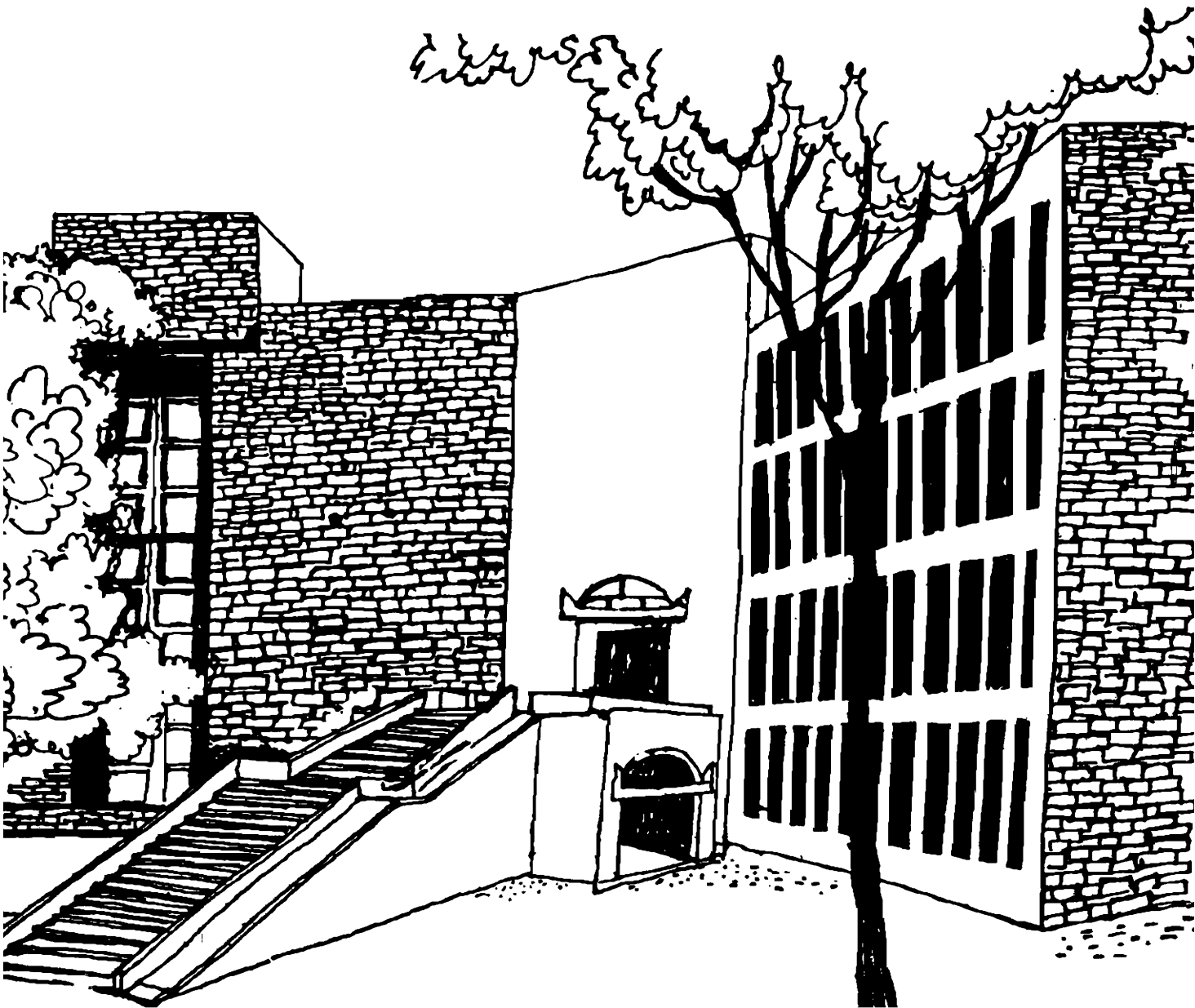




Working Paper



WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT - A MOVEMENT FROM
FIFTIES TO THE NEXT MILLENNIUM

By

Indira J. Parikh

Mahrukh Engineer
(Project Associate)

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at

Mudra Institute of Communications, Ahmedabad

**Indira J Parikh, Professor,
&
Ms. Mahrukh Engineer, Project Associate**

**Indian Institute of Management,
Ahmedabad**

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**Indira J Parikh, Professor,
Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad**

**Ms. Mahrukh Engineer, Project Associate,
Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad**

Abstract

This paper provides a panoramic view of Indian Women in Management from the 1950's to the end of the present century. The paper then looks at new opportunities for women managers in the next millennium.

Women in Management are coming of Age. The transformation of the Indian women from an enigmatic figure clad and covered in metres of fabric to today's educated, capable, successful and accomplished women has not been without great personal sacrifices. These are women who have broken shackles thousands of years old, who have walked a previously untraversed path, who have had the courage to make new beginnings and to pay the price for the choices they have made.

The paper discusses 5 phases of evolution of the Indian Women's role in management, spanning 5 decades of this century and the transition to the new millennium. The first phase represented tentative beginnings, where women entered the workplace to utilise their education and time, the second where they struggled to break through the invisible barriers of promotions and senior positions, the third phase where the women competed for careers and opportunities in the organization, the fourth phase representing the 1990's, where the organizations and the society saw the evolution of a mature career - person, with professional ambitions and aspirations matching her male-counterpart. The consequent evolution of the environment, both at home and at workplace, witnessed societal changes in terms of an increased acceptance by families and colleagues at workplace of the women's new role.

As always change has not been easy but the fact that Indian women now occupy positions and rightful place in the corporate world bears testimony to their fortitude, patience and courage.

This paper ends with women's role in the new millennium having traveled a long distance. Women in management now need not be the rebels of the past, but can enjoy lifestyles that do justice to both home and work. Flexible corporate structures and norms, enabling technologies and liberalised societal expectations will facilitate women to climb the upper rungs of the corporate ladder without necessarily sacrificing their femininity and or role of motherhood.

The paper concludes on 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 and for personal and professional growth.

WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT - A MOVEMENT FROM FIFTIES TO THE NEXT MILLENIUM

**Indira J Parikh, Professor,
Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad**

**Ms. Mahrukh Engineer, Project Associate,
Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad**

Women carry a cultural heritage and civilisation of five thousand years, social structures and role processes of two thousand years, five hundred years of a traditional agrarian society, one hundred years of experiencing change in business in industrialisation, and fifty years of freedom of education and realization of new aspirations and dreams to be and become themselves in the next millenium.

The Indian women were seeped in cultural lore of idealism and faith, chained and shackled in the oppression and conformity of social structures and roles, and marginalised vis a vis the males of the family. The women juggled with multiple expectations and demands of systems and settings of home and work but were grounded with their dreams of freedom, aspirations and achievements to rise the corporate ladder.

The transformation of Indian women today is from an enigmatic figure clad and covered in meteres of fabric to an educated, capable, competent, successful go-getter. This image is as real and alive as the arduous path she has travelled in five thousand years to arrive where she has arrived in the last fifty years.

Who are these women who have dared to walk an untraversed path, and who have had the courage to make new beginnings and pay the price of the choices they have made? Let us take a look at the history of the paths women have travelled. This paper is a continuity from the earlier study of "Career Paths of women in Management in India", Indira J Parikh, 1990, "Women Managers in Transition: From Homes to Corporate Offices", Indira J Parikh & Nayana A Shah, 1991, "Changing Patterns of Women's Identity", Indira J Parikh & Nayana A Shah, 1992, etc.

The data of all these papers is based on at least few hundred life stories of women in the organisational context who experienced anguish and pain, who struggled putting in a lot of effort, who achieved and succeeded to rise beyond themselves and the given settings. The women in the first and the given settings of freedom had access to education. Education opened doors for a whole lot of women to dare to dream, and weave a fabric of life in which they would play an equal and a significant role. The journey which many women took in this century began with the freedom movement, leading into the forties and fifties and is today at the threshold of the next millenium.

In this paper we take a look at , who these women were and what they did with their lives. Starting from the nineteen forties, fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties which includes the data from the previous work done as mentioned earlier, we journey into the nineteen nineties and move towards the new millenium. Exploring how the woman of today has travelled a long way and has created a niche for herself both at the homefront and at the workplace, we examine the space she has created for herself in the socio-cultural context, and how she has managed the new role and given shape to new patterns of identity to meet the challenges in the next millenium.

PHASE I: WOMEN IN THE FIFTIES

The women of the fifties fall into two categories. Two sets of women entered the organizations for two distinct reasons. One set took up jobs exclusively for economic and monetary reasons. These women were educated and the family required the resources. The second set belonged to business and professionally oriented families. The women were educated, were not compelled to do household chores, were intelligent and capable and wanted to utilize their education and or their time in purposive activities. Some women entered formal work organization or businesses due to the loss or death of a family member and the women took on the role of income

generation and home responsibilities. A large number of these women took on marginal and infrastructural service roles. In their attitudes they brought the baggage of social structures, roles and relational processes. The organizations and the men too related with the women locating them in social structures and social role expectations. These women, men and organizations focused on the job but also related with each other in traditional social roles.

Personal history and data of many of these women suggest that in the initial phases of entry into the jobs women did not rise very high in the hierarchy of the organizations. Moreover, many women carried far greater responsibilities than their designation or status in the organization. The women in management had become reliable and dependable and as such indispensable in the organization. Like the social system in the organization women were taken for granted but to the women it was good enough to be indispensable in their responsibility. They had a job which gave them meaning, a steady income and were making good use of the education they had received (Parikh and Garg (1982). They were dependable and reliable at one level and at another level they were pioneers forging a new role and a space for themselves as well as for the coming generations of women.

These women managed the home, children and fulfilled all the social role obligations. For the women, it was unthinkable to state that they were often extending and stretching themselves. They hoped for an understanding of their aspirations and support in their other roles. However, they would not ask for this help either from the husband, the inlaws or the children. Children continued to be brought up in the traditional way. Children created guilt and anxiety in the women as the mothers were

not like other traditional mothers. The husband and the extended family expected from the woman all social roles to be fulfilled in the traditional manner. Her work was a luxury and a privilege given by the husband and could be taken away if other roles were not fulfilled to the satisfaction of either himself or other members of the home. The women had discovered that besides the social role, work provided a meaning to them. This new found personal meaning created anxiety in the social system. The women themselves experienced work as a privilege for themselves and an opportunity which, many others did not have. The additional income meant that women contributed to a different status and quality of life – the belief for the family was that women were going out for themselves and they really did not need that extra income.

As such, the women in the first phase of entry held on tenaciously to whatever was available, whatever was given and contributed their best to both the systems. They fulfilled social role responsibilities as their duty and sought a sense of fulfillment in their accomplishments. However, they remained caught between the pulls and pushes of both systems. Their attitudes as well as that of the organization's remained rooted in the traditional modality. This aspect was most visible in the sphere of authority. Women found it extremely difficult to exercise legitimate functional authority either downward with their male subordinates, rarely upward with superiors for task purposes or laterally with colleagues for effective performance. They could only plead, cajole, persuade and or use social skills to get tasks done. Organizationally, it was difficult for women to have a similar career path and growth as that of their male counterparts. Existing cultural and societal patterns of discrimination and deprivation continued to make inroads into evaluation and promotion policies of the organization.

PHASE II: WOMEN IN THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES

By the mid sixties women in significant numbers had entered the portals of formal education both at the primary and higher levels. In the realm of work, women opened up new frontiers. These women had grown up with education as a given reality and dreams of a different role and life for themselves. They entered organizations in large numbers and aspired for career growth in the organization. This was quite unlike their mothers who had stayed home or the women in organization before them who were satisfied with the responsibilities but did not actively seek career paths. These were the second generation of working women who had aspirations to perform and be rewarded, could walk alongside men and do as well or better, could deliver results without seeking privileges of social roles and were not complaining. They were willing to stay longer hours, and perform and prove their capabilities. They also demanded that the organization needed to review their policies and take stock of women's contribution rather than just give responsibilities or keep them in infrastructural or marginal roles.

In this phase of history and the movement of the country education provided increased knowledge base for both men and women and the organizations experienced unprecedented growth opportunities. This led to a faster pace of movement in the career paths of employees.. Some of the new realities of women in management in India in phase two of their career path reflect the following patterns:

1. Women regarded work as an integral aspect of their life space.
2. Income generation and a career choice both were equally significant.
3. Educated and qualified the women aspired for a different role and life vis-à-vis their

mothers and grandmothers.

4. The women wanted both homes, marriage and children as well as a career.
5. The women accepted the social traditional role behaviour from the older generation but from their husbands, colleagues and children they expected understanding and support in their career paths. They looked for redefintion of roles and redesigning of systems.
6. In managerial roles the women were willing to carry their share of the work responsibilities but also wanted participation in policy formulation and decision making. They wanted their voices to be heard as employees and managers of the tasks and not through social role relationships.

In essence, the generation of women who entered management sought jobs and careers which gave significant meaning to their lives. Work was not just a job to manage their boredom or put education and investment to good use. Work was significant in itself. Moreover, working women had acquired an immense significance in the social system. In the social setting a job was a life time income generation, and an insurance against maltreatment or mistreatment by the in-laws. A job had also become a means of respect and had proved its potentials of giving them autonomy and self-reliance. The income also added to the social status and a quality of life style in the extended family, which otherwise was not possible.

The women in this phase were beginning to forge a career for themselves and create a path in the organizations. But they had no women role models. They made successful men as their role models. Many women became assertive and sometimes aggressive. They became ambitious and sometimes competitive. To some work acquired a larger

meaning giving dimension in their lives. In this role model many women were willing to give up marriage and devote large part of their time, effort and energy to success in work. Work and organization acquired the role of a husband. Some women married and had children. They experienced problems in their spouses as well as children accepting the new kind of a wife, mother and the person she was emerging as. The husband and the children logically accepted and understood the change but found it most difficult to realign and redesign their roles. Like the society and culture these women were part of a transition. These women were pioneers who were defining a role for themselves with new coordinates and new dimensions of role space and systems. However, one thing was clear. With no female organizational role models and emulating successful male role models for their role taking many women paid a huge price. Parikh and Garg (1989).

The men were anxious and apprehensive about women's emerging ambition and aspirations. The women as well as men were unable to own up or relate to their femininity. Women also experienced their femininity as a liability and pushed it aside. Many searched for meaningful and satisfying relationships but ended up lonely and desperate. This further pushed them into work, achievements and career success. These were the women who unlike their earlier generation confronted men and organizations as women who were capable, competent, successful and as devoted to work as any men in the organization. The women were equally qualified and proved their abilities and capabilities to perform. They were willing to take responsibilities without seeking privileges. They were willing to perform and be evaluated for their performance. They were willing to take challenges and achieve results. The realities of organizations acquired significance. The social structure and processes however, did

not keep pace with the emerging realities of women and their career aspirations. In this phase also the pressure on women from the families continued to be anchored in social roles and responsibilities. There were many debates as to the fate of children growing up without the stable and continuous presence of the mother at home. Any reference to the enhanced quality of life brought a retort that it was not necessary.

A significant number of women from the fifties and sixties broke the barrier of junior level of management and entered middle level of management. This breakthrough was also reinforced by women entering directly at the middle level of management based on their professional education. They became equipped with management knowledge, skills, tools and techniques. They successfully crossed the examinations to enter the next level promotions. They proved their capabilities and competence, achieved their tasks and targets and performed well. The women began to earn respect from their superiors, colleagues and subordinates.

This new space and new role taking broke many a social stereotypes and myths about women and what they could or could not do. It brought reluctance to acceptance of their arrival, location and space in the organization.

PHASE III: WOMEN IN THE EIGHTIES

This was the era of professionals and professionalism. Women of fifties, sixties and seventies had accepted both their social and work roles. They played the social role in the traditional mode and to some extent carried that to the organization. They rode

two horses and kept the spaces separate. The model of men in successful career paths meant women had to surrender their femininity and sacrifice personal lives and relationships. Some women experienced motherhood as a chore and a responsibility. This created dilemmas of choice between one or the other roles or systems. Women ended up becoming more like men managers. For women, work and working in organization were necessary but for a large sector of women in management, marriage, was equally important and so was motherhood and social relations. However, the women of the eighties were not satisfied with this fragmentation and differentiation. They were over competent and underutilised in their middle managerial positions. They had their personal vision of organization membership, their career paths, and their location in the structure of the organization based on their qualification and competence. The women of the eighties had invested in themselves, designed a role and life space where they could manage their home and work interfaces and respond to the challenges and opportunities in the formal work organization.

However, one of the difficulties for women of the eighties has been the dilemma of either or choices. When women have moved from the location of a job orientation to a career orientation they have believed that their social roles and systems and existing relationships have to be sacrificed. They have postulated and very often rightly so, that the social systems, role and relationships anchored in traditional culture becomes a barrier and constraint to their growth in career and making choices in the organization. Confronted with this either or many women opted for limited job orientation and remained rooted in social systems, roles and relationships.

Women, who chose the career paths believed that choice of a career meant sacrificing

a part of themselves and their identify. They either had troubled marriages or experienced upheavals in their personal lives and roles of wife and mother. They anchored themselves in their organization and work. This choice also left the women feeling denied and deprived of their multiplicity. They overloaded the organizations for their search for meaning and fulfilment. Organizations by their very nature cannot be the totality of an individual's meaning and fulfilment. In our view, the concept of personal sacrifice as the only alternative for career choice is anchored in the cultural and social codings of women which the women carries to the organization's management. There has evolved over centuries the universal slogan that culture and society in India has contributed to the barriers and constraints of women in their organization roles and career paths. This belief may have some reality base in the experience as well as the culture but it is not the total reality. Women need to examine the strengths and the positive processes which Indian culture provides women. The universal slogans, processes and framework need to be examined in the context of Indian cultural realities for a more realistic appraisal so that the women can take support from the positives of the socio cultural and familial context to make meaningful choices and actions.

PHASE IV: WOMEN IN THE NINETIES

The women of the nineties emerged as a qualitatively different breed of women. The upbringing and education of women in the nineties have been different than what it was for women of the prior generation. Women in the nineties increasingly have Role Models anchored in their own gender - mothers, aunts and teachers who themselves have had successful careers and who inspired the young women of today to take up

new challenges, explore new vistas, find fulfillment and compete and work with men in any assignment. The education system in India is both fair and encouraging to women. However, the families may still be seeped into the narrow role space for women. After graduation it is possible for women to pursue further education either in India or abroad, and get employment both in India as well as abroad. The generation of women growing up in the nineties have also had support from the males in the family, i.e, the fathers as well as other males in the primary system. This attitude of openness has facilitated women both at the social as well as work settings. These men have provided equal opportunities for both men and women and logically and rationally accepted career planning and growth for women. The daughters are encouraged to stand on their own two feet and be financially sufficient, and only then get married. Financial independence generates self reliance and autonomy as well as equality in status. The men who have nurtured the women for such an autonomy are mature men, largely professional and have also accepted women as their equals. These men have opted to choose a capable confident and an intellegent woman as a life partner, and accept that women require their own spaces and pace for growth and unfolding. This does not mean to convey that women have successfully overcome the socio cultural inhibition and barriers which are so deeply embedded. This statement only reflects that a transition and a transformation is occurring in the Indian families moreso in the urban centers of India.

The decade of the nineties can be categorized in two distinct phases. One phase consists between 1991 and 1998 and the other phase consists from the years beginning 1998 leading into the next millenium.

Women of the nineties have performed exceedingly well in the organizations as they came through as determined, assertive and committed to work. They are also experienced as developing better relationships with their colleagues and add to the overall collectivity of the organization. In addition, the women are described as having inherent qualities of management such as patience, tolerance, honesty, loyalty and communication skills. Moreover, it is also believed that women have to work twice as hard to prove their capabilities and worth. However one must also recognize that in any organizational work setting the men also have to prove their worth to be respected for their competency and capability. As such, in the organizational context both women and men need to prove their capability and competency through performance, achievements and results. The unique dimension of women is that they struggle with the dilemma of choices between motherhood and work roles. Often her logic and rationality as well as her own sense of commitment pulls her to a professional choice whereas her heart as well as her role as a mother pulls her to the child, especially an ill child. In this process the child also does not make it easy for the mother as the socialization of the child in general is coded in the social role of the mother providing the nurturance. The child also senses the guilt and dilemma of the mother and becomes anxious.

In the emerging realities of globalisation and liberal business environment the challenges facing the Indian women of today is the complexity of life space and the competition of the business environment. This contributes to the syndrome of the survival of the fittest. In the organizational context it means long working hours. Excellence of quality has been the landmark/ hallmark rather than the gender issue. Given the fact that there is increasing acceptance of women in organizations and the

opportunities it is still difficult for the women to reach the top at the pace they wish to or are even qualified to. The women constantly juggle roles and attempt to maintain a balance between home and a career. The women attempt to mix and match the roles with the significance of the situation and priorities of the system. The path is immensely difficult and uphill. The path is not made any easier by the many colleagues who are still caught in the traditionalism of their own roles as well as who are using the social structures for their own convenience. The organizations which attempts to provide facilities for women raises the reverse comparisons of working women having a favoured or privileged status as compared to the men who also have working wives. The organisations may not be sensitive to the issues of dual career couples, while they are somewhat sensitive to the specific social issues of their organisation's women managers role in the family settings.

In some organizational context there are generations made of successful women who are often accused of "sleeping their way to the top". The term of reference being petticoat influence, etc. There are many organizations who have attempted to study the issue of women in the organization and understand the issues of women and address those issues realistically. There are many organizations where women feel safe, secure and respected for their capabilities and the managerial roles they play. Our attempt here is not to present a bleak scenario which is stereotyped about the pathos and difficulties of women in management but identify the dilemmas that the women encounter. The effort here is to portray that if these are the realities of the transforming environment, then the women have the potential possibilities of changing the existing scenario of the organization context and their roles in it.

As the number of women in organizations have and are increasing considerably there is an emergence of a critical mass of women in management which has compelled the organizations to look at many ways of integrating women in management. For example organizations are looking at the concept of flexi time, maternity leaves, part time work and working out of homes and other similar mechanisms to ensure that women have the opportunities as well as security of their jobs.

However the reality is that gender discriminations does exist and that there is " glass ceiling " which is encountered by the women. This has generated a lot of corporate debate. Very few women have reached the most coveted top managerial and corporate decision making positions. Women employees are considered more marginal and dispensable than their male counterparts. This is parallel to an organizational scenario where mediocrity will be considered dispensable rather than the specific gender issue. Women in leadership roles encounter issues of power, authority, direction for the organisation, participation in policy formulation and strategy implementation ,etc. Research findings suggest that women in significant positions are capable and competent , are autonomous , can exercise authority , can take significant responsibilities and aspire for positions appropriate to the tasks they are doing. However, the stress that they experience while combining roles at work and home, generates a lot of dynamics of pushes and pulls from work and home settings. Data of women managers in some organisations have suggested that most women find it easier to relate with their male superiors and subordinates. The superiors find women sincere, dedicated and hardworking and the subordinates respect the women in the managerial cadre as they are professionally educated and qualified. However, with male colleagues the interface of women is somewhat distorted, as they very often fall

into a comparison trap and feel that women are given more consideration and provided with more privileges than men. A lot of hostility and resentment is therefore

experienced by the women in such situations.

Women in the nineties have often questioned their traditional codings of their roles and have become conscious of the voice of their own identity. With economic independence, women have acquired a high self-esteem and have also discovered that they are able to deal with situations single-handedly. In situations of mis-match in marriages, physical violence, demands for dowry, pushing the women into socially confirming roles and other forms of social psychological harassment women do stand up to make their statements and make difficult choices. Today's women is fearless and has learnt to live alone, travel alone, and rear children alone when failures in marriage and life partnerships occur. Some women have preferred to remain single, are leading happy and contented lives and are successful in their work. Many couples today, opt for leading a life without children, due to increasing demands of work, relationships, and the joy of experiencing freedom. Many and more and more women in nineties have made up their minds to have a single child in order to meet the demands of home and work and have very well been able to integrate their multiple roles in multiple systems.

Sexual openness and experimentation is on an increase due to more and more women being out in the world of men where they have to encounter man-woman relationship without the social structures of social relationships. Although the world on one hand has reached an era which is progressive and outward-looking, there still exists a majority of people in the society who cannot cope up with the thought of

women stepping out of the portals of their home. Such people either hamper the professional growth of women or harass them sexually. The biological and physical chastity is a significant area of anguish in many relationships. To address this issue, many women have learnt to fight back, but many who are docile and timid keep tolerating such indignities due to financial constraints of needing a job fear of being branded as a loose woman who has initiated the flirtations or is in search for some comfort where all around her she is a lone battler for her rights, growth and meanings.

On the one side one can portray a sunrise and a sunshine scenario for the women of today but on the flip-side India is a traditional society and both women and men live by the deeply embedded social codings. Change is visible due to the changing mind-sets, but the processes which go into the transition of women from a traditional to a professional identity, needs to be enhanced, multiplied and available to larger masses. A critical mass is emerging with some awareness, some understanding and some support. However, the country and its citizens both women and men need to accelerate the pace.

Essentially, the women of nineties have created niches of their own and are ready to perform the multiple roles of mother, wife and executive thus creating a space for themselves in family, society and workplace. As the women are heading towards the new millenium the convenience of telecommuting and flexi-time is a facilitator. With the advent of information technology, and the Internet, and the concept of virtual classrooms, women of today have nothing to lose, but gain, learn, unlearn and update themselves in the information age. They can use the opportunities for freelance assignments and succeed with full satisfaction of bridging the gap between the home

and work place.

PHASE V: TRANSITION OF WOMEN TOWARDS THE NEW MILLENIUM

The decade of the nineties has witnessed a major paradigm shift in the business environment in the country. The shift is away from industries based on manufacturing towards industries offering services. The service industry lends itself to a more flexible work ethos, one that allows individuals to be part of the work force regardless of their geographic location and work schedules. This trend has been re-inforced by the widespread availability of enabling technologies, such as user-friendly computer hardware/software, internet facilities and virtual libraries. These industries have also been extremely profitable and have created phenomenal opportunities for the proper utilisation of the significant human resource that is available in India. These are industries that are new and vigorous and do not suffer from the baggage of the past.

These industries are headed and guided by mavericks, and not by the "Old boys club". The loci of power have shifted away from traditional venues such as Old boys Clubs, Golf courses and Cigar smoking rooms to power now being vested with energetic new upstarts working out of their garages or on their computer terminals from home. This new cauldron of opportunity, can become the proverbial melting pot for professional women. Here there are less barriers to overcome, less pre-conceived notions, fewer well entrenched assumptions and rules and lesser gender agenda in the secondary environment.

Women have the opportunity to create virtual working environments at home, avail of

flexible working hours and therefore better deal with social and home responsibilities.

The emerging scenario of the next millenium suggests indeed, the next stage of evolution in the work place which will lead to certain trends that would have been considered unthinkable not too long ago:-

1. The new work environment will also enable men to enjoy various flexibilities in their work schedule and they will therefore also be able to participate in activities such as bringing up children and cooking, which were previously considered to be exclusively the women's domain. Parenting would aquire significant focus.
2. The Y2k women will have outgrown the rebellious phase in her quest towards equality, fulfillment and self-actualisation. She will not only be an equal contributing partner at the workplace but will also enjoy and partake of the joys of marriage, motherhood, partnership and other activities in the social milieu.
3. Another possibility is that the geographic reach of women will be considerably enhanced due to improved technologies related to travel and communication. Perhaps marriages might evolve in a manner that spouses may live in different cities and still be able to be together for periods of time. We believe that the next century will witness increased experimentation, new ways of looking at things and destruction of old dogmas and myths.
4. People will wish to try and create new things and define new roles for themselves and may want to experience innovations themselves rather than rely on "wisdom" passed down by prior generations .

5. One can expect and be hopeful that changes in women's roles, identities and attitudes at the workplace and home-front would increasingly become so much balanced and aligned that the pulls and pushes between home and work may become redundant.

6. One can also hope that women would be able to deal better with issues of Leadership in organisational context, by focusing on exploring life spaces to discover wholesome ways of managing their personal dreams and career paths; by dealing effectively with processes of socialisation both in the family and at work, by crystallising one's role and identity in a manner that she takes charge of her own life space and systems and gives shape and meaning to her own life. These changes will result from increased maturity and understanding rather than being reactionary as in the earlier century. Women anchored in the earlier liberation movements will become rebels without a cause. In the next era, there will be a real change and "catharsis" after the rebellious stage witnessed towards the end of the 19th century.

Indeed the distinctions between home-life and work-life will gradually fade away to create in their wake a new space, a new person -a more complete and seamless multi-faceted human being called a—"WOMAN".

Let us take a look at the five phases of movement of women's role from fifties to nineties to the next millenium. The movement from the fifties to the nineties is just not a movement of half a century but a movement in time, space, and institutions of five thousand years.

Five Phases of movement of Women's role from the nineties fifties to the next millenium:

Phase I (Fifties)	Phase II (Seventies)	Phase III (Eighties)	Phase IV (Nineties)	Phase V (Transition towards new millennium)
1. Educated and waiting for marriage	1. They were educated with aspirations for career and growth	1. Career was an accepted dimension of life space	1. Educated with an objective of pursuing career	1. Education and career as a natural process of growing up.
2. Good use of time and education	2. Regarded work as an integral part of life space	2. Created the acceptance of work role and space in the larger social, cultural and external environment	2. Takes up challenges, explores new vistas, competes with men on their own turf	2. Surfing the net, and searching for new opportunities and facing the challenges with ease.
3. Gave up job after children - dominance of motherhood	3. Income and career both were significant - balancing act of motherhood and work roles	3. Dual career / income created role redefinitions, enhanced quality of education for children	3. Searches for job-satisfaction and fulfillment of her professional aspirations and dreams	3. Fulfilment both in career and motherhood. Creation of a home , single woman status or single parenting as an accepted option.
4. Be grateful to in-laws for letting them work	4. Career was insurance against maltreatment by in-laws	4. In-laws started accepting and taking pride in daughter-in-law's new role	4. In-laws having changed mindsets for a quality of life and providing support systems which help the women of today. Women continue to grapple with issues of work with guilt or fear. Movement from nuclear family back to small joint families	4. Women working from home, or taking up part-time jobs or working flexi-hours, less dependent on familial support systems due to flexible organization structures and enabling technologies. Emergence of secondary support systems.

5. Social codification of relationships	5. Could walk alongside with men	5. Multiplicity of roles in multiple systems	5. Gained a lot of self-confidence and self esteem to be part of home, society and workplace	5. Superwomen - managing multiple memberships in multiple systems.
6. Pushes and pulls of two systems	6. Home and career both were significant	6. Sought partnership in managing home / work interface	6. Husband, girl's parents, in-laws, creche facilities - all aid in helping the women of today to achieve her goals.	6. Bridging the gap between home and career through information technology and virtual organizations.
7. Did not rise high in hierarchy	7. Participated in management and decision - making in workplace.	7. Policy / strategy and corporate membership were legitimately seen as their role	7. Due to competition and survival of the fittest women have to struggle their way to the top. In spite of that very few have reached the top coveted managerial positions due to the "glass-ceiling" syndrome	7. More and more women would be able to survive the competition and reach top positions.
8. Feelings of guilt and anxiety	8. Income added to social status - dilemmas of choices	8. Traditional culture / norms were integrated with new roles	8. Has been able to strike a balance between home and career which has given the women of today a lot of satisfaction and self-worth.	8. Would make new choices with ease and confidence as she feels anchored in herself, increased maturity and location in spaces.
9. Held on to whatever was available	9. Did not make choices, only compromises	9. Acquired a corporate perspective - paid the price for choices	9. Maturation of leadership role within the corporation.	9. Would be respected, idealised and looked upto by the future generations for her multiple competency and capability.

10. Difficulty in exercising authority	10. Became assertive and aggressive	10. Integrated social identity with professional identity	10. Coming of age, lesser need to rebel, more pragmatic.	10. Would create new role spaces for her multiple roles in family, society and workplace.
11. Discrimination and deprivation at home and at work	11. Pressure from families continued	11. Transformed barriers into opportunities	11. Support systems from within the home and family.	11. Would be self-contained and would be less dependent on support systems.
12. No role models of women available.	12. Career oriented role models of men.	12. They had role models of the previous 2 phases of women.	12. They have men and women as role models.	12. Would be able to set benchmarks and would be able to become role models for future generations.
13. Job oriented	13. Career oriented	13. Profession oriented	13. Home and profession oriented.	13. Would have orientation towards happiness, overall fulfillment in different aspects of life, increased sense of societal responsibility. Transition of "me, myself" to a broader societal orientation.

Phase I, II & III adapted from Parikh, Indira. J. "Career Paths of Women in Management in India", W.P. 884, Indian Institute of Management,

Ahmedabad, August, 1990 and Parikh, Indira J. and Shah, Nayna - "Women Managers in Transition: from Home to Corporate Offices,

WP.No.941, IIM, Ahmedabad, June, 1991.

The above five phases reflect a time span of a decade and a half in each phase. The universe of attitudes held by women in each phase reflects distinct and unique characteristics. This universe of attitudes forms a part of a life space which includes social system as well as formal work systems.

Essentially, the women of the nineties created a new path where many found freedom from their own stereotypes of themselves. Without defiance or rebellion many silently let go of the chains and shackles of the social roles of yesteryears and chose to be a

woman who wishes to create a home and be a wife and a mother as well as have a workplace and a career.

The transition to the next millennium is where the women will create new paradigms of being a daughter who takes the responsibility of her parents, is a wife who wishes to create a home and a family, a mother who takes charge of the children to make them the children of the new millennium as well as aspire for a relevance and meaning of her life in herself. She accepts the uniqueness of her identity and is willing to share the space. Simultaneously with all the dreams of togetherness she searches for mutuality, dignity and respect. She is also open to a life without marriage and a parenting without a father.

NEW PATTERNS OF IDENTITY FOR WOMEN IN THE NEXT MILLENIUM :

What should be the strategy of women to experience life, work, family and their ownelves to the fullest extent? How can they make more meaningful action choices in the complete and everchanging environment where they have to deal with the unknown and the unfamiliar? It seems that Indian men and women in this millenium have failed to delink the absolutism of role activities associated with that of being male and female. Women often get caught in their primary biological role of nurturance and sustainance. The career and professional women get stuck in the dilemmas of women-person encounters. Each attempt to get out of a situation sucks them deeper into entrenchments of inter-personal relationships of their social and work roles.

Women are at a cross road. What choices do they make for themselves, their dreams, hopes and aspirations? The only alternative seems to be that the women learn to take an adventure to initiate a search to discover their own identity without condemning men, society or the system. Some women have taken an adventure in to the unknown and created a landmark for themselves. They have had the courage and convictions to create new spaces and roles of their existence and grappled to discover an integrated identity which includes the multiple facets of social and work roles. They have claimed their existential and psychological identity beyond the social roles. Only then fulfilment of wider horizons have been experienced, acted upon and actualised.

The future scenario for women in India is to walk an uphill path, to transcend the monolithic social structures, to create new processes in the culture, the organization and the social systems. The women of the next millenium will influence the social structures and culture by presenting a new role of being a professional, a new kind of a daughter, wife and a mother - truly a homemaker and fostering a family.

The next millenium offers a space beyond the present horizon-- where, instead of hope there is active engagement with the world, instead of dreams there are commitments, instead of aspirations there are choices, instead of ideals there are convictions and instead of searching for bestowals and affirmation there is the acknowledgement of one's own uniqueness of identity.

In the next millenium, Indian women would have to cross a major threshold and enter an unknown land. They will have to walk a path where none existed with a sense to discover. They will have to encounter and live with excitement and enthusiam as well as threat, fears, anxieties and terror. It is the trust in the self, of the resource to be generated, of the courage to journey forth in a new land, to live through the terrains of uncharted land that the women of today will shape the new identity. They will discover the voice which has been silenced for centuries to sing the songs of life and living and to discover the joys of experiencing the beauty around.

The women of today will touch the magic of enlivening themselves and say, "this far I have travelled, there are distances to travel but there are moments here and now where I can be". In this statement the past, present and future will emerge to create that space where movement and stability, where noise and silence, where light and

darkness, and chaos and tranquility loose their absolutism to create a new rhythm and unfolding.

Women will discover what offerings they will make and what they will receive. They will also create a space where others will feel included as well as excluded. Women in their identities will discover the infinite quality of relatedness as well as the finiteness of boundaries. They will experience in themselves the gentleness of a meandering river as well as the raging overflowing river without negating or disowning either.

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