
UNIT 9 ENTRY, SURVIVAL AND ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN ORGANIZATIONS

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9.1 INTRODUCTION

Women occupy economically an inferior position. Women's incomes were lower and their employment opportunities more circumscribed. Women also faced other less obvious barriers to economic equality,- such things as limited access to higher occupational levels, and to management positions, difficulty in getting credit, inadequate old age security. Women's labour market participation, wage and occupational structure and lack of career opportunities are directly related to their primary responsibility for work in the home. In these circumstances, this Unit will discuss the women's work from historical as well as perspectives. The Unit also discusses the issues of women's work during their entry, survival and advancement.

9.2 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you would be able to

- discuss Women's work from historical perspective;
- explain women's role in public as well as private spheres;
- analyze gender composition in labour force;
- examine the persistence of gender ideologies and gender discrimination in workplace;
- and
- discuss prevailing gendered discrimination in workplace.

9.3 WOMEN'S WORK: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

One needs to recognize that women's position within the economic domain is the cumulative result of number of factors such as their role in reproduction, their assignment to do unpaid work at home, the social institutions and ideological structures of a patriarchal society, the imperatives of industrial capitalism and the inhumanity of unregulated markets. There is a casual connection between these and the pervasive and persistent inferior status of women.

One needs to be sensitive to the fact that analysis of women's work has to be carried out historically. The concept of 'working women' is now being used as if it is of a recent phenomenon. Women have always worked, in many times and place many more hours than men. The difference in recent years is that women are increasingly part of the *paid labour* force.

9.4 THE PRE-INDUSTRIAL PERIOD

Initially the common economic unit of production was the family, in which all members, except the youngest of children, contributed and was indispensable. The skills of the women were essential for the survival of the family and the community. Family was the primary unit of production, where women performed the crucial roles of production and reproduction; until this form of labour organization was destroyed by industrialization and the factory. Accompanying this change in the economic system was a shift in the population from the rural areas to the major urban centres. This shift was in addition to the increasing monetization of the markets and its economy. Such a development increased production for the markets rather than for home consumption. Agricultural productivity rose with increased mechanization and new technology. The impact was that the work that had been done by the women in the home was now done for the employers in return for wages.

For women certain aspects of their jobs began to change. Outside of family units, women usually moved into jobs that were commercial counterparts to the work they had done in the home or on the farm. They would sew, clean, prepare food, teach, - jobs now done for pay where they had previously done for the family. These women were on the whole paid poorly in relation to men and were frequently subjected to fines and reductions in wages. Further they often worked for longer hours and commonly longer than men.

One needs to recognize that it was the women who bore much of the brunt of the second phase of industrialism, both directly and indirectly. The factory system was destructive of their skill. Women were the group who were initially the subject of large scale processes of *deskilling*. The knowledge and techniques that were previously in the hands of the artisan were incorporated into machines, which in combination with large-scale production allowed for the breaking up of skilled jobs into an increasing number of unskilled simpler tasks where dexterity, work experience and obedience were the main prerequisites. The degradation of the skilled work made it imperative that other members of the family work in industry in order to maintain a minimum standard of living. Thus women's wages were set at a level that when added to a man's would produce a family wage sufficient for reproduction of the family and the labour force. Most important among others was the fact that women and children were cheaper and

they were more obedient, thus less likely to struggle against the wages and working conditions of emerging industrial capitalism. Women were thus incorporated into the industrial economy at a disadvantageous position, with very minimal levels of negotiating power.

One can very well see that a limited range of occupational choice and a high percentage of part-time work are distinguishing characteristics of the expansion of female labour market opportunities that have not proven conducive to economic equality for women and which do not bode well for their economic position in the future. The pervasive fact is that more and more women have entered the work place and labour force, but in a narrow range of occupations and at inferior pay to men. The major reason as to why women were incorporated within the economic system at an inferior position was the structural reality of gendered society.

9.5 THE GENDERED SOCIETY

Kimmel (2000) argues that gender is not simply a system of classification by which biological males and females are sorted, separated and socialized into equivalent sex roles. Gender also expresses the universal inequality between women and men. *When we speak about gender we also speak about hierarchy, power and inequality and not simply difference.* Virtually every known society known to us is founded upon assumptions of gender difference and the politics of gender inequality. *The social institutions of our world- workplace, family, school, politics- are also gendered institutions, sites where the dominant definitions are reinforced and reproduced, and where 'deviants' are disciplined.*

9.6 WHAT DOES ONE MEAN BY A GENDERED SOCIETY?

We become gendered selves in a gendered society. A gendered society implies that the organizations of our society have evolved in ways that reproduce both the differences between women and men and the domination of men over women. Institutionally one can see it organized around demonstrating and reproducing masculinity: the temporal and spatial organization of work both depend upon the separation of spheres (distance between work and home and the fact that women are primary child care providers). Therefore assuming gender neutrality actually serves to maintain the gender policies of those institutions. Gender inequality creates a double bind for women- a double bind that is based on the assumption of gender differences and the assumption of institutional gender neutrality (Kimmel 2000).

Further we need to recognize that both difference and domination are produced and reproduced in our social actions, in the institutions we live and work. These differences are real and they become important in our expectations and observations.

9.7 GENDER AND FAMILY

Family life has changed considerably. Gerson (1991:36) argues that changes in the family structure are inconsistent in two ways. First some social arrangements have changed significantly, while others are not. Most women are gainfully employed, but women still face discrimination in the labour market and do most of the housework and childcare. Work structures rarely accommodate to family needs. Secondly, different groups are exposed to different degrees of change. Professionally trained white women, upper caste women do not experience the employment constraints of women in female job ghettos, in particular Black women and lower caste women.

Judith Stacey (1991, 1993) suggests that changes in the family life are more than evolutionary. She feels that they amount to second revolution in family life. The first revolution was the shift from a pre modern to a modern family life that accompanied industrialization. The modern, nuclear family evolved into the male breadwinner, full-time homemaker, dependent children arrangement we think of as traditional family. The second revolution was the change from modern to the post modern family. The post modern family is not simple the next stage in the evolution of family. The post modern family is 'recombinant and fluid' (Stacey 1993:8). Such is the amorphous nature of family life that one no longer has a consensus about what constitutes a family. 'There is no longer a single family form that the majority inhabits and most of the rest desire'. Fluidity and diversity are no longer the exception, they are the rule.

One needs to recognize that while motherhood is often described as women's traditional role, it was not until the latter part of the nineteenth century that motherhood was a full-time responsibility for most women. The demise of the household economy, the growth of factories and offices, and the increased availability of mass-produced goods for home consumption, which paralleled industrialization, changed family economic responsibilities. Men's entry into the paid labour force meant that families came to depend economically on their wages. It also meant that domestic work was more exclusively women's domain and responsibility; a responsibility for which they were thought to be naturally suited.

9.8 SEPARATE SPHERES AND THE CULT OF DOMESTICITY

One could argue that married women's economic dependence peaked during the first decades of the twentieth century. Before this, women had made concrete economic contributions to their family's welfare. Nineteenth century women cared for infant children, nursed the sick, and labored to feed and clothe their families. Their labour was physically taxing and time consuming work and it had a direct impact on the family's standard of living.

As wage earning became a way of life, the economic responsibilities of husbands and wives changed, although the change was gradual and had its greatest impact on urban middle class families. Because wage labour took most men away from home during the day, home management and childrearing increasingly became a women's responsibility – at least for the middle class. Laslett (1977: 106) describes the absence of men from home during the working day as the single most important event in the history of the modern family, for urban middle class families, financially dependent on a male breadwinner, and able to find and afford substitutes for domestically produced goods, the public world of work and the private domestic world became increasingly separated.

The idea of dual spheres was built on the presumption that men as husbands and fathers would perform wage-earning work and women as wives and mothers would be responsible for domestic maintenance. In fact, the separation was more illusion than reality for all but urban-middle and upper class families (Bose 1987). Working-class family life was economically much more tenuous. Working class families may have accepted the presumption that women's place was in home, but they were not in the position to organize their lives accordingly. The 'cult of domesticity' ignored the economic contributions of married women and the economic needs of women who were not dependents. While the idea of dual spheres may have given support to the efforts of male workers to secure a 'family wage', it stood to the efforts to improve their working conditions or wages.

The decline in home production and the availability of manufactured substitutes freed middle-class women from some of the more taxing and time consuming domestic jobs. Motherhood and family life began to assume increased personal and social significance, reiterated by popular literature. Women, it was believed, were temperamentally different from men and naturally suited to their roles as wives and mothers, ideas given credibility by religion, culture, literature and popular discourses. Femininity was characterised by domesticity and masculinity by labour-

market success. The home was to be a 'haven' from the world of work. In this way, family life conformed rather than neatly to the demands and needs of the capital expansion, rejuvenating current employees and grooming the next generation.

Motherhood became the glue that held family together in face of rapid changes due to processes of industrialization. As moulders of the next generation, women were encouraged to take their responsibilities as mothers, seriously. Because industrialization required an educated labour force, children stayed in school for longer hours, and mothers were important agents in ensuring educational progress.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: i. Use this space given below to answer the question.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this U nit.

1. Define 'Gendered Society'

9.9 THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

In the early years of the twentieth century, there were signs that motherhood was not, and could not be, a lifelong preoccupation for women. A significant number of women did not marry or become mothers. Although the numbers remained small, more women were seeking careers. The contradictions inherent in the ideology of motherhood were apparent. No amount of social philanthropy could disguise the economic instability of working class family life or the need for additional income provided by women and children. Middle-class women, too, were drawn to the labour force by expanding opportunities. Continued expansion of the service sector began to draw married women into the labour force, first on a part-time or temporary basis. More recently, marital instability, inflation, rising standard of living and consumption, and changing expectations has made labour-force participation the norm for married women. The demographic, economic and attitudinal changes of the last decades have profoundly altered family life. Social attitudes have not kept pace with demographic and economic shifts, and social policies have lagged behind the needs of many women and children. Until recently mainstream sociology took for granted a 'division of labour' among family members, treated

women's paid work as secondary and transitory independent living and childlessness as exceptions to the norm and lesbianism as deviant.

9.10 DILEMMAS OF FAMILY LIFE

Although married women are more apt to be employed rather than full time housewives, women still work in a limited range of jobs for which they receive low pay relative to similarly educated and experienced men. Employed women experience considerable tension trying to balance income generating work and family-related work. Women have increased their commitment to the labour force, but continue to shoulder the 'burden' of domestic and childbearing responsibilities. Husbands and fathers have not made a corresponding commitment to active involvement in family life. This contradiction between the assumed primacy of the wife/mother role coupled with the reality of extensive labour force participation creates a dilemma for all women.

9.11 JUGGLING MOTHERHOOD AND EMPLOYMENT

The 1950s media image of the 'Happy Housewife' which Betty Friedan (1963) found so objectionable, portrayed women as devoted wives and mothers. The 'Superwoman' image of the 1980s has added accomplished professional to the picture. On the surface, this appears to be a step forward. It suggests that women can 'have it all': a meaningful job, a devoted husband and clever, well-adjusted children. But as Hochschild (1989) argues, the image has little to do with reality for most employed married mothers. More importantly, the image is a powerful model encouraging women to accept that the price of employment is the double day. 'By defining the successful women as one who is happily carrying multiple burden and in addition suggesting that it was women who sought this change, the superwoman ideal de-legitimizes discontent'. The image implies that women are free to choose- career, motherhood ...or both. Granted, women today have much more control over decisions about education, employment, marriage and motherhood than their mothers or grandmothers had. But these choices are circumscribed by conditions over which women have little control: financial need, the availability of child care, employment opportunities and household responsibilities. For women the organization of their daily experience, their work routines, and indeed their lives are determined and ordered externally to them.

As social conditions make it difficult for women to make equally strong commitments to family life and to gainful employment, each woman was required to seek an individual solution. Whether women were able to follow their early expectations or not depended on how they negotiated four key aspects of their social environment: the presence or absence of a stable supportive partner, blocked or enhanced job opportunities; economic need; and their perceptions of the costs and benefits of the traditional choice.

The lack of control women have over organization of their work and family life reflects the internal dynamics of particular households, the lack of public support for child care and the realities of market inequalities. Structured inequality in the labour force exacerbates the problem of soliciting help from husbands. Wives typically earn less than their husbands and work in jobs where the penalties for working to the clock, absenteeism, or exit and entry are lower. Consequently, it falls on wives more than husbands to stay home from work if children are sick, to let school and day care hours determine work hours, or to follow spouses in job transfers. Even in homes where both husband and wife espouse egalitarian attitudes, housework and child care are mostly women's work. This allocation of work and inequalities that lie at its root cannot help but be observed by children. As Duffy (1988:124) observed "Good wives do not need to be controlled by their husbands, they are controlled by a lifetime of appropriate gender socialization".

9.12 PRIVATE VERSUS PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILD CARE

An important consequence of our cultural ambivalence about maternal employment is the failure to publicly support child care. Inequalities in the labour force create a double jeopardy for women. They enter a segregated labour force and work in jobs for which they receive low pay relative to equally qualified and talented men. In many cases, married women's earnings augment their husband's earnings augment their husband's wages but are not enough to be self-supporting. So although women make a significant financial contribution to the household, universal pay differentials make it very difficult for most women to have economic independence outside of marriage without experiencing a drop in their standard of living. Many women have sacrificed education and career for marriage and children, accepted geographical moves at the costs of their careers, or worked part time or reduced job responsibilities to be available to their children. Within a marriage, these seem to be reasonable trade-offs. Outside of

marriage, they become costly barriers. The few women who stay at home as full-time housewives are particularly vulnerable.

Employed women are penalized by their interrupted labour-force participation, frequent job changes, part-time work, and the fact that women typically work in sectors of the economy where private pension coverage is rare. It bears repeating that housework brings no work related benefits, and no disability or unemployment insurance, no health benefits, and most importantly, no pension coverage. Marriage and motherhood create unequal structural opportunities for men and women. The assumption that women are primarily responsible for domestic maintenance and mothering and men for economic security means that women do not have access to economic resources on the same basis as men. Thus the workplace is also gendered.

9.13 THE GENDERED WORKPLACE

People have always worked to satisfy their basic material needs – for food, clothing and shelter, to provide for children and loved ones, to participate in community life, as well as to satisfy more culturally and historically specific desires to leave a mark on the world and to move up the social ladder. Thus virtually every society has developed a division of labour and since gender is a system of classification and identity as well as a structure of power relations, one finds prevalence of gendered division of labour.

One needs to recognize that gendered division of labour that many have called ‘traditional’ the separation of the world into two distinct spheres- the public domain of work, business, politics and culture and the private world of home, domestic life and child care- is a relatively new phenomenon which is a reflection of the gendered nature of society. Women have always worked outside the home for both economic and personal reasons- though they have had to fight to do so.

9.14 THE CHANGING GENDER COMPOSITION OF THE LABOUR FORCE

Perhaps that most significant change in the relationship of gender and work is numerical- the enormous shift in the gender composition of the labour force. In this century women have entered every area of the labour force, and in unprecedented numbers. The impact has been enormous. The percentage of both women and men entering the labour force has increased throughout the century, but the women’s rate of increase far outpaces men’s. *Women’s entry into the labour force has taken place at every level, from low paid clerical and sales jobs through all*

the major professions. These changes have rippled through the society, gradually changing the relationship of the family to the workplace. Gone forever is the male breadwinner who supports a family on his income alone. Today, the norm is that of the dual earner family. The question is why women's relative economic position hasn't changed significantly?

Women occupy the inferior economic positions as they have inferior labour market qualifications. They generally have less education, lack training and skills and relevant experience a prerequisite for higher paying jobs. Thus women are in general confined to low paying, low status, and low growth jobs. However the fact that women may have less training and experience can be attributed, at least in part, to a broader form of discrimination in the schools and in society generally which tends to downplay women's career aspirations on the assumption that women will be forced to withdraw from the labour market for a significant period of time to act as a homemaker, doing unpaid family work. Such a perception has a very negative impact on women's earnings and they tend to be accommodated into low-wage job ghettos. Thus a majority of women enter a very few occupational categories and these in general have income levels well below that average for all workers, male and female.

One manner of analysing this phenomenon is that the '*labour market*' is not a neutral entity. Labour market is divided into segments with limited opportunity for upward mobility among the segments. The dual market approach helps us to understand that there was a significant division of the labour market. At one end were the jobs that paid relatively good wages, where employment was comparatively secure, working conditions reasonable, opportunities for advancement existed and management was constrained by customs and rules. At the other end were the jobs that paid poor wages, where employment was insecure, working conditions poor, opportunities for advancement minimal and management frequently makes arbitrary decisions. The former was designated the organized labour market, the latter the unorganized labour market. *The primary was dominated by the upper class and caste males many of them unionized and the unorganized had a preponderance of ethnic minorities, lower castes, and women.* Unionization is non-existent and where ever one does find them it exists in weak form.

The growth of female employment in services was also merely a continuation of household work, only in the market- laundry workers, hotel maids, waitresses, and charwoman, nursing and childcare workers. Whether in manufacturing or services, women's work remained women's work in the market place as in the home. Even after much development female employment is

still concentrated in a small number of job ghettos, and although their relative importance has changed, the ghettos themselves have not- management, the skilled trades and the upper echelons of the industry all are but male preserves. Women continue to fill the expanding areas of retail trade, clerical and financial low-level occupations; they still represent a high proportion of low paying workers and still are denied extensive promotion or job ladders. In short the dualistic structure 'discovered' in the sixties and the Seventies and based in part on sex has its roots firmly planted in the rise of industrial capitalism., the replication of the labour market of the household division of labour and the response of employers to the working class's struggle to oppose or at least ameliorate the worst excesses of industrial transformation and the rise of monopoly capitalism.

9.15 THE PERSISTENCE OF GENDER IDEOLOGIES

Since the nineteenth century, the workplace has been seen as a masculine arena, where men could test and prove their manhood against other men in the market place. Working enabled men to confirm their manhood as breadwinners and family providers. The workplace was a site of 'homosocial reproduction' - a place where men created themselves as men. The 19th century ideal of the self-made, and the prospect of unlimited upward mobility for those who worked hard enough, placed men on a treadmill of work, sacrifice and responsibility. Men as the saying goes 'are unsexed by failure'; they cease to be seen as real men. Women on the other hand are 'unsexed by success'. To be competent, aggressive and ambitious in the workplace may be both gender conforming for men, but they are gender non conforming for women, undermining her sense of herself as feminine.

In the all male workplace women's role was to lubricate the male-male interactions. Women performed what sociologist Arlie Hochschild called 'emotion work', making sure that all male-arena was well oiled and functioning smoothly. So for example, women performed jobs like stewardess, office manager, cocktail waitress, and cheerleader to make sure the male-male interactions went smoothly- and remained unmistakably heterosexual. The combination of the persistence of traditional gender ideologies and changes in economic and social realities makes today's workplace a particularly contentious arena for working out gender issues. On the one hand, women face persistent discrimination based on their gender. They are paid less, promoted less often and assigned to specific jobs despite their qualification and motivations; and they are made to feel unwelcome, like intruders into an all male preserve.

9.16 THE PERSISTENCE OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

For many years, the chief obstacle facing women who sought to enter the labour force was sex discrimination. Discrimination occurs when we treat people unequally because of personal characteristics that are not related to the job. Discrimination occurs when we treat people who are similar different ways, or when we treat people who are different in similar ways. For example women and Dalits are seen legally as 'similar' to men and to upper castes in all functionally relevant aspects relating to employment, housing and education. Therefore to exclude one caste or gender from housing, educational opportunities or employment would be a form of discrimination. On the other hand, people with certain physical disabilities are seen as *legally* different, and thus deserving of antidiscrimination protection. Treating them as the same as 'able bodied' people- falling to provide wheelchair-accessible facilities, for example- is therefore also a form of discrimination.

To justify gender discrimination in the workplace, employers have historically referred to a variety of characteristics about women in order to exclude them; for example, women didn't really want to work; they didn't need the money; they have different aptitudes and interests. It was safely assumed that women either couldn't do a job, or, if they could, they would neither want to nor need to do it. What these arguments share is a belief that the differences between men and women are decisive and that these differences are the source of women's and men's different experiences.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i. Use this space given below to answer the question.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this U nit.

1. What are the reasons for the persistence gender discrimination in workplace?

9.17 SEX SEGREGATION

Outright gender discrimination is extremely difficult to justify. Sex segregation refers to the women's and men's concentration in different occupations, industries, jobs, and levels in

workplace hierarchies. Thus sex segregation itself becomes, itself, a sexual division of paid labour in which men and women do different tasks, or the same tasks under different names or at different times and places. Different occupations are seen as more appropriate for one gender or the other, and thus women and men are guided, pushed or occasionally shoved into specific positions. *In fact sex segregation in the workplace is so pervasive that it appears to be the natural order of things, the simple expression of women's and men's natural predisposition.* Sex segregation starts early and continues throughout work lives. Job segregation by sex is the single largest cause of the pay gap between the sexes.

Explanations of sex segregation often rely on the qualities of male and female job seekers. Because of differential socialization women and men are likely to seek different kinds of jobs for different reasons. Sex segregation is the outcome of several factors – the differential socialization of young men and women, sex-typed tracking in the educational system and sex-linked social control at the workplace, at the hiring stage and beyond. Another consequence of sex segregation is wage differentials. Professions that are male dominated tend to have higher wages; professions that are dominated tend to have lower wages. *One needs to recognize that there is nothing inherent in the job that makes it more 'suitable' for women or for men. It also so happens that when a particular occupation begins to change its gender composition, the wages also change.*

For example, in the 1940s, in computer programming, women were hired as keypunch operators, the precursors to computer programmer because the job seemed to resemble clerical work. In fact however, computer programming demanded complex skills in abstract logic, mathematics, electrical circuitry and machinery, women used to perform in their work without any problem. However, once programming was recognized as 'intellectually demanding', it became attractive to men, who began to enter the field and thus drove the wages up considerably.

The sex of the worker is thus vitally important in determining wages. Women and men are paid not to do the same work, but different work, and they are evaluated on different standards. There is an unwritten understanding that men's jobs are rewarded according to their standing within the hierarchy of men's work, and women's jobs are rewarded according to their standing within the hierarchy of women's work. Legal remedies for sex-stereotyping of occupations have yielded mixed results.

Thus one finds the persistence of archaic gender ideologies in income distribution. At both the aggregate level and the individual level- whether we average all incomes or look at the specific individuals wages for the jobs they do- women earn less than men. Income inequality often remains invisible precisely because of sex segregation- what appears to us simply people doing different jobs is actually a way of paying different gendered differently for doing roughly the same jobs with the same skills. As long as it appears that it is the attribute of the job, and not of their gender of the person doing the job, income inequality remains invisible to us. The gender gap in income is made more complex by caste, ethnicity, race and educational level. Women of the marginalized castes especially Dalit women, Black women, and Hispanic women earn significantly less than upper caste men and women and white men.

The wage gap varies with the level of education. College educated women earn less than college educated men. And the wage varies with age, actually increasing throughout women's lives. The reason- women and men enter the labour force at more comparable starting salaries; but as they continue their careers gender discrimination in promotion and raises add to the differences in income. The wage differences are also due to the different experiences of women and men in the labour force. When men enter the labour force, they enter for good, while women occasionally take time out for childbearing, childrearing and parental leave. This has negative effect on women's wages and fuels the growing gap across the life span. *In fact women who drop out of the labour force have lower real wages when they come back to work than they had when they left.*

Within any occupation, women tend to be concentrated at the bottom of the pay scale and this has also got to do with system of professional patronage and sponsorship. *Women thus face a double bind in their efforts to achieve workplace equality. On the one hand, traditional gender ideologies prevented them from entering those occupations that we well paid: they have been pushed into other less well-paying sectors of the economy. On the other hand, when they enter those well-paying fields, they are prevented from moving up.* This is what is known as the 'glass-ceiling'.

9.18 THE GLASS CEILING

One of the consequences of sex segregation is discrimination against women in promotion. Women face the twin barriers of the glass ceiling and the 'sticky floor', which combine to keep women in low wage positions, with little opportunity for upward mobility. The glass ceiling

consists of 'those artificial barriers, based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward within their organization into management level positions.

The glass ceiling keeps women from being promoted equally with men. In India one of the important studies was conducted by Banerjee and Mahtani (2010) in their research on Standard Chartered Bank: Women on Corporate Boards in India 201. They state that out of a total of 1,112 directorships on the BSE-100, in India, 59 directorships are held by women. This represents just 5.3% of all directorships. These directorships are held by 48 different women. This percentage does not compare favourably with other countries - not just Canada (15.0%), US (14.5%) and UK (12.2%), but also Hong Kong (8.9%) and Australia (8.3%). Less than half of the companies, only 46, have women on their boards - which means conversely that 54 companies have no female representation at all. Of a total of 323 executive directorships on the BSE-100, only eight are held by women, representing just 2.5%. However two women (Chanda Kochhar and Shikha Sharma) hold Chief Executive Officer (CEO) positions of two of India's leading banks, ICICI Bank and Axis Bank Ltd. Whilst these figures are perhaps understandable given the conservative attitudes towards women's education and empowerment in the past, it appears there is a lack of representation of women in the boardrooms of India's leading companies.

In examining the representation of women on the boards of the BSE-100, a number of key observations can be made. The headline figures are very low and very similar to those in the UK in 1999 - over a decade ago. By almost every measure India performs below Hong Kong in terms of the gender diversity of its boards. As in other Asian countries, there is significant family-ownership of listed businesses. This contrasts to most Western stock exchanges. Companies in the financial sector perform best in terms of gender diversity - nine of the 11 banks listed on the BSE-100 have a woman on their board and two of these banks have a female CEO. Female directors are on average at least five years younger than their male counterparts (55.6 years compared to 60.3 years). Women in executive director positions have been in the organization twice as long as their male counterparts.

The majority of women felt that companies on the BSE-100 do not think about the gender diversity of their boards. Two thirds of the women were not surprised by the high level finding of this research (which shows that the overall percentage of directorships being held by women is

5.3%) saying that this was in line with what they expected. The women gave various reasons for this low percentage. The most commonly cited reasons related to women's primary role of looking after the family. They talked about how women in India are juggling careers and families and how many fall off the corporate ladder mid-career because of guilt about neglecting their family. They also said that women are perhaps less visible in the corporate environment and as a result, are not put forward in the nomination process, as often as men. Some women referred to India's relatively young economy as a reason why the talent pool of senior women may be more limited. Some expressed concerns about inherent bias in the selection process and the view that women are often not considered for board appointments because they are ready to voice their opinion and challenge the status quo and this can be seen as a threat.

The glass ceiling occurs under a variety of circumstances. Corporate management may be either unwilling or unable to establish policies and practices that are effective mechanisms to promote workplace diversity. The company may not have adequate job evaluation criteria that allow for comparable worth criteria, or they may rely on traditional gender stereotypes in evaluation. Limited family friendly workplace policies will also inhibit women's ability to rise.

Perhaps the most important element that reinforces the glass ceiling is the informal effort by men to restore or retain the all male atmosphere of the corporate hierarchy. Equal opportunities for advancement would disrupt the casual friendliness and informality of the homosocial world at the top- the fact that those with whom one interacts share similar basic values and assumptions. One British study of female MBAs, for example, found that by far the 'most significant' and 'most resistant' barrier to women's advancement was the 'men's club' network.

The bias can also be seen in the type of questions asked at the interview. Many a times the hiring committee ask woman a range of inappropriate questions based on traditional gender stereotypes, including her plan for family and whether her husband supported her having a job. Sometimes women are discriminated if she does not present herself in the stereotypical image of a 'women'. Many a time's women, who were successful, were perceived of as a 'macho', abrasive and demanding and thus thought to be 'different, ambitious and abnormal'. Women were often told to walk more femininely, talk more femininely, wear makeup, have her hair styled and wear jewelry. This provides us with cases where traditional gender stereotypes impede women's success and progress. Had women been more traditionally feminine, she would have never been

the aggressive and ambitious success she became. Either way women lose. Either they are too aggressive, in which case they are seen as mannish, or they are too ladylike, and as a result are passed over as being too passive, sweet and not ambitious enough.

9.19 ISSUE OF TOKENS

When women enter 'men's' occupations, and men enter 'women's' occupations they experience tokenism. But their experiences are different. Tokens are those people who are admitted into an organization but who are recognizably different from the large majority of the members of the organization. But tokens are more than simple the members of a numerical minority. Tokens are accepted not despite their minority status but because of it. They are actively discouraged from recruiting others like themselves, and become part of the organizational mainstream. Typically tokens may even become more strongly wedded to organizational norms than members of the numerical majority.

Tokenism heightens the boundaries between groups rather than dismantling them, as the contrasts between the token and the majority is exaggerated to become the sole difference. The token is always in the spotlight- everyone notices him or her, but only because he or she is different. Tokens are rarely seen as similar to others in the group. Thus tokens have a double experience of visibility – they are *hypervisible* as members of their category but they are completely *invisible* as individuals. This has serious consequences. The token does not have to work hard to have her presence noticed, but she does have to work hard to get her achievements noticed.

Further the experience of men and women as tokens are different. Men entering mostly female occupations do experience some negative effects, especially in their dealing with the public. For example male nurses face a common stereotype that they are gay. Male social workers were seen as 'feminine' or 'passive', male librarians are seen as 'wimpy' and asexual. Ironically these negative stereotypes of men doing women's work actually added to the glass escalator effect, by pressuring men to move quickly out of the female-identified areas, and up to those regarded as more legitimate and prestigious for men.

Thus men take their gender privilege with them when they enter predominantly female areas and this translates as an advantage in spite of their numerical rarity. When women are tokens, men retain their numerical superiority and are able to maintain their gender privileges by restricting

woman's entry, promotion and experiences in the workplace. When men are tokens, they are welcomed into the profession, and use their gender privilege to rise quickly in the hierarchy.

Men thus continue to resist workplace equality. Eminent feminist economist Heidi Hartmann argues that low wages keep women dependent on men. Women are encouraged to marry and perform domestic chores for their husbands. Men benefit then, from both higher wages and domestic division of labour. This domestic division of labour in turn acts to weaken women's position in the labour market. Thus, the hierarchical domestic division of labour is perpetuated by the labour market and vice versa. Workplace inequality is not only good deal for men it is also invisible to them. Inequality is almost always invisible to those who benefit from it. Equality will always feel uncomfortable for those who once benefited from inequality.

Another why men resist gender-integrated workplace is that men say they would be distracted by women. Except that it is not true. There are many workplaces where men and women work together without any problem. Thus it is not the presence or absence of women that seems distracting – it's the presence of women as *equals* that the emn are really worrying about.

9.20 SEXUAL HARASSMENT – GENDERED POLITICAL ECONOMY

Sexual harassment is one of the chief ways that men resist gender equality in the workplace. Sexual harassment takes many forms, from sexual assault to mocking innuendo. Typically it takes one of the two forms. In the most obvious – trade or barter of sexual contact for reward or avoidance of punishment. This could be in form of sex-for grades model of student-teacher interaction, or the sleep with men, you will get promoted, or don't sleep with men and you will get fired' workplace scenario.

The second is understood as the creation of a 'hostile environment,' one in which women feel compromised, threatened and unsafe. For example women in medical schools experienced different forms of harassment. Female medical students reported being subject to jokes or pranks, hearing women's bodies being mocked during anatomy classes, and finding pornography shuffled into anatomy slides during lectures.

What one needs to recognize is that whatever form of sexual harassment it is rarely about the sexual attraction between employees. It is about making workers feel unwelcome in the workplace, about reminding them that they do not belong here because the workplace is the man's place. It is a strategy of domination and exclusion a way of keeping women in their places

and out of men's. Sexual harassment are not meant to attract women, but, rather, to repel them and send them scurrying away, reminded that the streets belong to men and that women who dare to walk on them alone, or show up in bars alone, are defying an unwritten law. Such remarks are rude reminders of male entitlement, an unwritten and unconscious sense that that public arena belongs to 'us' and that female invaders will be reminded that they don't really belong.

Harassed women report greater stress, feeling of humiliation, irritability, eating and sleeping disorders, and absenteeism. Men see women as invading a masculine environment and try through different forms of sexual harassment scare women off a male preserve. One other thing that sexual harassment is typically not about is one person telling the truth and the other person lying. Sexual harassment cases are difficult and confusing precisely because there are often many truths. 'His' truth might be what appear to him as an innocent indication of sexual interest or harmless joking with the 'boys' in the office (even if those 'boys' happen to include women). He may experience sexual innuendo or references to pornography as harmless fun, what the workplace was supposed to be like for men. He works there therefore entitled to his freedom. 'Her' truth may be that his seemingly innocent remarks cause stress, anxiety about promotion, firing and sexual pressure. At the societal level, sexual harassment stymies women's equality. Both private and public sectors lose millions because of absenteeism, reduced productivity and high turnover of female employees.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: i. Use this space given below to answer the question.

ii. Compare your answer with the one given at the end of this U nit.

1. Discuss the concept of "Glass Ceiling"

9.21 SUMMING UP

Until recently, the workplace has been such a male space, a homosocial preserve. But that world has vanished forever (Acker 1986). It is virtually impossible for a man to go through his entire

working life without having a female colleague, coworker or boss. Just when men's breadwinner status is threatened by economic downsizing and corporate restructuring, women appear on the scene and become easy targets for men's anger. This is the context which we must consider the question of sexual harassment, prevalence of glass ceiling; to perceive it within the gendered political economy framework. Differential treatment in the workplace is a distorted effort to put women back in their place, to remind them that they are not equal to men in the workplace that they are still after all their gains, just women, even if they are in the workplace. It is still very much a man's world.

9.22 GLOSSARY

Tokenism: According to Oxford dictionary, the practice of making only a perfunctory or symbolic effort to do a particular thing, especially by recruiting a small number of people from under-represented groups in order to give the appearance of sexual or racial equality within a workforce:

9.23 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. A gendered society implies that the organizations of our society have evolved in ways that reproduce both the differences between women and men and the domination of men over women. Institutionally one can see it organized around demonstrating and reproducing masculinity: the temporal and spatial organization of work both depend upon the separation of spheres (distance between work and home and the fact that women are primary child care providers). Therefore assuming gender neutrality actually serves to maintain the gender policies of those institutions. Gender inequality creates a double bind for women- a double bind that is based on the assumption of gender differences and the assumption of institutional gender neutrality (Kimmel 2000).

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. To justify gender discrimination in the workplace, employers have historically referred to a variety of characteristics about women in order to exclude them; for example, women didn't really want to work; they didn't need the money; they have different aptitudes and interests. It was safely assumed that women either couldn't do a job, or, if they could, they would neither

want to nor need to do it. What these arguments share is a belief that the differences between men and women are decisive and that these differences are the source of women's and men's different experiences.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1. The glass ceiling consists of 'those artificial barriers, based on attitudinal or organizational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upward within their organization into management level position.

9.24 REFERENCES

9.25 QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND PRACTICE

1. Discuss the problem faced by women during entry, survival and advancement in the Organization.