

January 11, 2025

'Narayana Murthy Loves Infosys More Than His Kids': Devina Mehra Says 90 hours work 'bunkum'

Devina Mehra, First Global founder, has said that the recommendation of putting more work hours for national building or company building makes no sense.



90-Work-Hour Debate: First Global founder Devina Mehra has shared her view on the 90-work-hour debate suggested by L&T chairman SN Subrahmanyan saying such a recommendation of working for 'nation-building' or 'company building' is bunkum and makes absolutely no sense. She further took on Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy's working culture.

"After the comments by the L&T Chairman, SN Subrahmanyan on how he would like employees to work 90 hours a week and essentially hates the thought that they have any life at all outside work, let me repeat this as politely as I possibly can. This type of recommendation of working for 'nation-building' or 'company building' is bunkum and makes absolutely no sense," she wrote on X.

"Research shows that increasing the number of hours of work beyond a point (and certainly that point is far before 90 hours) reduces productivity substantially. The human mind (or body) is simply not capable of focused, good quality work for that long - at least on a regular basis. Not to speak of the toll it takes on physical and mental health," Mehra said.

Only Men are at work always...? Devina Mehra raises new debate

Further sharing her thoughts on the issue, Devina Mehra highlighted a concern saying when big bosses recommend long working hours, it appears that they assume it is always the man who is always working around the clock while the wife is taking care of the home and children. She mentioned that this was very starkly visible from a book on Mr Narayan Murthy and Mrs Sudha Murthy that she read recently.

And this attitude of only men are working means that most women would be precluded from this type of workforce and work culture at the very first.

"This type of working hours recommendation assumes that the man (it is almost always the man) who is working around the clock while his wife is taking care of the home and children. This was very starkly visible also from this book on Mr Narayan Murthy and Mrs Sudha Murthy that I read recently," she wrote.

"Mr Murthy completely outsourced parenting to not just his wife but also Sudhaji's sister and parents - So much so that the children thought of their grandfather as the real father and their father as only a 'backup' father. They also had no doubt that their father loved them less than he loved his company. Now of course it is all considered fine after the big payoff! This was one of the reasons I found it a disturbing book," the entrepreneur said.

"Plus, this attitude means that most women would be precluded from this type of workplace and work culture; or at the very least, would have to give up dreams of having children (unless there's a social revolution and Indian men become somewhat equal partners in raising of a family)," she added.

The women then can have a career OR a family with kids, a choice which all these men didn't have to make, Devina said.

Speaking further on the matter, Devina Mehra said, "More important, all data shows that no country has moved from low income to middle income without very substantial participation of women in the work force. So, if the aim is to build the country and its economy, we need to attract more women to the workforce, not less.

Hence, the 90 hour week is not the prescription that will take the country to the next level. This much is basic, but there is a deliberate blindness to this among even well-educated men!

Devina shares Korea, Japan anecdote

The social fallout of this culture in Korea & Japan which required people to hang around the workplace all day every day is that the women in those countries decided the sensible route was not to get married at all and the birth rates in those countries have plummeted to far below replacement levels, Devina said.

“Having said all of this, while I do not believe in long hours in office necessarily, the fact is that if you want to really be skilled in something like equity research or any other real knowledge area you need to put in those 10000 hours of work to really learn the skill,” she further highlighted.

This means reading books, maybe doing courses from universities in your own time and so on. Without that you would not be at the cutting edge. So at the very least in the initial years you would need to put in the hours which may not be in office but on learning, the First Global founder concluded.

<https://tinyurl.com/yr3hvp6p>

Devina Mehra 
@devinamehra · Follow

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11:12 AM · Jan 10, 2025