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EMPOWERING INDIAN WOMEN THROUGH ICT

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ABSTRACT

Across the globe Digital technology has revolutionized the world as never before. Rapid transformations have taken place in the global scenario, as Digital Technology is an effective tool in catalyzing the economic activity in efficient governance, and in developing human resources. The contribution of Information and communication technology has been significant in terms of income and earnings, growth and employment generation. India too, has witnessed an unprecedented growth in the field of IT. The presences of world class educational institutes in the country have led to creation of a large pool of trained manpower of international standards.

INTRODUCTION

The IT industry is expected to emerge as one of the largest employers in the country (Ninth 5 yr plan). This sector is expected to grow to grow to $87 billion by 2008 and FY2012 is a landmark year – while the Indian IT-BPO industry weathered uncertainties in the global business environment, this is also the year when the industry is set to reach a significant milestone – aggregate revenue for FY2012 is expected to cross USD 100 billion. Aggregate IT software and services revenue (excluding hardware) is estimated at USD 88 billion.
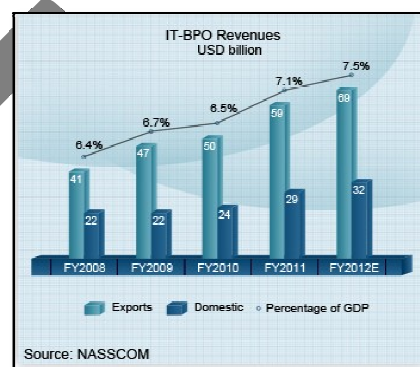
The industry continues to be a net employment generator - expected to add 230,000 jobs in FY2012, thus providing direct employment to about 2.8 million, and indirectly employing 8.9 million people.

A prominent feature of the IT sector is the growth of IT enabled services. There has been recent growth in IT enabled service businesses in India as call centers, medical transcription, technical support and back office processing, engineering and design, geographic information services, payroll and other human resource services, insurance claim processing, legal databases. Business Process Outsourcing has tremendous potential for growth.

The IT sector has not only created a large number of jobs, but has also resulted in new types of challenging careers. In the IT sector, emphasis is on intellectual rather than physical resources. As

emphasis is on knowledge, the IT industry is considered to be non-discriminating. It is considered to be an equal opportunity employer for men and women, minorities and handicapped all alike.

A large group of working women of India is in the rural and unorganized sectors. Socially the majorities of Indian women are still tradition bound and are in a disadvantageous position. Inequality in women's access to and participation in all communications systems, especially the media, and their insufficient mobilization to promote women's contribution to society.

Since globalization is opening up the Indian economy suddenly at a very high speed, during the past decades, advances in information technology have facilitated a global communications network that transcends national boundaries and has an impact on public policy, private attitudes and behavior, especially of children and young adults.

As per Nasscom estimates, women comprise 20 – 25% of total number of science and engineering graduates in the country. The number of software professionals has been rising continuously over the years. The number of software professionals increased from 6800 in 1985 to 650,000 in 2003-2004 (Nasscom, 2004). Women are joining the IT sector and their numbers are fast increasing.

In 1993, only 10% of workforce was women. In 1998, 18% of IT workforce was women which were higher than the national average of 12%. In 2003, the proportion increased to 21%. The participation of women in IT is rapidly growing and is expected to go up to 35% in 2005. Hence, women are now occupying a prominent position in the labour force.

The one area where India is way ahead of the United States is in the empowerment of women in the information technology services arena.

Compare figures from India's technology majors and IT industry bodies -- such as the National Association of Software and Services Companies -- and studies from the Information Technology Association of America to check this out.

The ratio of women in IT services in India is rising steadily, whereas the percentage of women IT workers in the US has been declining over the years. According to a recent study by the Information Technology Association of America, the percentage of women workforce in the IT industry in the country has declined by 18.5 per cent since 1996. That is, in 1996, while 41 per cent of the IT workers in the US were women, the number of women IT employees decreased to 32.4 percent in 2004.

More than a million, according to the latest Nasscom survey. The landmark figure of 1 million was crossed in the fiscal year 2004-05.

The software and services industry employ 6.97 lakh (697,000) people as against 2.42 lakh (242,000) employed during the previous year. The employment growth in the ITES-BPO industry has been the highest in the last one year. The sector currently employs 3.48 lakh (348,000) people, as against the 242,000 it had in fiscal year 2003-04.

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Seventy six per cent of the software professionals in IT companies are men, whereas 24 per cent are were women.

However, Nasscom says this ratio is likely to be 65:35 (men: women) by the year 2007. This ratio is reversed in the ITES-BPO sector where the ratio of men to women is 31:69

INFOSYS DATA
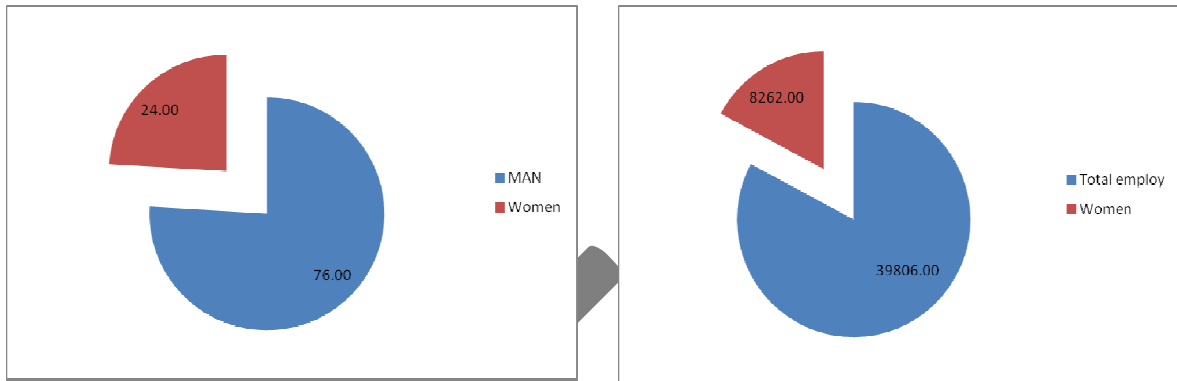
As per the previous few years' data, there has been a steady increase in the women workforce. It is seen that the percentage of female population has grown steadily from 17 per cent in March 2001 to 24 per cent in June 2005. During the same period the number of females grew from 1,691 to 8, 262,"

Wipro DATA:

Women empowerment example is given by IT

giant Wipro Technologies. The ratio of women workers in Wipro rose to 21.22 per cent in April 2005 compared to 18.75 per cent in April 2004.

Women are employed in IT companies located mainly in cities as Bangalore, Poona, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad and Bombay. More women are employed are employed in Southern regions of the country, where hiring of professionals was 41 percent as compared to Eastern region at 6 percent (Nasscom 2003). The women employed in IT belong to the younger age group. The overall median age of software professionals was about 25.6 years. 44 percent of software professionals possessed over 3 years of work experience (Nasscom 2003).
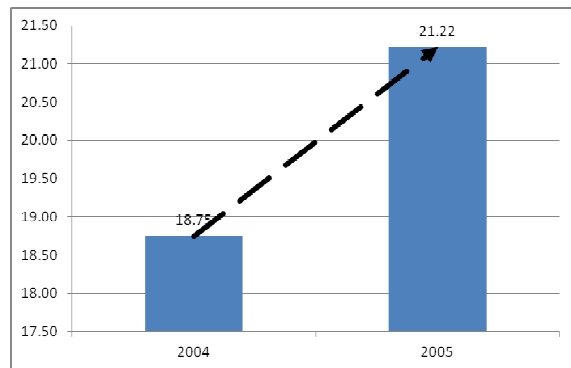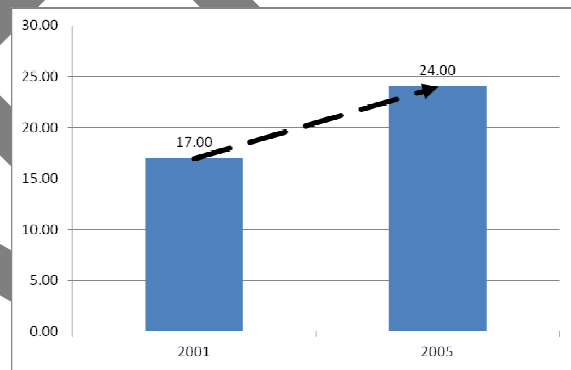
CONCLUSION

There's a famous Chinese proverb "Women hold up half the sky". It really encourages us to appreciate and accept the fact that it's the era of Women in the so called Man's world.

Women in India have torn apart confined boxes and now it is the era of women entrepreneurs. More and more women are entering professional engineering streams such as computer sciences and electronics. Indian women in the IT fields are very committed and they acquire software skills quite fast just like the men.

Earlier many IT companies feared to recruit women because many of them would end their careers with marriages. That is no longer the case with women in the IT industry these days. Now Indian women walk shoulder to shoulder with men and ratio is very few left who are dropping out because of marriages.

Trend shows that very soon men-women ratio in IT services in the country will reach the 50: 50 marks and it is a possible scenario in the few years.

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