

# Women in Indian Banking Industry: Role & Challenges

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## ABSTRACT

In the fast and competitive world the Indian women are getting themselves out of the constructive frame works of housewives or teachers. They are placing themselves in diversified areas. During the early nineties we can hardly find an Indian woman at the top of a banking or financial institution. But now, the scenario is changed, with the continuous growth in the banking sector, banks has created new windows of opportunity for women to find employment in the banking sector. Today the women are realizing the need for making things happen. The bangle wearing hands have experienced the power of putting signature on important documents. The decisions that are approved by their fingertips are indirectly making waves in the economy the women in the country are moving towards the wider opportunities that the banking sector offers and climbing the ladders to reach the peak where fame, recognition and responsibilities are waiting for them. This paper explains the transformation journey of women. It focuses on the present scenario of women in banking sector. With changing times, women in the society started participating in the formal Indian labour force. But few women could reach the top position of organisational structure. In the male-dominated banking and insurance sector, women executives like *ChandaKochhar, Shikha Sharma* and various efficient women executives proved their mantle to be better managers/leaders as compared to men. Above mentioned are the names of women leaders who outshined in different fields where they stepped in, the paper also poses the various Challenges, faced by women professionals in banking sector.

**Keywords:** *Changing role of women in Indian banking sector and Current challenges faced by them.*

## INTRODUCTION:

The progress of any country is intimately linked to its ability to develop and use its human resources effectively. This is particularly true in a developing nation such as India. Women, as a significant part of this human resource pool will play

a vital role in economic, social and political development of India as it heads towards the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While the participation of women in the workforce in India is on the rise their inclusion into the exclusivemale dominated professions such as engineering, criminal law and corporate leadership is still limited. Another such area is bank management.

According to Employment Opportunity Commission, in 2011 women made up 58.8% o executive/senior-level officials and managers at 4,224 companies that fall into the Commercial Bankingcategory. However, among the managerial ranks, women occupy less position. This represents a significant disparity in the participation of men and women in the upper echelons of bank employment. The present study will focus on the transformation journey of Indian women professionals which will help to understand the progress they have made in Indian society. In order to understand the transformation journey of women professionals we begin with a brief description of changing role of women and the progress they have made overa period of time. This paper also puts a light on the Challenges and problems hindering the performance of women professionals in banking industry.

### **OBJECTIVES**

1. To study the changing role of women in Indian banking sector.
2. To find the current challenges faced by women professionals in Indian banking sector.

### **SIGNIFICANCE**

In the present scenario of globalization and liberalization of the economy, the demographics of employment have been changing. In the competitive environment more and more women are joining banking sector and making their mark. as the increasing number of women workforce in the banking sector, the research paper focuses on women executives in the banking sector . An attempt has been made in this research paper to highlight the problems hindering the performance of women professionals in banking industry. The women executives face organizational problems like heavy workload, Discrimination, Safety & Security etc at workplace and so on. They also face familial problems like work-family conflict, hostile environment at home, children and elderly care, etc. Thus, women face a number of problems on the personal as well as the professional front. Through this paper the banks are suggested to bring light on their existing practices and must focus upon to adopt advanced & new human resource

strategies and policies that, accommodate the work-life needs of a women workforce in the current business environment necessity.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The present study used qualitative survey method to collect the data. The Personal and telephonic survey was conducted with 30 Indian women professionals , belong to Middle level management i.e. Assistant manager, Manager position of banks performing different roles. By using open ended questions, the participants were prompt to encourage in-depth discussion about work, problems hindering the performance, career progression, and challenges faced by them. The secondary data related to the transformation journey of Indian women was also collected from reputed journals, magazines, and Newspaper and bank websites.

### **CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN**

In the past picture of women, they are usually the most exploited and least privileged members of households and as the primary caregivers of their families, they are often overburdened with domestic work for their families. Notwithstanding their second-class status in several societies, women's issues have acquired growing importance in all countries as the impact on gender discrimination in the political, social, economic and employment arenas have come to light. The humiliation, harassment and exploitation of women had been commonplace throughout history. But now the picture says "Women do two thirds of the world's work, receive ten percent of world's income and own one percent of the means of production." which shows that of women is totally changed women holds a unique position in every society, they become the larger part of the workforce. As per the (NSS 64th Round) The workforce participation rate of females in rural sector was 26.1 in 2009-10 and In Urban sector, it was 13.8 for females. The ratio of women in organized sector in 2010 was 20.4% with 17.9% working in the public sector and 24.5% in the private. The continuous participation of women shows that the share of female employees in the scheduled commercial banks was 15.9% in 2009 which rose slightly to 16.6% in 2010. Thus with changing times, different organizations into India has opened their arms with new jobs and opportunities for women Which , in turn, can raises self-confidence, make them independent and promotes equality between the sexes, something that Indian women have been struggling with their entire lives.

## PRESENT SCENARIO OF WOMEN IN INDIAN BANKING SECTOR

Women play a vital role in Indian economy in banking sector. The new employment mantra for the banking organisations, as well as for the women aspiring to reach the top in India's banking sector is perhaps best summed up in the words of Chandakochhar EEO and MD of ICICI Bank. According to a survey by International Executive research firm, around 11% of Indian Companies have women CEO's, where in US the women CEO's is just account for 3% of the total consideration. Indian banking sector has witnessed explosive growth and expansion ever since in the era of economic reforms was launched nearly to decades ago. That growth also created new windows of opportunity for women to find employment in the banking sector. The new opening up of banking to the private sector in India, there is a new hope that more employment transparency and purely merit-based Job opportunities will get a boost in this sector. This change is already become visible, according to data available with the Institute of Banking Personnel Selection, the nodal agency which runs the entrance exams revealed that in 2011 40% applicant are women for the posts of officers and clerks in 19 public sector banks and earlier it was between 15-20% .“The ratio of men and women applicants for the posts is 60:40 and the numbers speak for themselves, said by" Mr M. Balachandran, Director of the institute. According to human resource services giant Randstad India's estimates, the country's banking sector will generate 7 lakh to 10 lakh new jobs in the next 10 years. The government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have already been taking several steps, such as issuance of new licences, in the first half of 2014, to ensure expansion of financial services to rural and remote parts of the country. Moorthy K Uppaluri, chief executive officer at Randstad India & Sri Lanka, said, "With the new banking licences, which are likely to be issued the banking sector is poised to create big career opportunities for both men & women in the near future”.

Top 10 Indian Women in Banking sector in 21st Century		
S.No	Name	Designation & Bank
1	UshaAnanthasubramanian	Managing Director, BharatiyaMahila Bank
2	Arundhati Bhattacharya	Managing Director, State Bank of India
3	Archana Bhargava	Managing Director,United Bank of India
4	Vijayalakshmi R. Iyer	Managing Director, Bank of India
5	ShubhalakshmiPanse	Managing Director of Allahabad Bank

6	ChandaKochhar	MD & CEO, ICICI Bank
7	Naina Lal Kidwai	Country Head, HSBC Bank
8	Shikha Sharma	MD & CEO, Axis Bank
9	Ranjana Kumar is the .	first woman CEO , Indian bank, 2000
10	H.A Daruwalla,	MD, Central Bank of India

(Source: *Business Today, Edition-Dec 8<sup>th</sup>, 2013*)

In 2013, UshaAnanthasubramanian took over as chairperson and Managing Director of the country's first women's bank BhartiyaMahila Bank, inaugurated on the birthday of the India's first woman Prime Minister Indira Gandhi."The setting up of the BharatiyaMahila Bank is a small step towards the economic empowerment of our women, soon after there are many women's was elevated to the top positions in banking sector. Making it to the top is never easy for women in any field. But it's particularly hard in the public sector where women initially took up jobs to help support the family and held back from taking up more challenging roles. It took more than 30 years after bank nationalisation in 1969 for a woman to be appointed head of a state-run bank. Ranjana Kumar became chairman and managing director of Indian Bank only in 2000.The numbers are still small, but have been gathering pace recently. Today, state-owned banks headed by women have a 45% share of deposits and 50% of advances of all public sector banks.

### CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN PROFESSIONALS

The data represents that irrespective of sector, type, position in banking industry, the Indian women professionals are currently facing the following common challenges:

1. **Heavy Work load:** Heavy workloads are not uncommon in today's workplace. Downsizing, fear of job security and an uncertain economy often prompt women employees to accept or take on increasingly greater work responsibilities and longer hours. Today reaching targets and sales figures, the restructuring and soft dismissals of the last few years, etc. every employee have to cope with additional pressure in the working environment. **97% women said that despite stressful and competitive work, managing the heavy workload effectively is a big challenge for women employees.** During discussion with respondents, it was found that in banking sector the reporting time of managers would be fixed but there is no time to go back to their home. During closing period, they

have to stay back for a long hours being a part of middle level position they have to scheduled daily meeting, checks work progress, and solves problems if any, organizes intraday duties before the banks open. They have to take care from annual plan to monthly schedule and daily work, from overall situation to handling details. apart from this the female executives like cashier, teller, accountant, loan officer, portfolio managers, FOREX officer, assistant branch manager, etc., cannot leave the bank without tallying the account. Due to hectic work schedule and heavy workload, women executives find it challenging to strike work life harmony and healthy maintaining work life balance whereas **2%** women employees are comfortable with the workload.

2. **Status Discrimination:** **83%** respondent felt that now a day where both men & women plays an equal role to uplift the society, there is no gender discrimination but discrimination on the basis of status is going on and become a big challenge in front of married women. Today the single women received differential treatment compared to their married counterparts. The perception of higher management towards the single women is that they are more career oriented whereas the married women are more family oriented. Whereas **10 %** of women says that there is no status discrimination it all depends upon the knowledge, capabilities of women & **7%** says that there is still a gender & status discrimination both
3. **Transfer & Promotion:** "Bank employees are governed by the transfer policy. Since women face severe problems when transferred from place to place, Mobility is also a factor to decide promotions." The **67%** respondent indicated that the transfer policy was unfavourable for women because it is directly linked to promotions, they feel that married women are unable to meet this requirement" because of the family obligations and rest **33%** respondent indicated says no it's not a challenge because women do not seem to take their careers seriously and perhaps only consider their employment as a way to supplement the family income and there was a tendency to take women for granted and assume that women do not need promotions. As there are very few vacancies, men using all his power to get promoted". Thus it creates barriers to their career progress.
4. **Work life Conflict:** There are many men and the women facing the work life conflict in their lives but it is the major and greater problem for

female managers because they have more household responsibility. It has negative impact on the employees and organizations'. Work life conflict reflects upon the desire of work-hours adjustments and the provision of the family friendly policies, rather than the reduction in the work hours. The desire to reduce work hours is more related to married women who are performing dual roles in their personal & professional life. Major factors that affect work family conflict among married women executives are harmony in home and office, organisational support, family expectations, Thus the **90%** respondents indicated that the banks should adopt advanced & new human resource strategies and policies that , accommodate the work-life needs of a every women irrespective of status in the current business environment

- 5. Safety & Security issue:** In the competitive world where the phenomena of survival for the fittest are applied, the banking industry are also focusing upon their survival by entering into the new fields like insurance, mutual funds Demat& Trading services and through these functions they have opened the new windows for women employment into the various streams like Sales, operations, Human resource etc. Among these fields the fastest growth is in the sales department but due to safety & security issues such as visiting different places & interacting with different kinds of customers etc the women cannot take up their roles provided in sales department. Thus **87%** respondent indicated that yes safety & security become a big challenge for women professional working in sales department where direct dealing is with customers during and after office hours in the fields.
- 6. Lack of Flexible working:** Women feel banking is lacking in opportunities to work flexibly and remotely. **93%** respondent felt that availability of flexible working would be the biggest boon to progression for women. With flexi work arrangement the women employees get empowered and access the documents they need wherever they are and no longer have to wait for a colleague to step off a flight or finish a meeting to tell them where to find urgent information. During holiday it will help them to manage their personal & professional life both by keeping abreast of important deals and to avoid coming back to a built-up workload and a backlog of emails. Whereas **7%** women says No because

some privacy issues are related with the official documents so they cannot get leverage of operating it at anywhere & at any time.



## CONCLUSION

Women are the magnificent creation of god, a multi-faceted personality with the power of benevolence, adjustability, integrity and tolerance. She plays a great part in the progress of our country. In 21<sup>st</sup> century the massive change in the role of Indian women by getting themselves, out of the constructive frame works of housewives or teachers and placing themselves in diversified areas. During the early nineties we can hardly find an Indian woman at the top of a banking or financial sector but now the situation has changed, women are placed at the top most positions and some of the top women in banking sector, have turned their Bank's inclined downward graph to rising scales. From the last few years, women have been heading some of India's biggest banks, both public and private. They are involved in taking major decisions; they are introducing innovative ideas and contributing something towards the development of the economy. The leadership quality, managerial ability and the administrative skills are put together to make things happen. Though there is major economic contribution of women in banking industry, yet several current challenges and problems such as Heavy workloads, Discrimination on the basis of status, Transfer Policy, Work life Conflict, Safety & Security issue, Lack of Flexible working, irrespective of the type of banks are faced and still remains to be addressed by the banking sector and for this, a fundamental change is required in the attitudes of the employers, policy makers, family members and other relatives and the public at large.



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