CHAPTER 6: POSTCOLONIAL INTERSECTIONS OF I.T. PROFESSIONALS AT WORKPLACE SCALE

With the digital revolution, the portrayal of the I.T. Industry's workplace as a gender-inclusive continued to attract ambitious engineering graduates from diverse geo-social locations of India. Although the I.T. industry intended to open the space without gendered boundaries representing the organizational model of a progressive, globalized, and gender-neutral workplace, however, industry work culture subtly consumed the societal process of gendering and sustained as gender-segregated (Upadhaya 2004; Upadhaya and Vasavi 2006). The interwoven postcolonial fabric in the I.T. industry of India is visibly reflected in the workspace. The very structuring of job responsibilities is founded on the systematic bias following the patriarchal power that prevails in multiple social scales in India and reflecting the similar gender norms within the space. Previously, I have discussed How I.T. professionals negotiate and navigate gendered spaces at Individual (Chapter 4) and Family (Chapter 5) scales. And how they inflect each other constantly emerging critical gender trends that connect gender and intersectionality with multiple forms of mobilities (Shukla and Chaudhuri 2021).

In this chapter, I further move ahead the discussion by extending the scale to workplace. In this scale, I examine the postcolonial intersections in gendering of the work culture, its influence on individual's gender relations across the scales. I discuss the causes by which I.T. profession influence the social locations at diverse geographic and social scales. Understanding the process of gendering within industry, it is important to shed light on literature creation of gendered spaces in domains of Natural Sciences, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

6.1 The Gendering of Science, Technology and Engineering

Over the decades, systematic changes took place in women's education, enhancing social positioning. However, stereotypical biases, traditionally customized policies, and a lack of women icons in the industry lead to further sparse representations of women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). Various studies have reported that women do not get a fair share of opportunities and responsibilities to cross the institutional barriers in STEM. For several years, women have felt unwelcome, under-recognized, and marginalized (Bentley and Adamson 2003). Although contemporaries' studies reveal that certainly over the course women have improved their status, however, these studies also consistently point out women's disadvantages in STEM, with few changes based on the subject field (Maclssac 2019). After graduation, women fail to convert the skills into employment unlike men, and end up having a smaller share in occupations within the educational field of STEM (Beede et al. 201). Ayesha, a 25 years old software engineer in the American multinational I.T. organization, shared,

"*Unlike other girls in my family, I decided to opt for Mathematics in School and later on the move to an engineering college for a degree in Computer Science. As a Muslim girl, my family was concerned about the field I wanted to pursue as it is a male-dominated profession. Somehow I managed with my parents and elder brother but my relatives remained against the idea. They still are; they cut off connections with me and at certain extent maintain distance from my family. However, I expected this much reaction from them but what surprised me is the industry."*

Ayesha continued,

"We get hired, but I feel it is more of a formality to balance the percentage of men and women in the system. It is very superficial. All male teams prefer not to have women, and teams with more women usually do not get significant projects. Forget about the better appraisal."

Additionally, Ayesha and other respondents alluded that women usually give up full-time responsibilities in technology and engineering and preferable move to work outside the field. The environmental setup of institutes makes women estranged and marginalized; as a result, they become detached and unenthusiastic, producing poor results (Freeman et al. 2007). The feeling of alienation is particularly prevalent in the field of Science and technology including computer science and engineering (Murphy et al. 2007; Stout et al. 2011). It connects with underperformance and developing ideas about quitting the profession. A vital comprehension of women for poor motivation and performance is due to the widespread stereotype notion that sciences, numbers, and technical areas work as "guy things" (Nosek et al. 2002). Factually, the institutional gendering of organizations is contemplated as the "true gatekeeper to technical careers" (Davis 2007). Therefore, institutions are supposed to "maintain ambitions of women decisively committed to fields of science, mathematics, and engineering and keep the shutter open for others to rediscover" (Davis 2007). Neha, 27 years old, Data analyst in Korean Multinational Orgnization shared,

"I really liked mathematics, I might not be a genius but I was good at it. I wanted to be an engineer; I thought of becoming Civil Engineer like my grandfather but no one in my family agreed; eventually, I gave up on being a computer engineer. Even in engineering institute of mine, I observed that most girls are doing bachelors in I.T., computer science and bioengineering. During placement, major hiring for women comes from BPO irrespective of your engineering branch. With project distribution, girls end up with simpler tasks for reasons like we won't be able to work after office time, many have other responsibilities at home, etc."

As Neha discussed, technology and engineering as a male-dominated field disseminate the notion for girls to be collective and emotional beings, focusing more on marriage and family, and investing in the actions that help to develop interpersonal relationships (Konrad, Ritchie, Lieb, and Corrigall 2000). At the same time promote the notion that boys should be inclined on acts that focus on problem-solving skills, numbers, and financial matters (Buck, Leslie-Pelecky, and Kirby 2002). Therefore, the significant investors in the socialization process of gender roles partake in the social and economic institutions (Ambrose and Schminke 1999) can remold stereotypical insights and develop an inclusive institutional system. Neha further added,

"Women at a certain time in their career had to take a break due to marriage or pregnancy. These breaks disrupt the process for even highly ambitious women, policies are there but I wish they worked in favor of women the way it is presented. Ironically policies for women were formulated by men sitting in the boardroom. Lack of women voices in the higher positions only increases the distance from the ground reality."

Women currently lack essential networking opportunities and efficient support systems at both the level, i.e., educational and institutional (Baum 1990); in considering the face, there is a crucial requirement for women mentors in the executive positions in Industry (Pfleeger and Mertz 1995). From 1966 to 2004, the lots of women who opted for the technology and engineering courses has increased: Yet, only 1 out of 6 women opted for undergraduate in engineering out of which only 25% hold degrees in computer sciences (Fountain 2000). Women continued to be in a dilemma to find a balanced career path in technology and engineering (Hill, Corbett, and St. Rose 2010). Contemporary women still feel alienated due to informal networks among their male counterparts. As a natural corollary, Men informal networking creates hurdles in career growth, promotion, and fair work responsibilities (Sax 1994). Despite several reports in favor of women's competency, STEM-based organizations are internally perpetuating the notion of stereotypical gender roles of women. The I.T. profession indeed has reported an increase in women's employment where participation of women as system analysts and computer programmers range 26% to 29%; moreover, less than 30% of I.T. professionals are women (Fountain 2000). Interestingly, in the field of computer science and mathematics, women's participation dropped from 30% to 27% in 2009 (Beede et al. 2011). As a result, lack of opportunities and biased work share eventually hurt the prospects of women in their respective careers. It is been reported that women feel out of place due to the male-working culture and repeatedly prove their worth for the exact nature of work (Cheryan, Plaut, Davies, and Steele 2009). Furthermore, engineering and technology industries continue to have disproportionately low levels of female representation and make minor improvements to other STEM disciplines.

6.2 Understanding Gendered space in I.T. organization

Globally, it is widely held that the information technology industry is one of the most gender inclusive work field, with new opportunities to enter and prosper. However, the female-male ratio shrinks dramatically from early working years to later years – "the pipeline shrinkage problem" (Gürer and Camp 2002). Studies tell us that women are primarily underrepresented in all computing professions, including academics or within the industry opportunities (Camp 2002; Raabe, Boda and Stadtfeld 2019). It is worth mentioning that the I.T. industry captures about 51 percent of the world market (Kumar 2001). With an advent number of women at the ground level, there is a persistent lack of women representation at the senior level. Despite significant achievements in the computing field, women engineers are consistently treated as inferior. Many subconsciously pursue with stereotypical belief that it is more natural for men to study computing and work in the I.T. industry (Gürer 2002). Furthermore, at the executive level, the I.T. industry is missing out on female perspectives— a fact that might have negative consequences for society, as evidenced by the adverse outcomes attributed to all-male design teams (Margolis and Fisher 2002).

In India, the presence of women in engineering was negligible up until the late '90s. In the last few decades, there is a surge of involvement has documented; this growth firstly observed in the southern states of India and has progressively spread to other parts of the nation. In estimation, women constitute 30 percent of the total I.T. workforce, which is higher than their participation in the national economy (NASSCOM 2017). However, after analyzing the current trend, one can argue that the representation of women engineers in this sector is "not very encouraging." (Basant and Rani 2004)

The high percentage of women represented at the lower level of the job ladder slowly initiated the feminization of specified service activities of I.T. and led to consequential segregation. Shanker (2008) echoed the same findings that women professionals were mainly at the entry and intermediate levels rather than flocking at the middle and upper ranks, thus, creating the glass ceiling (Kelkar et al. 2002; Upadhya 2006). There are the persistence of gender-based stereotypes practiced by the management for the ideological construction of women's skills to be categorized as soft skills, for instance, "being good at routine, regular and repetitive works than the complexity of coding" (Margolis 2013); this notion shapes recruitment practices. Consequently, it limits opportunities for women's professional growth. Reinforcing gender-based stereotypes creates a culturally and structurally defined glass ceiling (Abraham 2008).

Women's participation in the I.T. industry does not fundamentally challenge the concept of gender-based division of labor (Upadhya and Vasavi 2006). As my data suggested that the age category of women in the I.T. industry predominantly lies 24-30 years old, and it is very uncommon to locate someone above 35 years of age. The suggestive reason is that unmarried women do not have the restricting work pressure from their parental family, whereas married women had to invest more in childcare and housework responsibilities for maintaining harmony (Kelkar and Nathan 2002). Therefore, women opted to work outside the boundary of private space to enhance their social location rather than being burdened with dependency and restraint within the family (Kelkar and Nathan 2002). The studies suggest that policies are formulated to narrow the gender disparity to regulate equal and better work opportunities. Yet, in reality, women are limited at the ground level of jobs in the work hierarchy, presumably constraints on specific work fields (Mishra 2017). The outcome of practice infers that gender relations at the

workplace continue to project stereotypical portraits of women employees and their technical skills because of societal constraints, pushing them to encounter and endure a glass ceiling.

6.2.1 Gendered Geographies of Globalization in the I.T. Industry

By definition, Globalization is a systematic process in which geographical boundaries erode, social and cultural intermixing increases, and the nation-state notion is rejected. (Waters 1995). In 2000, Wallerstein stated that "Globalization is a meaningless concept" without an analytical framework for understanding the direction of a dynamic process. Therefore, the postcolonial gender lens is used to articulate and learn the impact of the globalized I.T. industry on women engineers, specifically women I.T. professionals in India. The motive to adapt the approach is to understand the system and sub versed gender injustices incorporated with the globalized I.T. industry. Gender oppression, on the other hand, does not fit into a casket; it varies from an individual's geographical to social and cultural setting (Lange 2009).

To be more specific, institutional oppression is linked to an individual's intersectionality. Such gender-based oppression in an economic institution cannot be understood separately from individuals' axes of differentiation that constantly inflect each other at any geo-social location (Shukla and Chaudhuri 2021) with socio-geographical for juxtaposition. The idea is to understand the diverse encounters of women I.T. professionals across the nation and appreciate the differences of axes rather than appropriation. Globalization has functioned as a catalyst for global and socio-cultural convergence. Many scholars argue that the procedure was beneficial because it created occupations for socially excluded women and allowed them to advance up the social ladder (Hafkin and Taggart 2001; Sassen 2002; Gunter and Van Der Hoeven 2004). The depiction of I.T. organization as a globalized gender-neutral sanctum, initiatives are taken to

develop an embracing workspace for women I.T. professionals through implementing various measures such as Anti-harassment policies, Maternity benefits, flexible working hours, encouraging more women engineers to join and stay in the industry. Therefore, women engineers move from diverse geographical and social locations battling gender power dynamics of family and community retrieve to experience gender-neutral space. However, Shreya, a 26 years old software engineer in Indian multinational I.T. organizations, expressed,

> *"Most of the policies targeting women employees are just good on papers that help the companies have an open and neutral image but in reality, its application is horrible. I still remember the incident of my colleague; she got harassed by someone higher up. She filed the complaint in the HR department, which followed the investigation. The reports verified her allegations. The accused men dismissed from his position and company and that's an obvious course to follow. However, they suggested victim take paid leave for three months to find a new job. Interestingly, the man got the position in another organization with a better CTC package within a few weeks. From what I last heard, that woman was still looking for jobs because nobody wanted to hire her. This is the sad reality of the companies."*

Under consideration of Shreya and other respondents' voices, it appeared that despite the promising enterprise, the I.T. workspace continued to sustain its position as an alienated junction for women professionals because of numerous confirmations of gender inequalities that exist in the system. Shreya further added,

"what I have shared is one of the extreme incidents there are many such things happen in the system that most of the time women prefer to ignore it like eating up the work credits, giving poor appraisal, insulting skills and so on."

The said discrimination adversely impacts women's enthusiasm, ambitions, and opportunities further widening the gender gap (Peterson and Morgan 1995) adding more issues like lack of women representation in leadership positions (Carli and Eagly 2007), and the extra time and efforts requirement for women to progress in their field (Blau and DeVaro 2007). While the I.T. industry appears to provide excellent working opportunities to women, it also systematically follows the approach of exclusion operating within the organizational space, despite having women-friendly policies on the paper. The globalized Indian information technology industry is based on a nuanced gender stratification system that has been conveniently re-institutionalized with the goal of maintaining prejudice against women in the workplace. Rima shared in her narrative (discussed in chapter 1), *Women indirectly requested favors in exchange for a promotion, income raises, or overseas chances. Women constantly face gender biasedness and have to put 30-40% more effort to stand equal to men with a similar skill-set and knowledge in the I.T. industry.*

Women are exposed to exploitation and discrimination in the job as they try to navigate a systematically created gendered workplace (Carbado, Fisk, and Gulati 2008). Unfortunately, many pieces of the research raised concern that the that the IT industry's workplace was unpleasant and unstable, with a prejudiced working environment and excessive working hours but workplace culture includes skewed wage distribution and veiled sexual remarks. (Miller and Jagger, 2001; Kirkup 2002). The indisputable fact is that the systemic and institutionalized

prejudice against women was built into the foundations of globalization, and it continues to be unjust throughout the process (Brock 2016). Thereby, the problem of determining how gendered practices and ideology influence the globalization process in the Indian I.T. Industry is critical which indeed differs from other nations, and the postcolonial intersections appropriately provide the frame to gendered I.T. space.

6.2.2 Encountering Postcolonial gendered I.T. workspace

The I.T. industry is associated with globalization and the economic race of the world, unlike the industrial revolution, akin to 'masculinity' physical power (Fountain 2000). The very nature of the I.T. industry attracted the women to experience the intellectually stimulating working environment and better career perspective incorporating the gender-neutral image (Varma 2002). Sandhya, a 31 years old data structure scientist in an Indian Startup, shared her account,

> "*The very women-friendly image of the I.T. industry pushed me to join the industry. I think it is better if we compare it with other industries but they do not even promote themselves as gender-neutral as I.T. does. I.T. organizations have more responsibilities to adhere to the promoted image. I agree you will find a more modern lifestyle in I.T. professionals, attempting to break the old norms. However, I feel there is still a long way to go. If I have to put some numbers, I feel only 10-12% break the gender boundaries rest are only portraying the pseudo image of being modern. The pseudo image practice is so immersed in the work ethics that you won't realize the impact until you dig deep."*

The creation of 'pseudo-image,' Sandhya discussed, somehow became the poster image of the I.T. organization, which is critical to acknowledge because the very foundation of the Industry's work practice assuredly impacted the social and cultural fabric of the society. Therefore, the I.T. industry not being an isolated entity, affected the social relations between genders and technological determinism embodying a historical system resting upon societal structure (Haraway 1991; Castells 2000). To understand the societal interference in the economic system, the feminist approach of adhering to the historical and current experiences is key to moving along the local and global strata for apparent gender-based inequality and oppression (Ackerly and Attanasi 2009). Therefore, it is notable that the gendering of social and economic organizations in India retrieve notions from colonial experiences and reforms with postcolonial gender theory. The institutionalization of postcolonial gender notions within the social fabric of India over the decade envisions new patriarchal relations (Sinha 1999). Additionally, the postcolonial institutionalization impacted the social transition and gender construction roots in economic organizations, especially the Indian I.T. industry (Shukla and Chaudhuri 2021). Sandhya further shared,

> *"Definitely, I.T. helped women achieve financial freedom, which was impossible before the industry, and enter the engineering field simply because others were not considered women-friendly and highly male structured. Families did not permit girls to join engineering more based on the field. I.T. organizations created the space for girls interested in being an engineer."*

Like Sandhya, other respondents accepted that the I.T. industry emerged with lucrative career benefits for women engineers across diverse social and economic backgrounds. Women enthusiastically join the industry where physical strength is not prioritized, yet studies have reported that uses in the I.T. industry drive on a gender-based continuum (Patel and Parmentier 2005). She continued,

> *"However, the welcoming does not suffice because eventually women considered as sub-ordinate or staff to support."*

The industry put together a one-way mirror film where women I.T. professionals' numbers and women-centric policies are upfront as a trophy. Still, once you cross the mirror film, it becomes apparent that women rarely get the opportunity to participate in the decision-making spheres. The postcolonial idea of letting women participate in the outer world reflects the superior image connecting with the I.T. industry's hiring women at entry-level jobs but keeping the door to the center shut (Shukla and Chaudhuri 2021). Ujjwala and Rima shared in their narratives that *women are clustered in Ground level jobs but after that, there is 'Layers of Glass-Ceilings' at each critical step of the ladder which require different strength to break it down.*

Thus, women cluster at the entry-level jobs leading to gender-based segregation and systematic institutionalization following postcolonial gender roles and social stereotypes (Shanker 2008; Abraham 2008). After independence, India had tremendous economic and technological advancement. However, the women's servitude held in the guard of men continued as praxis, a socio-cultural phenomenon observed in every section of Indian society. If women I.T. professionals eye for the executive seat, it requires sticking to the same organization,

practically immobility (Patel and Parmentier 2005; Shankar 2008). The women I.T. professionals continued contesting for their place in the system uprooted from postcolonial gender roles, as discussed further in the section.

6.3 Women professionals as Treasure or Upholding Diversity dogma?

The I.T. industry has created a male-dominated space where men in the boardroom formulate policies to promote women's participation, missing the ground reality and voice. Despite continuous policy formulations and reforms, the gender disparity gap only widens. The systematic gender segregation in the workplace raises concerns as women are usually attached to less prestigious projects (Suriya and Panteli 2000). Gender inequality is not limited to entry or middle level, but women who successfully broke the glass ceiling continued to face it. A recent study conducted by the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA), 2022, reported that women executives earn an average of Rs. 85 for every Rs. 100 made by men. Discriminatory approach can be seen in organization's performance assessments such as rewards (monetary compensation), opportunities (promotion, role allocations), and penalties (termination). Gender discrimination institutionalizes policy systematically in favor the women. For example, "face time" is used at the workplace to evaluate who is present at the office for more hours and rewards employees in return. Considering the fact, that women still act as primary caretakers at home (Acker 1990; Fuegen et al. 2004); therefore, flexible work arrangements are regularly opted and, resulting in faceless scores on "face time" (Glass 2004). As a result, unbalanced performance evaluation criteria contribute to gender discrimination.

Women have fewer possibilities to obtain a complex project, which subsequently affects their further growth in the industry, causing pipeline leakage at the upper level of management

and leadership (Eagly and Carli 2007; Sabharwal 2015). Women receive less challenging work responsibilities and fewer training possibilities (King et al. 2012; Clark and Sekher 2010). It is detrimental that individuals develop essential skills needed to flourish in their field required demanding responsibilities. (Spreiter et al. 1997). Men often move up the organizational ladder faster than women (Cox and Harquail 1991; Stroh et al. 1992). Gender discrimination in promotion for a specific position or pojects allotments or level has serious, long-term repercussions. (Martell et al. 1996). All-male teams frequently object to the hiring of a female engineer, believing that it will not only lower the team's performance rating but also jeopardize the male camaraderie in the workplace. Women rarely participate in workplace informal socializing, which encourages young unmarried males to stay late at work, and their male coworkers may resent their presence after hours as limitations.

Further analysis of fewer women in the industry can answer why women do not consider "long-term investment," recruiters prefer males (Blau and DeVaro 2007). The idea that women must get home safely (although some firms arrange for night drops) prevents them from engaging in casual networking. Domestic duties (from which married men often flee) place extra restraints on married women, requiring them to leave the job at a sensible hour. Taking into account the aforementioned challenges, as well as some other stereotyped gender roles limits, when team is an under a lot of pressure at work or have a tight deadline to meet, male team members frequently target female members for being unavailable or not putting in the necessary effort to advance the team (Baxter and Wright 2000).

Moreover, gender discrimination is prevalent to the extent that women often deal with direct/indirectly targeted harassment to survive in workplaces. It is critical to note that sexual harassment has become a severe issue for women working in any industry, including the

globalized I.T. industry. In the survey conducted on working women, it is reported that 46% of women active in technical and scientific areas are being sexually harassed (Boiarsky et al. 1993). The policy of creating a new work culture setup to emphasize on "informal, non-hierarchical management systems based on networks and clubs", with a thought to create an inclusive workplace building up the interpersonal relationships and "team spirit" (Upadaya and Vasavi 2006). Despite the effort to create a mutual ground of comprehension, cross-gender interactions remain formal due to the lack of proper training and grooming of employees in the I.T. industry concerning gender sensitization. The I.T. industry requires a foundational change in the system, where women are hired to balance the organization's diversity but not for the skills they hold.

Furthermore, the next section will discuss the collected field data at length to understand the way women I.T. professionals in India negotiate and navigate gendered I.T. workplaces.

6.3.1 Women I.T. Professionals Navigating Gendered Workplace

The women engineers' voyage begins when they move out from their hometown with the thought of joining the globalized I.T. industry and attaining social-economic independence. This mobility indeed helps women gain improved social stature and financial capability; the geo-social mobility contributes to sliding away the patriarchal boundaries set up by society. To understand this, respondents discussed how moving from one place to another affected them not only in the change of geographical location but also in their social locations. Astha, 27 years old now lives in Bengaluru, employed as a system analyst in an Indian Multinational Organization, expressed,

"Moving out is the best thing that happened to me." She added, "I belong to Bihar's tiny village where educating a girl is not acceptable; they don't even think that girl is supposed to study after 10th standard. But from the beginning, I had in mind that ... I had to go outside, I wanted to do the job, and I didn't want to accept this lifestyle. So... I had to struggle to explain to my family because they haven't seen any girls study much…After completing my education, I have shifted far from home."

Once moved out from native places, notable shifts can be observed in the lifestyles of the interviewees, offering an opportunity to scale their social mobility. The I.T. Industry offered them a chance to experience a globalized milieu and path to move ahead. However, despite changing the geographical locations, social stigma persistently follows around. Dipa, 28 years old software developer in an Indian startup from Bihar, notes,

"I found moving from Bihar to Bangalore easier because I changed my city. Because of my technical education qualification, I got placement in I.T. Company settled in a new city. This sounds too easy, but I struggle to move from places full of restrictions, suggestions, and subtle comments based on my gender. Here, they won't say you on the face, but if you keep your senses vigilant, you can easily observe it in the actions."

Despite the transition in position, women professionals continued to face gendered remarks. The shift in social positioning and cities seems futile for women; they had to face similar but institutionally modified gendered dilemmas and definitions for taking steps to seep

with similar strains. Jyoti, 29 years old working as a data analyst in an American multinational organization, stated,

> *"We don't hear misogynist comments more openly in big cities, but if we keep our ears open, you will hear them all around, usually in humor, guidance, office jokes, etc. And the I.T. industry is no different."*

The interviewed women come from various social and economic backgrounds and negotiate various social and cultural stigmas; for some, it also became a journey full of obstacles. Preeti, a 24-year old respondent, working in a product-based I.T. industry, shared,

> *"I wanted my father to be happy and make him proud. So he kind of pitched the idea of doing management. So that excited me; I don't know much of the process, but I heard from people that you do computer engineering from IIT., and then you do MBA from IIMs I was like; let's do engineering. Yeah... I didn't know what engineering was about, I didn't want to do it also, but people fed my parents and my mind as the best possible course for the future."*

The I.T. boom in India often turns into a double-edged sword for women. Indeed, I.T. emerged as a lucrative career option but failed to remove the stamp of being dependent gender for "women engineers" - a category carefully crafted by society as a constant reminder that engineering as a profession and skillset is perhaps a male-only domain. Maybe women are "allowed" by family and other social constellations to be an I.T. professional, considering that

I.T. is soft-skilled labor. This ‘social appropriation’ of work and career choices shows the impression of postcolonial intervention as a critique of colonial coherence. Indeed their mobility here seems to evoke images of moving from underdeveloped places to technically advanced cities. Still, it also signifies a way of thinking and a new approach toward social interplay—resulting in disrupting the status quo of the ‘women’s question’ of colonial and postcolonial moments in South Asia. Therefore, the women's question continued to be critical in contemporary India. In Simple words, women struggled to empower the voice of their abilities and still had to put extra effort to achieve the same amount of accomplishment compared to their counterparts. For instance, Shradha, a 27 years old system analyst working in a reputed Indian I.T. firm, shared,

> *"I finish assigned work responsibility like any other male team member. But whenever I ask my team lead a reason for low ratings compared to male team members, reasoning may sound acceptable on paper that follows the regulations. Still, there is a subtle hint pointing to you that you, as a woman, won't work more than 10 hours, do the night shift or go on a work trip, etc. They cover such excuses so beautifully that you can't make any report to HR or responsible authority."*

The adaption of the ‘New Image’ of women in colonial India managed to seep into society’s veins in postcolonial moments. Women are empowered in a way they continue to juggle in the 'New women of India' where they work or run the business. Still, facing daunts that women’s primary responsibility is inside the home. They are allowed to break out but keep postcolonial restraints while living the ideology that ‘women are liabilities and men are assets’.

This is similar to the I.T. industry embracing postcolonial patriarchal ideology for women by defining men's abilities and roles as more valuable and investable, following the postcolonial notion of 'Individualization' and 'female emancipation' (Chatterjee 1989). This can cause common issues across the whole I.T. industry that women are a large number at entry level but very few in decision-making positions. It can be implemented as a failed attempt to criticize normative claims about the value of masculine Eurocentric knowledge and practices. The conscious/subconscious notion of male superiority mentality restricts male colleagues separate women counterparts with defined status. It has been reported that male colleagues find it difficult to take instructions from females in authority, considering the gap in position is not too huge. In Pooja's words,

> *"I was promoted as team lead, but unlike former male leads, male members usually seem uncomfortable or, should I say, stay blank in my presence. I have often found them cross-checking my instructions with male leads of other teams or managers of the team as they believe I might be wrong or probably don't know what I am instructing. The distrust of women's skills and leadership is nothing new; I have heard similar experiences from many women colleagues. Additionally, 'Mansplaining' I had to say it is so frustrating, I don't understand what makes their easy job is complex for us."*

A 26 years old, Pooja left the job in Orissa and joined as a team lead in a startup with the hope that here she could cross over stereotype boundaries women face in the lead position. Still, the scenario was not much different from the old workplace except for her hiring as the team lead. It is pretty standard for women I.T. professionals to be marked as unskilled technically. In

some cases, if success comes early in the form of promotion, they had to struggle with derogatory undertones in the voices of acquaintances. Somehow, they are forced to bear the traditional patriarchal ideologies on their shoulder. She gets devoid of or takes lots of time to achieve ‘onsite’ responsibilities, pay hikes, promotions, and other perks. Sweta, a 25-year-old developer, employed in the multinational product based I.T. industry, shared,

> *“My good friend, she went for maternity leave, so when she came back, she was eligible for promotion, but didn't get it because the manager said that he was not sure she would come back after delivery. She argued you could have asked me, but they presume that she might not come back because she went for a child; she might have wanted to leave the job. So they didn't give her the promotion. Men get a child; he comes back, right?”*

The moment information about marriage or pregnancy of woman employees enter, they presume to leave more of permanent or soon to be permanent. Unsurprisingly, I.T. organizations continue to follow the postcolonial gender intervention that women’s foremost responsibility is the family. The subtle displacement of the ‘colonial approach of promoting dominant groups’ (Chaudhuri and Thimm 2018) with intersections underlying perpetuation in the I.T. industry impact intimate relationships and societal connotations. Women I.T. professionals juggle with dynamic intersectionality of identities; they are confined by the jest concept of “Image of new women” (Sinha 1999), unconsciously maintaining such postcolonial notion. The stereotypical gender roles are changing in the family and workplace while carrying in the footsteps of postcolonial conceptualization. The nuanced gender stratification system had re-institutionalized

by keeping prejudice conveniently against women in the workplace. To navigate in a systematically formed gendered workplace, women tend to become vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination at the workplace (Kitty 2009). Consequently, the workplace has been described as a hostile working junction for women; numerous forms of gender prejudice and inequalities co-exist. Sandhya, a 26-year-old, working in the service sector, shared,

> *"You can see how the industry is set up. It is controlled, designed by men, and functions by men. I agree that the establishment tries to assimilate women's workforce in I.T., but you realize it is not about thoughts or skills required, but it is more about keeping the gender ratio balanced. You can't change the situation superficially when change should happen in the system's core, which shapes the workspace. When designing roots are patriarchal, or we can say subtly follow stereotypical thought, then any change is simply to save the face value of the so-called globalized I.T. industry."*

The inhospitable working environment results from an imbalanced gender ratio and authoritative, patriarchal set-up. Interestingly, from what other male-dominated industries set apart is the I.T. industry's self-presentation as innovators and pioneers for society's welfare. However, I.T. organizations have subtly incorporated the postcolonial patriarchal thoughts in creating the workplace's internal culture that problems related to gender discrimination and unethical treatment certainly do not raise any concern. Despite the digital technology-based industry- it pushed women's questions at the margins. Shanti, a 28-year-old respondent employed in I.T. service-based industry, shared

"The moment you apply for a particular job position, it is not your qualification or expertise that comes into their mind, but it is your gender that plays a critical role- in a good or bad way varies with the condition. I feel it is your gender doing all the work, from hiring to sharing work responsibility. I would say even hearing your voice and opinion."

She added,

"I was once called to organize a party for one of the team members. It was so at the last moment, and due to some prior commitment, I requested to give this responsibility to some other team members. To my surprise, from that incident, I was tagged as not a team player, but they do not use such terms for guy (men) members when they reenact similar situations. They get called busy men or introverts. Why? Can't women say no? It is not like it was part of my job profile. I think it is difficult for people to hear No from women."

Women working in the I.T. Industry usually represent a globalized and progressive society representation, but with signs of colonial influence in-depth. The postcolonial normalization approach to defying women's position and roles persists in the workplace. Women have fewer possibilities to obtain a complex project, which subsequently affects their further growth in the industry, causing pipeline leakage at the upper management level and leadership. A 29-year-old software engineer, Ritu, shared her account,

"I got placed in one of the I.T. companies in Bengaluru through campus placement. It is all good initially; you go through orientations, basic training before getting allotted to a specific team, and particular responsibility in the team. I would say most of us don't realize what barriers lie ahead. The same goes for me—my bubble of all good burst. When I was denied promotion due to a lack of onshore work experience with a particular client, another male, Techie, was given because he had a better understanding but didn't bother to remember that they asked me to take control of the same project from India. It is possible they don't realize that ethically it will be considered a discriminatory work approach. If you think about it, you will feel too how such behavior and work practices are very normal that nobody even bothers to give a second thought, forget about questioning it."

Women were considered more of a liability resulting in lesser onshore work responsibilities and fewer training possibilities (King et al. 2012; Clark and Sekher 2010). Critically, Ritu further noted,

"The bare minimum organization does for gender sensitization is provide a booklet and take test objective test based on it. That's it done! The only day you will find them worth celebrating women's power, talents, and skill is on International women's day."

The industry's efforts do not show any favorable impact due to their targeting approach. The aim of establishing a new work culture policy may emphasise informal, nonhierarchical

management systems based on networks and clubs, which frequently rely on the establishment of interpersonal ties and "team spirit" (Shukla and Chaudhuri 2021; Upadhya 2004). It might save their face from presenting as global leaders but despite efforts to create a mutual ground of comprehension of cross-gender interaction: the I.T. industry's failure to analyze deeply rooted issues concerning gender sensitization and patriarchal work ethics in the system.

6.4 Chapter Conclusion

The emergence of the I.T. industry has created an opportunity for women to participate in socially acceptable bind work nature and offerings, in principle gender-neutral. However, it is critical to point out that despite the constant attempt of portraying gender segregation in the workplace remains valid. The I.T. industry, following the postcolonial fabric of India, assimilated the patriarchal power structure of the traditional industries and their gender roles norms. Women professionals systematically get restrained from significant work areas such as software and hardware-centered projects. Still, they are included in administrative duties or business-oriented analysis, which is considered less technical and therefore less challenging. Indeed, the social mobility and participation of women are certainly gotten better in the I.T. industry but women's questions remain the same.

Still, women are pushed at the organization's margin, constantly negotiating in the workplace. The action of women brings scrutinized through traditional gendered notion- Women's complaining tagged as a soft or weak individual; aggressive nature as a bully or being a man. Furthermore, the conservative approach to a woman-man connection (Friend or mentor in the workplace) is interpreted as an 'affair' or 'sleeping her way to the top.' The inclusion of

women in the industry continued to hover with issues for women professionals; despite sessions for gender sensitization in orientation, participants in the study were labeled as a formality.

The evidence of gendering in the I.T. workplace reflects the influence of the social and cultural fabric of India and its colonial experiences. I.T. organizations' attempt to create a gender-neutral environment led to ‘women-friendly’ policies. However, exfoliating the deep-rooted issues that fail to solve the women’s problems naturally, women I.T. professionals continued to face barriers and gender dogma in the industry limiting career growth and active participation in high-skilled jobs. The industry denies the gendering of the workplace but respondents accepted that women are considered liabilities rather than investments in spite immobile nature of women professionals comparatively to men. The mobility of men that are often switching the organization is not shadowed, whereas women's mobility stifles after marriage impact the whole career chart for them. With the idea of sticking with the ‘gender-neutral’ approach, the I.T. industry overlooks the factor that traditional gender roles inclusive of the nation’s social ideology shape the functioning and structuring of the industry. The denial to accept the fault in the patriarchal sweep set-up adversely impacts attaining true gender-neutrality, not just on papers and spokesperson statements.