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## Women And Challenges In Leadership: An Indian Scenario

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### Introduction

Leadership is often considered to be man's affair in our society. The deep rooted patriarchal culture has made us to think that only man can reach the highest position in any work. Why can't woman? In the 21<sup>st</sup> century conversations have been often made about women empowerment, women participation, gender equality etc. whereas the stereotypical attitude of the society that man always are there 'take charge' and women are for 'taking care'. This attitude has changed to a great extent in the recent years. Still, men are in the majority where we come to the field of leadership. 'Leadership has always been associated with legends and myths and larger than life stories. It is a topic that has generated immense interest and intrigue at all times and evokes wide spread fascination among people. It is considered the world's oldest preoccupation and research studies on it remain important across timelines with varied outcomes. Harvard Business Review has published 500 plus articles since 1927 even then, research on leadership remains and will continue to remain a fertile domain <sup>1</sup>.

According to the United Nations publications on women challenges of year 2000, 'women constitute half the world's population, perform two-thirds of the world's work, but receive only one-tenth of its income and own less than one hundredth of its property' / so much has to be done by women to attain and achieve the position that men have already achieved. This paper will be an attempt to highlight the challenges faced by the women leaders and some ways to overcome the challenges.

### Objective:

- (i) To study the challenges faced by women in achieving a leadership position.
- (ii) To understand the factors contributing as a barrier in reaching the position of a leader.
- (iii) To study how to overcome the challenges faced by a women leader.

Women leaders confront lot of obstacles in their way towards achieving a leading place. They have to cross several barriers to attain the topmost position inspite of having good academic career, intelligence, dedication and commitment to their work and duty. Studies say that the rate of women leaders is at a very low level and this is not only in the Indian society but in the International arena also the same phenomena exist. The society cast women to be incapable to

lead a team, less assertive, less competent. Therefore they are not considered to be suitable for leadership role like male counterparts.

Another major challenge is balancing family responsibilities with other responsibilities as a leader. They often have to give preference to the care giving responsibilities. This can be limiting their ability to give long hours and go to a demanding position or progress in achieving the goal. The society do not trust and have confidence on a woman. So it becomes a difficult task for a woman to prove her as a good leader.

1. Nohoria Nitin and Khurane Rakesh(Ed.) : Handbook of Leadership Theory and Practice : An HBS Centennial Colloquium,p.11

‘Power the key theme of leadership’. Women power means having control, organizing further control having a say and being listened to being able to define and create from a women’s perspective being able to influence social choices and decisions affecting the whole society (not just areas of society accepted as women’s place), being organized and respected as equal citizens and human beings with a contribution to make 2.

But the attitude of the society is that women are only made for taking family responsibilities and is not fit for certain professions. They are generally accepted in certain female jobs.

### **Ways to overcome challenges:**

Despite the challenges women have been able to overcome the barriers and the challenges and this happened due to the determination and quality of leadership built upon by them. Women should have some effort to create opportunities in whatever field they are interested and suitable for. They have to develop self confidence in order to reach the desired goal. Belief in their abilities is another way by which they will be able to fight against the adversities. Women could make the society realize that women too can contribute to the development of the society. Leadership is skill and this skill is not in the gear of a person. So it becomes necessary to develop and acquire the skill of leading an organization smoothly. For this women should have to stay updated with the latest trends and try to protect in communication skills. Assertive role has to be developed to manage and lead any organization in whatever sector it may be.

It is well known fact that to attain a leadership goal, there will be adversities, setbacks and failures. Developing resilience to fight back with the adversities should be the motive of a leader. Seeking feedback from the members of that organization will be very necessary in order to develop as a leader. Besides these qualities of support and inclusion of all the colleagues and seniors in that sector has to be advocated. This will lead to equality in the workplace and help the leader to run the organization or that sector in a better way.

Women leaders can play a great role and impact in the society by showing the society that woman can break the gender bias with the unique skills and imaginative ability to led. Other qualities like empathy, love, kindness which are the innate qualities of women will allow her to

reach the topmost level as it will be easier for her to gain co-operation and support from the colleagues. Thus women need to be allowed to prove themselves and their skills, capabilities. Women should have to make conscious effort and attending training programme will make her realise where to give more emphasis. The most important quality of a leader will be to face criticism, as criticism is essential to become successful in the career.

2. Sahey Sushma: Women and Empoerment: Approaches and Strategies1998,p22

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2.Moran B.B (1992) : Gender differences in Leadership , Literacy trends,40(3)

3. Park D (1996) : Gender role, discussion style and leadership style, women in management Review. (8)