

Women Entrepreneurs and Empowerment in India

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ABSTRACT

Women owned businesses are highly increasing in the economies of almost all countries. The hidden entrepreneurial potentials of women have gradually been changing with the growing sensitivity to the role and economic status in the society. Skill, knowledge and adaptability in business are the main reasons for women to emerge into business ventures. 'Women Entrepreneur' is a person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. A strong desire to do something positive is an inbuilt quality of entrepreneurial women, who is capable of contributing values in both family and social life. With the advent of media, women are aware of their own traits, rights and also the work situations. The glass ceilings are shattered and women are found indulged in every line of business from papad to power cables. The challenges and opportunities provided to the women of digital era are growing rapidly that the job seekers are turning into job creators. They are flourishing as designers, interior decorators, exporters, publishers, garment manufacturers and still exploring new avenues of economic participation. In India, although women constitute the majority of the total population, the entrepreneurial world is still a male dominated one. Women in advanced nations are recognized and are more prominent in the business world

“When Women moves forward the family moves, the village moves and the Nation moves”

--“Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru”.

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of women entrepreneurs in a society depends to a great extent on the Economic, religious, cultural social psychological and other factors”.

The entrepreneur is a key to economic development. Women entrepreneurs are fast increasing in number and the rate of growth of Women owned business are outnumbering the men owned business in western countries. It is also observed that the Women entrepreneurs associations are formed in different countries of the world. However in developing countries like India women entrepreneurship is still in its infancy. Only in metropolitan and the state capital cities more Women entrepreneurs are assuming entrepreneurial role both in the traditional and modern nature

of activities. Recently the information technology and its revolution also facilities many capable women to do business in IT enable activities sitting within four walls but dealing. Business with international companies for example software development, e-commerce, e-business medical transcription etc. Hence it cannot be said anymore that Women are weaker sex and they cannot do all the work which the men do. The fastest growing segment of the USA's economy is Women owned business the US Bureau of census has revealed that 26 percent of the businesses were owned by Women entrepreneurs in 1980 and 32 percent in 1990. If this trend continues it would reach 50 percent by the year. Developing countries like India the presence of entrepreneurs that too women entrepreneurs is of vital necessity to achieve a rapid all round and regionally and socially balanced economics

through industrialization.

NEED FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Women suffer the most in our country. Her involvement in economic activities is marked by low work participation rates excessive concentration in the unorganized sector of the economy and that too in low skill jobs there is a greater dynamism in the rate of growth of female employment. However in rural areas, perhaps the agriculture has provided much more employment for Women.

Need of the Hour

Women sector occupies nearly 45% of the Indian population. The literary and educational status of women improved considerably during the past few decades. More and more higher educational and research institutions are imparting skill knowledge and specialization. At this juncture, effective steps are needed to provide entrepreneurial awareness, orientation and skill development programmes to women. The institutions available at present are very limited. Moreover, their functions and opportunities available with them are not popularized much.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA

The status of Women in India is an illustration of a paradox of the micro level. She has equal it not greater position in the family as “ARDHANGINI” and she is the pivot of the socio-economic fabrics of the family as a MOTHER. The scripture and mythologies give her even the status of goddess and many Women are remembered even today for their freedom struggle.

The Women in India have been neglected a lot. They have not been actively involved in the mainstream of development even though they represent a bulk of the population and labor force. However a society constrained by the suppressive socio-economic factors cannot generate the much needed Women entrepreneurs on its own. Education has been the prerogative of men over the given required scope for education. Entrepreneurship as a subject is not a part of the curricula in many universities. Vocationalisation of education is probably still a dream a dream in our country. But in many a states vocational courses are not running systematically. The government has not taken any initiative in this regard. In the 50 years of Independence an emphasis on the socialistic pattern of the society and the role assigned to the public sector limited the scope for the growth of private entrepreneurship. Under such circumstances special efforts to develop women entrepreneurship is more keenly felt.

WOMEN IN INDIA

The Indian sociological set up has been traditionally a male dominated one. Women are considered as weaker sex and always to depend on men folk in their family and outside, throughout their life. They are left with lesser commitments and kept as a dormant force for a quite long time. The Indian culture made them only subordinates and executors of the decisions made by other male members, in the basic family structure.

The traditional set up is changing in the modern era of 21st century. The transformation of social fabric of the Indian society, in terms of increased educational status of women and varied aspirations for better living, necessitated a change in the life style of Indian women.

Indian families do have the privilege of being envied by the westerners, since women here are taking more responsibilities in bringing up children and maintaining a better home with love and affection. At the family level, the task of coordinating various activities in a much effective manner, without feeling the pinch of inconveniences, is being carried out by the women folk.

Thus, the Indian women have basic characters in themselves in the present sociological and cultural setup as follows.

- Indian women are considered as Sakthi, which means source of Energy.
- Effectively coordinating the available factors and resources.
- Efficient execution of decisions imposed on them by family members.
- Clear vision and ambition on the improvement of family and children and society.
- Patience and bearing the sufferings on behalf of others and ability to work more at any age.

CONCEPT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Women entrepreneur is defined as ‘A person who starts and controls the unit with not less than 51 per cent of total capital and provides employment not less than 51 per cent of women. The Government of India has defined Women Entrepreneur as “an industrial unit where one or more women entrepreneurs have not less than 51 per cent financial holding”. Women Entrepreneurs can be classified into four groups depending on the driving motivational factors to venture into business.

Natural Entrepreneurs: Those who take business as profession on their own either by self planning or motivated through money factor and also for keeping themselves busy are known as natural entrepreneurs.

Generated Entrepreneurs: Those who have been encouraged and trained specialized training programmes such as the EDP to set up independent business are called generated entrepreneurs.

Forced Entrepreneurs: Those who are compelled by circumstances such as the death of father or husband with responsibilities falling on them to take over the existing business are known as forced entrepreneurs.

Benami Entrepreneurs: Those who are acting as a façade for business of their husband are called benami entrepreneurs.

FUNCTIONS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

In developing countries like India where male and female population ratio is almost equal the presence of women entrepreneurs has great importance. A women entrepreneur is expected to perform the following important function.

- Imitation of successful enterprises.
- Introduction of new innovations.
- Explore the prospects of commencing new projects.
- Assumption of risk and uncertainty bearing.
- Take decision as to the nature and type of goods to be produced.

ACTION PLAN FOR WOMEN ENTERPRENEURS

Proper planning and execution are required at all levels. Proper training in right direction is to be planned meticulously.

The steps to be taken can be listed as follows:

- Identifying women with different education levels in proper groups and to create
- Awareness about entrepreneurship and its importance as job providing avenues rather than job seeking ventures.
- Skills and knowledge to be provided to selected women group are to be identified.
- Making them to realize the income generation and social status and recognition
- Giving orientation and skill training on selected trades

or areas

- Assisting them in preparation of project reports for their own proposed units them to follow up the venture to start the new enterprise.
- Providing help, consultancy and guidance, continuously.

A training capsule or module of around two or three week may be provided by expert institutions, voluntary agencies and Government departments. The financial resources are to be mobilized to provide this type of programmes, by the government organizations like banks, public sector organizations and voluntary originations NGOs etc.

The higher education institutions, which are spreading throughout the country, may conduct programmes like this, regularly, in addition to their academic programmes, with or without government aid. Young graduates of that area and the final year students of U.G/P.G courses may also be provided with such training. Normally infrastructures are available with such institutions. Getting expertise and mobilizing other requirements will also be easier for such institutions, since they are already having good establishment facilities.

Voluntary agencies like Town clubs Rotary clubs, Lions clubs. Government. assisted institutions like UGC, AICTE., Science and technology Councils or State Entrepreneur Development Cell (EDC), District industrial center (DIC) may interact with the colleges/universities, through financial assistance, to carry out the programmes.

With proper financial assistance and effectively using them, each college/university may train 400 to 1000 youths, in the area of entrepreneurship development. When women are going to be the target groups, the benefit will reach a larger section of the society.

Thus ED culture is to be developed gradually among the women, in addition to providing educational facilities to use the vibrant women force in right direction. Thus programmes combining, technical skill and entrepreneurship skill, to selected groups, will make the Indian women more self reliant and confident and would lead them to be envied by people at the international level.

TRAINING COMPONENTS

Even though there are very efficient institutions at the national level, like EDI Ahmadabad, NSTED BOARD, New Delhi, NISIE, Hyderabad and at State level, CED in Madurai and Chennai, TANSTIA in Chennai, such programmes are to be conducted at regional level, at the residential area of the women, in their vernacular language

and to the specific requirement of the people of that area.

The essential components of such training may be listed as follows

- Awareness career building and attitudinal change towards enterprise formation.
- Effective training on building up self-confidence and communication skills.
- Skill training on specific trades suitable to their option.
- Training on quick and effective decision making techniques and managerial skills.
- Training on marketing strategies.
- Training on effective financial management.
- Training on project formulation and implementation.
- Scope for increasing access to new technologies and scientific knowledge.
- Information on persons/offices to be contacted.
- Interaction with successful entrepreneurs for sharing their experiences.

Training in such areas are not going to have much financial burden to the govt., when compared to other developmental projects. This type of programmes can be conducted in all the parts of the country. A consistent and continuous effort in this project will add more dimensions Indian women and their empowerment. and to the economic development of the nation as a whole.

Suggested list of appropriate areas suitable to Indian women entrepreneurs:

- Food products manufacturing
- -Food processing and preservation.
- -Catering services and fast food centers.
- -Interior decoration.
- -DTP and Book binding.
- -Maintenance of Dairy, Poultry and their products.
- -Maintenance of house-hold appliances.
- Stationeries retailing.
- Manufacturing of note books and pads.
- Packing & packaging
- -Diagnostic lab & pathology clinics.

- Communication centers with telecom, fax, browsing, and Xeroxing facilities.
- -Readymade garments, embroidering and fashion designing.
- -Retail selling through different methods.
- Art and painting works on commercial decorations.
- Hiring of warehouses and godowns.
- Floral decorations.
- Jewelry and imitation jewellery
- Beauty centers and beauty parlors
- Running old-age homes
- SoftToy Making
- Cooking classes
- Ceramic Works
- Mehadi classes
- Petch work
- Kutir Udhyog
- Bakery Product

PROBLEMS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

- Women have tendency to keep away from high flying activities which are supposedly regarded as the presence of men.
- Need for achievement independence and autonomy are the basic ingredients required to an entrepreneur.
- Protected life throughout her life time.
- Low female literacy rate.
- In the present setup a Indian society women's duty is to look after her children and family members.
- Lack of information needed to achieve entrepreneurial success.
- Lack of infrastructure and other basic facilities
- Low mobility character.
- Inferiority complex they are easily disheartened by failure.

Like this Women entrepreneurs have to face and overcome these obstacles to emerge as successful entrepreneurs. Therefore, a woman has to achieve empowerment by overcoming this entire problem. Hence,

it is important to take measures to encourage the women entrepreneurship.

The remedial measures undertaken and suggestions are:

Government agencies (Like EDC), association of women entrepreneurs, NGO's and CBO's have carried on so many programmes for development of women entrepreneurship.

Government has stressed on women education and special programs have been introduced. Yet it is necessary to increase the number of professional schools for women.

Banks, financial institutions (Like State Financial corporation) are lending more freely to women entrepreneurs. Yet, Government has to lend more subsidies to women entrepreneurs.

As it is necessary to provide practical knowledge of the business situation during their study levels, some schools and colleges are providing such knowledge during the education period. It should be increased.

As women entrepreneurs have to face several marketing problems, they should be taken into consideration by government and steps should be taken to solve them. Markets should be developed in rural and semi urban areas so that women entrepreneurs can sell them easily in the nearest markets more and more fairs and exhibitions should be arranged for women products.

The development of transport and communication throughout the country will help for women entrepreneurs to market their products easily.

As self employment breeds entrepreneurship more and more self employment programmes should be undertaken and proper training should be given to both rural and urban youths including women.

As women entrepreneurs lack information as regards to their business, it is necessary to start information bureaus, to help them in getting the required information.

More research programmes should be conducted and the steps should be taken to solve the problems of women entrepreneurs.

CONCLUSION

The saying entrepreneurs are born and not made

has little sense today. A host of evidences shows that they are successfully made. In order to make women entrepreneurship movement a success government and non-government agencies have to play a vital role. Women entrepreneurs in backward areas needs special assistance and incentives from the government and financial institutions separate industrial estates may be set up for women entrepreneurs to create all together a special environment. There is a need to setup Women industrial development bank in the existing banks and financial institutions it is advisable to start a separate cell called: "Women entrepreneurs guidance cell to promote and guide the Women entrepreneurs. The development of women as a entrepreneurs will generate multifaceted socio economic benefits to the country.

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