an enormous capacity to cope with conflicts and can be more resilient and strong than their male counterparts. Organisations have realized that women are capable, have tremendous capacity to work hard, are sincere, and can be outstanding managers and leaders.

However, some of the women participants in our survey expressed a contrary view. Women managers have negative experiences due to male insecurity and apprehension about women taking over their dominant roles in the organisation. This insecurity is sometimes manifest in wild accusations about successful women. This absurd thinking and behavior stems from an inferiority complex found in certain male managers. Moreover, many organisations are obsessed with short term work goals and financial imperatives to the detriment of human development . Money seems to be the main currency in the organization, for the employee, for client relationships and for virtually every other work context. This is akin to a pendulum at one extreme which needs to come back to balance in the center, where value building will need much more energy and attention.

Clearly, in today's organisations, facilitating policies and practices for both men and women at the workplace need to be implemented in a manner that is fair and equitable but at the same time productive and efficient. Company run crèches, flexitime, 'e'-enabled work in the organisation and at home, paternity leave etc., are examples of policies practised by progressive organisations. Organisations need to become increasingly sensitive towards personal and familial responsibilities of their female employees. There could also be job-sharing arrangements between two or more women within the organisation. Clearly, adjustments and sacrifices are required from both the organisation and the individual.

The 21st century holds great hope and promise for women in the workplace. The various changes and attitudinal changes that have occurred during the last 50 years bear testimony to the rapid evolution in societal attitudes towards women in general and towards working women in particular. The relatively recent Western way of life, involving dual income families and gender equality has spread throughout the world. It is quite possible that the eras of Technology and Information will evolve into a new era of holistic human development and progress. De-construction of age old patterns, systems and mindsets are leading to a new renaissance in human thinking, gender relationships and synergism across various facets of human life.

Is all the above a wishful thinking? On the one hand we have progressive organisations in India and across the world where men and women both have made great progress. On the other hand, the 21st century still witnesses the hangover of the darker side of the previous century. Gender bias, race bias, age bias continue unabated. It should also be said that women have contributed in equal measure by perpetuating traditional gender biases and often taking self-centred stands when they reach positions of authority. The results and analysis of a survey on working women in the West is found in a book edited by Konek, C.W.,etal (1994). It was found that most career women advocate working harder and better on an individual basis before advocating collective policy or legal changes. They rely on their ability to overcome the odds even if they are built into the system in which they live and work. They are focussed on individual success. The authors in this book opine that although this belief may reflect the participant's optimism and initiative, it may also interfere with their dedication to fight for justice for other women. The authors further suggest that " If we do not work to change a system that includes structural inequities, every women who follows us including our daughters, would start over alone. If we do not work to make our professions, organisations and society responsive to the needs of women, we may unwittingly complicit with a system that underestimates women's worth and undervalues women's work." According to the authors, "The lessons of the past tell us that reluctance to work for structural change may cause a woman to underestimate the willingness of her colleagues, male and female, to engage in partnership strategies for the realisation of social justice and she may underestimate her capacity to influence the transformation of society. By recognising the importance of taking collective action with other women, she may more fully realise her own potential.

Moreover, the progress achieved by women in the workplace in the last few decades does not cut across the board. With vast disparities between women in different countries, between urban and rural women and women in different socio-economic strata, these discrepancies are particularly pronounced in the Indian context. Clearly, a long and difficult road lies ahead. However, one can take satisfaction from the fact that at least the path seems to be in the right direction. Learning, communication and

transformation is also likely to be much faster in the new age due to the Internet revolution. Undoubtedly, women have made enormous progress in recent years and hopefully this is a harbinger of overall societal transformation. The progress that has been made needs to be built upon. The new paths that have been traversed need to be reinforced, so that more can travel more easily. Various role-models in India and across country in varied walks of life are now available for inspirational support.

Success Strategies for the Corporate Women of Tomorrow

Research conducted by these authors including surveys of working women in India, indicates that today's women can do a lot more to shape their future. In this paper, we have examined opportunities and challenges facing women at the workplace, at home and at the societal level. It is necessary for women to more fully understand the environment, exploit available opportunities and become change agents in order to create a better tomorrow for the next generation of working women. A deeper understanding of the environment will better enable women to introspect, determine their own career path and prioritize what is important to them. Although commonalties exist across the spectrum of working women in India, each individual needs to determine her own priorities and then strategize and endeavor to shape her own unique destiny.

 Discussed below are some success strategies for working women of tomorrow. Some of these pertain to attitudinal changes and personal transformation, whereas others are practical, action oriented strategies and tactics.

- Women should become change agents and strive for leadership roles within the organizational context. They should avoid taking the path of least resistance and have the courage of conviction to break barriers that come in the way of women assuming leadership roles. Rather than compete, they should lead. Rather than becoming clones of men at the work place, they should leverage their inherent strengths in order to bring new dimensions and value to the organisation. Women possess the qualities of resilience, patience, empathy, compassion, emotional intelligence, service orientation and an understanding of human interfaces which are

arguably superior to many men. These qualities along with business skill sets that education have provided, can be a winning combination that can catapult women to leadership positions within Indian organisations. Women should not loose touch of their femininity but rather bring bear their unique qualities to the workplace. They can bring about qualitative change in the world of business and commerce through their values and by introducing a holistic human development perspective at the workplace.

- Many working women are aggressive but not assertive. This leads to a reactionary negative cycle at the workplace. Women need to be gentle yet assertive in terms of getting across their view point at the workplace. They need to evolve from a reactionary mindset to a pro-active and positive attitudinal frame of mind. They should build negotiability with male colleagues at the workplace, at the same time women need to retain their individuality and personality rather than try to be "someone else" to gain acceptability from the traditional system. Although difficult in the short term, this stance will result in respect for women within the organisation in the long run and a better acceptance of their unique identity. Tomorrow's woman will "listen to her heart beat" since otherwise she will soon become a rebel without a cause.

- It is important for women who succeed in the corporate world to give something back in return for the individual success they have achieved. These women can become successful role models for younger aspirants and can use the power and respect that they command within the organisation to bring about structural changes beneficial to other working women.

- Women need to re-look at their attitudes and roles within the context of the family and home. They need to explore the shared space shared space which they can create for themselves and their husband. This is essentially an encounter between a woman and a man who are co-creating a home and a family relevant to the times. The ability to communicate and negotiate will be important for achieving a harmonious and balanced life. In this context, the husband becomes a friend and a co-traveler on the path of life. Tomorrow's women need to introspect, establish priorities and thoughtfully determine their own life path. Stereotyped definitions of

the past are melting away to reveal new choices for tomorrow's woman. For example, should she marry or be a single career person? If she chooses to marry, when should she marry and when should she plan a family? Should she choose a nuclear family or a joint family, either with her husband's folks or her own folks? Tomorrow's choices will be made based on a combination of personal preferences and outside realities, but less so through pre-conceived notions of the past. There is no one right choice. Different individuals will choose differently to suit their own personalities and needs. The only common aspect is the right to choose. Once the foundation of dialogue and choice is established, decisions regarding balancing work and other life roles become easy. Taking responsibility for one's own life is not easy, but is undoubtedly the best option for women of tomorrow.

- The definition of 'home maker' needs to be re-defined to include both the wife and the husband. It needs to be understood by the husband and the family that a free and fulfilled women will be the mother of a strong and free new generation. Families that partake of a working woman's equity need to reciprocate by sharing the woman's workload at home. For the current transition phase to be successful it is necessary that there is attitudinal transformation not just at the workplace but also at the familial and societal levels. We believe that communication, negotiation and assertiveness are important for tomorrow's women to achieve the objectives detailed above.

- Tomorrow's women should see themselves within the context of the age they live in. The Information Age will allow them to leverage available technology to the fullest and to overcome perceived handicaps of the past. Enabling technologies allow the possibility for women to excel in a virtual environment where home-offices, flexi- time etc., become possible.

- Organisations need to more fully understand and realize the latent potential in their female workforce. Policies and systems that are customized and tailored to enable and empower working women can become a competitive business advantage for enlightened organisations. These changes will occur at the workplace only if working women actively seek to be change agents and if women leaders of today look beyond their individual success to bring about structural change for the larger good.

- Women also need to become change agents at the societal level recognizing the power of Education, Media and representation at the political level to shape societal behavior. It is also important for women to fully appreciate the power of education and to realize that it is education that has brought them to the present stage of progress. Sadly, Indian women often under utilize their education and frequently fail to upgrade their professional skill sets after marriage. Tomorrow's women need to focus on continuous education and also on the fullest utilization of their knowledge and skills at the workplace. It is important to understand that the woman is also the mother of tomorrow's generation and her upbringing of children can play a fundamental role in creating a superior new generation of men and women.

In summary, we believe that successful strategies for tomorrow's working women need to be within the larger framework of the society as a whole. Women need to take responsibility for their own lives and also for bringing about societal transformation.

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