

DILEMMAS AND CHALLENGES OF A WORKING WOMAN

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The image of a woman in India has transformed a lot since the past. She is not only a homemaker or a housewife, but a skilled and capable working woman. She belongs to the new generation, and is bold, ambitious, career-oriented, and an achiever. She knows how to fulfil her dreams. But, as rightly said by anonymous, 'Life is not always a bed of roses'; the same is true for the life of a working woman. She struggles and faces various challenges every day. Though a woman is strong enough to sail through all the ups and downs, however, there are various situations where she ends up being in a fix. There are times when she is confronted with various dilemmas and challenges, owing to which she is unable to achieve her professional goals and therefore, those need to be addressed.

Fitting 'Many Lives' in 'One Bag'

A working woman lives multiple lives. She is a daughter, might be a sister, a daughter-in-law, a wife and a mother in addition to being a successful working woman. She manages many roles at the same time and no wonders, she manages them well. A woman has to fulfil the demand at work and afterwards various mandates at home. She works towards creating a perfect balance with her work life as well as family life. On one hand as a working woman, she meets deadlines and achieves impossible targets, and on the other hand, she has to cook food, do the laundry, get groceries, pay bills, do the cleaning, attend to the guests or maybe feed the kids, change their diapers, help them fall asleep when they are awake, wake them when they are asleep, pick up toys, crayons, wrappers, and much more! She carefully keeps her car keys, organizer, pen and credit cards, in her bag, while prudently adjusting essential medicines of family members, a diary with important phone numbers, home keys, sometimes the feed and diapers of their kids too, in the same bag.

Working Woman Vs. Working Mom

Being a mother is one of the best blessings in the world. It is one of the toughest yet most satisfying 'job'. Every woman who is a mother can otherwise be also called as a working mother, though those with a professional career handle additional challenges. Moreover, leaving your kid behind at home and going to work is not as easy as just saying or writing it. From the time a mother leaves home for work, till the time she is back after a tiring day's long work, the well-being of her child is the primary continuous concern on her mind. The dilemma she faces all the time is to work or not? To continue working or consider taking a break? Whether a break is required at this time or maybe at a later stage? Am I doing the right thing or being selfish? Taking care of the family

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and children, and handling the responsibilities of home along with work commitments put a lot of pressure on working moms. A mother is the best concierge for a child. No one else can take care of the child as a mother does. There's absolutely no substitute for a mother's love and concern. But, still for the time when the mother is away, the father or grandparents can look after the child. They can be asked to help out and share the responsibility. After all, raising a child is not easy and the onus is not just on the mother.

The Time Factor

The most obtrusive dilemma faced by a working woman is time management. She already often works 'overtime' and is expected to work more than this. How and from where to extract time to fulfil all the tasks? And what about time to look after herself? There's hardly any scope left for social gatherings and outings. Amidst meeting deadlines, preparing meals for the family and helping the children with their homework, where's the time left? These questions occupy her mind round the clock. The daily prioritising and sorting of to-do list takes a toll on her health and becomes the most difficult task, even if she is a seasoned manager!

The Gender Quotient

"Where do I fit best?", asks a working woman to herself, as she is always been adjudged for being the 'uncommon' part of the mass. She faces a lot of issues at the workplace owing to the fact that she is a woman. Lack of a woman mentor at the workplace might be an additional reason. She is generally questioned about her personal life, about family, marriage and children per se, rather than about her skills, knowledge and experience, before she can be hired for a job that she is best suited for. Be it doubts pertaining to her capabilities or some pre-conceived notions about devoting time to work, travelling to places, or taking up any new challenges, a working woman encounters a range of them. There are biases for promotions and pay disparities that the so-called 'fairer' sex faces. Though she is capable, yet she can't work at odd hours. At times, she misses various opportunities and growth prospects when flexible working hours or travelling is required. Sexual harassment is another plague adding to her agony. In my view, a woman should not be discriminated on the basis of her femininity, instead she should be granted equal opportunities and rights.

Disguised as a 'Superwoman'?

One big mistake a woman commits is to consider herself a 'Superwoman'! She thinks that everything is her responsibility and for every job she is required. She tries to work continuously without pause. In justifying her every role as a woman, she forgets being herself a human being! Overestimating her capabilities is one thing and underestimating others is another faux pas. She commonly does not trust anyone else for some specific tasks, especially child care and some house responsibilities. She feels that even the spouse is not proficient enough to do the job. Mostly, she ends-up being a perfectionist and a 'micro-manager' that pays attention to every minute details and won't settle for

anything 'less'. But, this should not happen and she should refrain herself from always being in the 'leading' role.

Surmounting of Guilt

A girl grows up with the conviction that she is responsible for taking care of her family and kids after marriage and she feels that nothing is going to be in its place without her. That's why, she always finds herself filled with guilt of not accomplishing all the tasks, or not being able to cater to everybody's needs. If she finishes one job, the other remains pending, the blame of which is either given to her or mostly, she herself takes. She asks herself if she is at fault or not? Working mothers are always filled with the guilt of leaving the child behind, of not able to give enough or quality time to their children and of missing out many joyous moments of their growing up. It is this guilt that pulls her down. If the child does not perform well at school, it is the mother who is blamed. She herself also wonders if she has been selfish by neglecting her child.

Recognition or Appreciation

Another dilemma is that though a working woman plays all the different roles assigned to her and manages a 'perfect' balance between the two distant worlds to the best of her capabilities, yet she still doesn't get the recognition or appreciation she deserves. The hard work and efforts rendered by her for the whole family never get due acknowledgement. She is neither encouraged, nor rewarded for whatever she does. Her financial contribution which uplifts the living standard of the family is also ignored. Additionally, she is not given equal status in society.

Trust and Support from Family

It would become easier and less stressful for a working woman if her family supports her. She jolts between work and family, engrossed in various ifs and buts. Many a times, she overlooks her own health. Family members can play an important role in reducing her anxiety and ensuring her good health. They can share responsibilities and do house chores. The support and encouragement of a husband is very crucial for a wife if she wants to work. He can look after children and elders at home and shoulder the burden in many more ways. There should be a trustworthy, safe and reliable childcare at home so that the mother can stay calm and mentally at peace while she is away at work. I would like to add that the children should also be co-operative enough to facilitate a healthy living environment for all.

Last But Not The Least...

Despite all the dilemmas and challenges, in my opinion, a woman is strong enough to fight the hardships, overcome the challenges and find ways to chase her dreams and pursue her career, after all to live a life of her choice! That's what all of us want for our daughters too, isn't it so? Our children would also like to see their independent and successful mothers, whom they would feel proud of.
