

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP – AN EMERGING TREND FOR WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

The term “Women Entrepreneurship” defines an act of business ownership and business creation that empowers women economically, increases their economic strength as well as position in society. Hence women-entrepreneurs have been making a considerable impact in all most all the segments of the economy which is more than 25% of all kinds of business. In India “Entrepreneurship” is very limited amongst women especially in the formal sector, which is less than 5% of all the business. Entrepreneurship is the state of mind which every woman has in her but has not been capitalized in India in way in which it should be. Due to change in environment, now people are more comfortable to accept leading role of women in our society, though there are some exceptions.

As said by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru- “When women move forward, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves”, therefore social and economic development of women is necessary for overall economic development and empowerment of women of any society or a country. The Self Help Groups (SHGs) is considered to be institutional innovation that fosters empowerment of economically and socially deprived women. The members of SHGs are involved in Micro Entrepreneurships. Through that, they are becoming economically independent and providing employment opportunities to others. As our increasing dependency on service sector has created many entrepreneurial opportunities especially for women where they can excel their skills with maintaining balance in their life. This paper deals with empowerment of Indian women through entrepreneurship, advantages entrepreneurship among

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the women and attempts to identify the opportunities and challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. This paper also tries to identify various reasons for slow progress of women entrepreneurs in India and suggestions for the growth of women entrepreneurs in India.

Keywords: Women empowerment, women entrepreneurship

Introduction

Entrepreneurship refers to the act of setting up a new business or reviving an existing business so as to take advantages from new opportunities. The emergence of entrepreneurs in a society depends to a great extent on economic, social, religious, cultural and psychological factors prevailing in the society. Thus, entrepreneurs shape the economy by creating new wealth and new jobs and by inventing new products and services.

While at least half the brainpower on earth belongs to women, women remain perhaps the world's most underutilized resource. Despite all the social hurdles, India is brimming with the success stories of women. They stand tall from rest of the crowd and are applauded for their achievements in their respective field. 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. The role of Indian women has undergone drastic and dramatic changes from era to era. The economic status of women is now accepted as an indicator of a society's stage of development. Increasing globalization, impact of technology, media, social, economic, and political cross currents of the world and unforeseen & unanticipated events across the world gave birth of women entrepreneur. Government of India has defined women entrepreneurs as owning & controlling an enterprise with a women having a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and giving at least 51% of the employment generated in the enterprise to women.

In a general sense, women empowerment refers to empowering women to be self-dependent by providing them access to all the freedoms and opportunities, which they were denied in the past only because of their being women. In a specific sense, women empowerment refers to

enhancing their position in the power structure of the society. Empowerment of women has five components: women's sense of self-worth; their right to have and to determine choices; their right to have access to opportunities and resource; their right to have the power to control their own lives, with in and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

The entrepreneurship of women is considered to be an effective instrument to the economic development and empowerment of women. As most women business owners in India organization were either housewives or fresh graduates with no previous experience of running a business, those women business owners were in traditionally women oriented business like garments, beauty care, and fashion designing, which either do not require any formalized training or are developed from a hobby or an interest into a business, therefore the promotion of women entrepreneurship in India has been influenced by the government through various Government policies as well as by various other agencies. The Self Help Groups (SHGs) help even economically poor and socially backward women to come together and succeed by their collective efforts. The policies and programs of the government motivate, assist and guide entrepreneurial development of women.

Objectives of the Study

- To study the present position of Women Entrepreneurship in India.
- To identify the factors responsible for encouraging women to become entrepreneurs.
- To study the Problems of Women Entrepreneurship in India.
- To suggest certain remedial measures to solve the problems of Women Entrepreneurship in India.

Methodology

The study is mainly based on secondary data taken from the reputed Published Sources like Economic Survey, various books and websites and existing literature.

Status of women entrepreneurs in India

The Indian economy has been witnessing a drastic change since mid -1991, with new policies of economic, liberalization, globalization and privatization initiated by the Indian government. Till 1991 majority of women entrepreneurs were engaged in the un-organized sector like agriculture, agro-based industries, handicrafts, handloom & cottage based industries. Since the 21st century the status of women in India has been changing as a result to growing industrialization & urbanization, spasmodic mobility and social legislation. Women as an independent target group, account for 495.74 million and represent roughly 48.3% of the country's population as per the 2001 census.

Since 2008 women participation in the various sectors of industries such as information sector, ship-building, painting and glass making, manufacture of organic and in-organic compounds, smelting, alloying, refining, metallic and lead battery industry has been increasing because more and more women are going in for higher education, technical & professional education & their proportion in the workforce has also been increased. Skill, knowledge and adaptability in business are the main reason for women to emerge in the business venture. With the advent of media, women are aware of their own traits, rights and also the work situations.

During the Pre-Independence days there were no concrete public or private financial and non-financial support systems to foster Entrepreneurship. Development of women has been a policy objective of the government since independence. Post Independence along with five year plans, various Industrial Policy Resolutions(IPRs) were introduced for fostering Entrepreneurship. The Government nationalized the banks, set up state financial corporations in Programs, designed various income generating schemes meant to reach out to women entrepreneurs. At present, the Government of India has over 27 schemes for women operated by different departments and ministries. Some of them are as follows:

1. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)
2. Khadi And Village Industries Commission (KVIC)
3. Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM)
4. Women's Development Corporations (WDCs)
5. Trade Related Entrepreneurship Assistance and Development (TREAD)
6. Micro & Small Enterprises Cluster Development Programmes (MSE-CDP).

7. Mahila Vikas Nidhi
8. SBI's Stree Shakti Scheme
9. NGO's Credit Schemes
10. Working Women's Forum
11. Indira Mahila Yojana
12. Mahila Samiti Yojana
13. Micro Credit Schemes

Post liberalization, various private support bodies specifically for women entrepreneurs, like TIE The Indus Entrepreneurs with their TiE Stree Shakti, NEN (National Entrepreneurship Network) through its Goldman Sachs 1000 women entrepreneurs Program and Federation of Indian Women Entrepreneurs (FIWE) have supported many women entrepreneurs in terms of technical guidance. The Government has also laid special weightage on the requirement for conducting special entrepreneurial training programs for women to enable them to start their own ventures. There are various institutions which are supporting women entrepreneurship in India. Some of them are as follows:

1. Central Bank of India Credit Schemes
2. Self-Employment Women's Association
3. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)
4. State Government Schemes for Development of Women and Children in Rural Area (DWCRA)
5. Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Karnataka (AWAKE)
6. Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)
7. Federation of Indian Women Entrepreneurs (FIWE)
8. Consortium of Women Entrepreneurship in India (CWEI)
9. The Indus Entrepreneurs- Stree Shakti
10. National Entrepreneurship Network-Goldman Sachs 1000 Women Entrepreneurs
11. Google India Women on Web

The emergence of women entrepreneurs and women owned firms and their significant contributions to the economy is visible in India. These businesses are ready continued

growth in the future. The following table no. 1 shows the contribution of women entrepreneur in India in various sectors:

Table no.1 leading women entrepreneurs in India

S. No.	Name	Designation	Organization	Sector/ Industry
1	Chetna Gala Sinha	Founder	Mann Deshi Mahila Sahakari Bank	Micro-finance
2	Ekta Kapoor	Creative Director	Balaji Telefilms	Indian Television
3	Ela Bhatt	Founder	SEWA	Micro-finance & Labour
4	Kiran Mazumdar Shaw	Chairman & Managing Director	Biocon	Bio-technology
5	Priya Paul	Chairman	Apeejay park Hotels	Hospitality
6	Ritu Kumar	Fashion Designer	---	Fashion
7	Shahnaz Hussain	CEO	Shahnaz Herbals	Herbal cosmetics & Skin care products
8	Seven Women in a joint venture	Women's Co-operative Association	Shri mahila Griha Udyog-Lijjat Papad	FMCG
9	Simone Tata	Chairman	Trend Ltd.	Cosmetics
10	Thinlas Chorol	Founder	Ladakhi Women's Travel Company	Mountaineering & Travel

The above table no.1 shows some of the leading names of Indian women entrepreneurs. It defines that women are almost in all the sectors across India, it shows contribution of women in organized and unorganized sector, traditional & modern industries, urban & rural areas, large scale and small scale industries and single women and joint venture.

Opportunities for women entrepreneurs

According to R. A. Sharma (1980), various factors internal as well as external to an entrepreneur motivated him to start his own enterprise. These factors were further classified into - ambition

factors, compelling factors and facilitating factors, which promoted the entrepreneurs to get started on their own. Self determination, expectation for recognition, self esteem and career goal are the key drivers for taking up entrepreneurship by women. Sometimes, women chose such career path for discovering their inner potential, caliber in order to achieve self satisfaction. It can also provide a mean to make best use of their leisure hours. Matching the basic qualities required for entrepreneurs and the basic characters of Indian women reveal that, much potential is available among the Indian women on their entrepreneurial ability.

In the last decade, there has been a remarkable shift emphasized from the traditional industry to non-traditional industry and services. This potential has been documented, brought out and exposed for utilization in productive and service sectors for the progress of the nation. There have been significant rise of support systems since liberalization and particularly post recession. Various financial Institutions like Punjab National Bank, State Bank of India, bank of Baroda have introduced credits schemes for women entrepreneurs.

The efforts of government and its different agencies are ably supplemented by NGOs that are playing an equally important role in facilitating women empowerment. Some important opportunities are being identified by Government, considering the socio-economic, cultural and educational status and motivational level of women entrepreneurs, particularly projects with low investment, low technical know-how and assured market are suggested fro them. The Self help groups are playing a role model in providing micro finance through banks like Gramin banks, SIDBI, Cooperative banks to enhance life to the women in villages for their social and economic empowerment. These SHG's and MFI's are the prominent features found to provide loan to the women having specialized skills such as production of soaps, detergents, ready- made instant food products including pickles, spices, papad, manufacturing of woolen goods, beauty parlor business, typing centre, job contracts for packaging of goods and distribution and household provision etc.

All the above efforts by Government and private support bodies provide opportunities of equal access to participation and decision making power of women in social, political and participation in economic progress of the nation. Despite concerted efforts of Government and private support

bodies there are certain gaps. Of course we have come a long way in empowering women yet the future journey is difficult and demanding.

Problems Associated with women entrepreneurs

The emergence as well as development of women entrepreneurs is quite visible in India and their over-all contribution to Indian economy is also very significant. Today the role of Women entrepreneur in economic development is inevitable because women are entering not only in selected professions but also in professions like trade, industry and engineering. As it has been found in various studies (Cohoon et. Al. 2012) that entrepreneurial process and opportunities are same for man and women, but there are some umpteen problems faced by women at various stages beginning from their initial commencement of enterprise, in running their enterprise.

In a male dominated society, women are not treated equal to men that act as a barrier to woman's entry into business. The Major hurdle that the women face during starting and running a company generally comes from financing, lack of supportive network, marketing problems and balancing of life. Main challenges faced by rural women in business are lack of education and technical knowledge. Some of the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs are as follows:

Financial problems:

The women entrepreneurs are suffering from inadequate financial resources and working capital. There are several bottlenecks and gap in availability of credit for women. According to a report by the United National Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), despite evidence that women's loan repayment rates are higher than men's, women still face more difficulties in obtaining credit, the financial institutions discourage women entrepreneurs as women do not in general have property on their own names to use that as collateral securities for obtaining loans/funds from banks and financial institutions, as a result of this they are forced to rely on their own savings and loan from relatives and family friends. The sincere efforts taken by financial institutions regarding incentives, loans, schemes etc. towards women entrepreneurs may not reach to the entrepreneurs in rural and backward areas because of lack of awareness.

They also face financial problem due to blockage of funds in raw materials, work-in-progress finished goods and non-receipt of payment from customers in time.

Marketing Problems:

Despite the fact that women entrepreneurs are good in keeping their service prompt and delivery in time, due to lack of organizational skills compared to male entrepreneurs, women have to be at the mercy of middlemen for marketing of the products, who pocket the hunk of profit. They don't lack managerial skills but they have less promotional ability, which they need to improve upon. The male - female competition is another factor, which develop hurdles to women entrepreneurs in the business management process. They have to face severe competition from organized industries. Such a competition ultimately results in the insolvency of women enterprises.

Balancing of life:

Women's family and personal obligations are sometimes a great barrier for succeeding in business career. In business they have to spend long hours and as a result, they find it difficult to meet the demands of their family members and society as well. Only few women are able to manage both home and business efficiently devoting enough time to perform all their responsibilities in priority. Their incapability to attend to domestic work, time for education of children, personal hobbies, and entertainment adds to their conflicts.

Lack of supportive network:

The mindset of Indian society restrains women to prosper and achieve success in the field of entrepreneurship. The business success also depends on the support the family members extended to women in the business process and management. Sometimes the family members and the society are reluctant to stand beside their entrepreneurial growth which force women entrepreneurs to drop the idea of excelling in the enterprise field.

Lack of Education and Technical Knowledge:

The literacy rate of women in India is found at low level compared to mal population. The low level of education and confidence leads to low level achievement and advancement motivation

among women folk to engage in business operations, and running a business concern. The rural women are ignorant of new technology or they are unskilled. They are often unable to do research and gain the necessary training. Due to lack of Knowledge of latest technological change, know-how and education creates problems before women to set up competitive enterprises therefore rural women controlled business are often small. Just a small percentage of urban women entrepreneurs avail the assistance of technology and they too remain confined to word processing software in the computer. They hardly make use of advanced software available like statistical software SAP, Accounting Package like TALLY, Animation software 3D MAX, internet, etc. Lack of knowledge of availability of the raw materials and low- level negotiation and bargaining skills are the factors, which affect women entrepreneur's business adventures.

Apart from the above discussed problems there may occur other series of serious problems to women entrepreneurs as improper infrastructural facilities, high cost of production, gender discrimination, inaccessibility to information and some internal factors like risk aversion by women, lack of confidence, lack of vision of strategic leader etc.

Suggestions for enhancing women entrepreneurship:

Entrepreneurship basically implies being in control of one's life and activities and women entrepreneurs need to be given confidence, independence, and mobility to come out of their paradoxes. More-over with increasing government and non- government and other financial institutions assistance for various women entrepreneurs within the economy there can be significant increase brought about in the growth of women entrepreneurship process. Still it is essential to formulate strategies to invigorate, support and sustain their efforts in the right direction. The following measures are suggested to empower the women to seize various opportunities and face challenges in business:

1. Positive attitudinal change in the society recognizing the role of women as entrepreneur may lead to the development of appropriate environment in which women will be able to exploit their entrepreneurial talents.

2. The basic requirement in development of women entrepreneurship is to make aware the women regarding her existence, her unique identity and her contribution towards the economic growth and development of country. The basic instinct of entrepreneurship should be tried to be reaped into the minds of the women from their childhood. This could be achieved by carefully designing the curriculum that will impart the basic knowledge along with its practical implication regarding management (financial, legal etc.) of an enterprise.
3. Potential women entrepreneurs should be exposed to different types of emerging opportunities. Housewives should be motivated to learn additional income. There should be a continuous attempt to inspire, encourage, motivate and co-operate women entrepreneurs. Group Women Entrepreneurship (GWE) may be promoted in rural sector by reinvigorating activities / skills on traditional crafts or practices with which they are acquainted.
4. An awareness program should be conducted on a mass scale with the intention of creating awareness among women about the various areas to conduct business. Information should flow in right direction with the help of NGO's and government organizations to about policies, plans and strategies on the development of women in the field of industry, trade and commerce.
5. Good academic background makes women confident in dealing with problems in business in an effective manner. Although it is a fact that entrepreneurship is not a special preserve for the educated but in the case of women already burdened with many social pressures, education is a powerful tool in breaking down the barriers to successful entrepreneurship. Government should provide better educational facilities and schemes to women folk. Education institutes should tie-up with various government and non-government agencies to assist in entrepreneurship development mainly to plan business projects.
6. Women should try to upgrade themselves in the changing times by adapting the latest technology benefits. Women must be educated and trained constantly to develop professional competencies in managerial, leadership, marketing, financial, production process, profit planning, maintaining books of accounts and other skills. Training Centers should provide training to prospective women entrepreneurs free of cost and Entrepreneurship Development Program should be much more practical oriented. This can facilitate women to excel in decision making process and develop a good business network. Vocational training to be extended to women community, which enables them to understand the production process and production management.

7. For solving the financial problems of women entrepreneurs' financial institutions should have feasible and viable norms of funding. Financial institutions should provide more working capital assistance both for small scale venture and large scale ventures. Government should make a provision of micro credit system and enterprise credit system to the women entrepreneurs at local level. Provision should be made to provide land / sheds to deserving women entrepreneurs on priority basis. However, precautionary measures should be undertaken to avoid the misuse of such facility by the men in the name of the women.
8. There should be consideration in helping the women entrepreneurs in balancing their family life and work life. The established and successful women entrepreneurs can act as advisors for the upcoming women entrepreneurs. Competent counseling should be given to women entrepreneurs in various fields such as: financing, liquidity, budgeting etc.
9. There are various schemes and plans of government for encouragement of women entrepreneurs but on ground level their execution is poor, there should be a strong monitoring of these policies at different levels of execution.
10. An all India forum should be establish to discuss the problems, grievances, issues, and filing complaints against constraints or shortcomings towards the economic progress path of women entrepreneurs and giving suitable decisions in the favor of women entrepreneurs and taking strict stand against the policies or strategies that obstruct the path of economic development of such group of women entrepreneurs.

Women are entering into entrepreneurship even in the face of socio-cultural, economic, technical, financial, and managerial difficulties. Women entrepreneurship movement can gain momentum by providing encouragement, appropriate awareness, training, environment, and support. Therefore Right efforts from all areas are required in the development of women entrepreneurs and their greater participation in the entrepreneurial activities. This would definitely enhance their socio-economic status, a prerequisite for women's empowerment.

Conclusion:

Women entrepreneurs can play a role of catalyst in social and economic development of country like India. Empowerment of women has a rich payoff in economic development and egalitarian goals of the society and entrepreneurship is the most viable option for empowering women. The

overall scenario of women and its society has changed; the Indian economy witnessed a drastic change after 1991 with new economic policies, liberalization, globalization of activities. Liberalization of markets encouraged women to come confined to the traditional role as a mother and housewife; it has and is undergoing changes. Women across regions have started showing interests to be economically independent. Women have the potential and the determination to set up, uphold and supervise their own enterprises in a very systematic manner. The right kind of assistance from family, society and Government can make these Women Entrepreneurs apart of the mainstream of national economy and they can contribute to the economic progress of India.

The social activists, NGO's government agencies and corporate sector should play an active role in the transformation of women and driving the women to explore entrepreneurial opportunities in small scale industries. But unfortunately, the government sponsored development activities have benefited only a small section of women i.e. the urban middle class women. Effective steps are needed to provide entrepreneurial awareness, orientation and skill development programs to women. Emphasizing on educating women strata of population, spreading awareness and consciousness amongst women to outshine in the enterprise field, making them realize their strengths, and important position in the society and the great contribution they can make for their industry as well as the entire economy. We can promise ourselves and make a sincere commitment of contribution to the field of women development of women entrepreneurship at country and even at a global level.

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