

## EMPOWERING WOMEN IN ENTREPRENEURIAL WAY- ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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**Abstract:** Women are considered to be the building blocks of any society. A nation can be self-sufficient only when its citizens are self-reliant, most importantly the women, who constitute almost half of the population of any country. Our North Eastern States, in many ways occupy a better position in terms of women empowerment both in society and economy. Women empowerment in developing countries particularly is very much essential to remove global poverty since women represent most of the world's poor population. Making women self-sufficient through entrepreneurship is the most sustainable approach of empowerment. Success of Grameen Bank of Bangladesh indicates the same. It is time to look at the issue with a renewed perspective, to give a boost to women entrepreneurs by creating awareness and providing necessary support. This paper is an attempt to investigate the potential of growth and possible hindrances that come in the way of women entrepreneurs.

**Key words:** Women, Self-sufficiency, Entrepreneurship, Economy, Empowerment, Sustainable, Hindrance etc.

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## Introduction

Women, the drivers of civilisation, are bestowed with enormous potentials which are generally not looked down upon. Only a fraction of their tremendous inner strength and innate qualities gets the appropriate platform to nurture and to be used for the benefit of the larger whole. In 21<sup>st</sup> century, a society can never progress until its women members become self-conscious, self – sufficient and do actively take part in the development of a better world. Women being a home maker are well concerned about the day to day necessities of life and do act as navigators to manage family against all odds, thereby making them strong and creative enough, to withstand the same. Given the opportunity, they no longer lag behind their male counterparts; even can be at upper hand too. Success of Grameen Bank of Bangladesh justifies this statement.

Only providing women with livelihood skills do not facilitate empowerment in truest sense. They need to be self reliant for that and hence, the primary focus is on making them aware of their own rights so that they could reinvent themselves as leaders within the community. The ultimate goal is to make women economically independent. Empowerment of women and gender equality recognized globally as a key element to achieve progress in all areas (Sharma& Verma, 2008). Entrepreneurship is considered to be the touching stone for success in this regard. Empowerment in the context of women's development is a way of defining, challenging and overcoming barriers in a woman's life through which she increases her ability to shape her life and environment (Sharma& Verma, 2008). According to Kothawale (2013) it is also instrumental in sustaining the process of economic development. But unless fifty percent of the population are allowed to contribute at par, all round development is unattainable. Entrepreneurship is a prerequisite for the development of any nation hence the contributions of women entrepreneurs are a prerequisite for nation building (Sorokhaibam& Laishram, 2011). Studies reveal (Singh& Sarma, 2011) that women constitute 90 percent of total marginal workers of the country. Rural women engaged in agriculture constitutes 78 percent of all women in regular work and the contribution of women and their role in the family as well as in the economic development and social transformation are pivotal. All though our NE region lacks infrastructure and many more facilities, but goes a long way in making women self-reliant. Making women self sufficient through entrepreneurship can be even better for growth and development of the long overlooked region.

**Definition of Entrepreneurship:** Entrepreneurship is defined as the development of a business from the ground up — coming up with an idea and turning it into a profitable business.

**Definition of Entrepreneur:** The term ‘Entrepreneur’ has been derived from the French word ‘entreprendre’ means to undertake. The term entrepreneur may be defined as “an entrepreneur is a person who combines capital and labour for production”. According to Cantillion “entrepreneur is the agent who buys means of production at certain prices, in order to sell at prices that are certain at the moment at which he commits himself to his cost”.

**Definition of Women Entrepreneur Enterprise:** “A unit of organization relating to service or business enterprise managed by one or more women entrepreneurs having individually or jointly a share capital of not less than 51% as shareholders of the private company, limited company or members of Co-Operative society”.

#### REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Women entrepreneurship can bring about women empowerment. Women are endowed with the innate power of management as they manage family very well without any training hence they can become very successful entrepreneurs as well. However, they face many problems while acting as entrepreneurs. Women in India reveal that empowerment of women and development of women entrepreneurs to bring actual reality through constitutional goal of equality. (Devasia, 1990). According to Hazari, women entrepreneurship is mainly beneficial as it leads to women empowerment. Iyer’s study (1991) on “Women Entrepreneurs Challenges and Strategies” analyses major constraints faced by women entrepreneurs and reflects upon specific policies and programmes for women entrepreneurship development. Singh (1992) had studied on Women Entrepreneurs, has made an attempt to diagnose the women entrepreneurs profile and has identified dominating entrepreneurial traits, their motivational forces and performance both quantitatively as well as qualitatively. This work aimed at understanding the entrepreneurial development among women is a unique attempt for highlighting their existing status and contribution in the national economy. Ranjan’s study (1993) on “Women and Modern Occupation in India” presents the emerging status of women in contemporary Indian Society at grass root level and enquiry into social origin and adjustment of women employed in different

occupations. Tiwari and Tiwari (2007) commented that women are the nuclei of a nation and they are the real builders and moulders of a nation's destiny. Kumar (2007) throws light to the fact that the problem of unemployment, regional imbalances, inequality in the distribution of income and wealth can be sorted out by providing training to the people of the country for self employment. Santha (2008) stated that any strategy aimed at economic development will be lop-sided without involving women who constitute half the world population. While the motivations of some female entrepreneurs may be similar to their male counterparts, including a desire for independence and financial gain, there is an argument that large numbers of women, unlike men, choose to start a business to balance work responsibilities and earning potential with domestic and familial responsibilities (Marlow and Strange 1994; Mattis 2004). However, women entrepreneurs suffer from many other major challenges. The basic problems of women entrepreneurs in North East India are attracting clients and evaluating their needs, finance, right materials, and lack of training (Kurbah, 2013). They face problems in getting finance for their enterprise mainly because they are unable to provide collateral as they do not have property in their name. Moreover, they have restricted mobility freedom and have to perform dual role one at family and other at work which hinders the entrepreneurial growth among the women (Robita Sorokhaibam, 2011). Gender issue is the main challenge of women entrepreneurs. Moreover, educational program related to marketing, fund raising and personality development should be conducted to support women entrepreneurs (Chakravarty, 2013). Hazari also opines that marketing and transport is the main hindrance of women entrepreneurship (Hazari, 2013).

**TABLE-1: Women Work Participation of Select Leading Countries vis-a-vis India (2010-11)**

COUNTRY	PERCENTAGE
India(1970-71)	14.2
India(1980-81)	19.7
India(1990-91)	22.3
India(2010-11)	31.6
USA	45.0
UK	43.0
Canada	42.0
Indonesia	40.0

Source- World Bank Report 2010-11 and WAVE Conference report 2009-10

This shows even after having increasing rates of women participation, India is far behind other countries. Although, with the spread of women education and awareness about self-reliance, women are gradually taking active role as entrepreneurs. The emergence of women entrepreneurs and their contribution to the national economy is quite visible in India (Singh & Sarma, 2011). With economic liberalisation, consumerism is getting increased focus, thereby making people more income oriented to meet the increased needs. Women are also not left behind as consumers. Sometimes unfulfilled needs also spur the requirement to start own venture. By the way of entrepreneurship, the 'habitants of half sky' not only garner resources for their own self and society, but also give earning opportunity to many others, which leads to development and growth of the nation as well.

### **Entrepreneurship in North East India-**

In north eastern states of India, women enjoy greater privilege than the rest of the country. Since ages, the women of this region actively take part in all spheres of life, hand-in-hand with their male counterparts, along with managing their household chores. But yet a large section of women are outside the domain instead of having tremendous entrepreneurial zeal. In this regard, Foundation for Social Transformation, in 2012 (2012-2014) launched a project for economic empowerment of women in three states of North East India-Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. The project had been to empower such women who often go unnoticed by way of imparting intensive tiered training, capacity building programs and helping all entrepreneurial efforts which are the apt necessity.

Generally, the major sources of income of north-eastern ladies come off various sources like agriculture and small scale entrepreneurship. A look into the major ones make the picture more clear-

**1. Rural Entrepreneurship-** Basically women of this area are involved in various farm and livestock management activities like dairy farming, poultry farm, pig farming, livestock feed production and production of vermi composting using the animal waste, in which women utilize both her technical skills and raw materials from the farm and livestock to earn substantial income. Also, they engage in plantation of rubber, coffee etc and organic farming which give them extra edge as they have been through it since long. Also, cottage industries like spinning, art and crafts, e.g., bamboo & other allied items are also carried out by them.

**2. Micro Entrepreneurship-** Lack of proper financial resources does not allow women of this region to carry out big venture. Hence, they prefer small scale agro-processing units which engages in dehydration of fruits and vegetables, canning or bottling of pickles, chutneys, jams, squashes, dairy and other products that are ready to eat.. Household based operations like knitting, stitching, weaving, embroidery, bakery and flour milling, petty shops, food preparation and preservation are also some options they try to engage in(Singh& Sarma, 2011).

Although, Govt. of India is taking many initiatives to bring more and more women inclined to entrepreneurship,taking many schemes, yet a long way to go for understanding and identifying untapped potentials.

While they voluntarily take part in the same, they also face a number of constraints while carrying out entrepreneurial venture. According to Das (2012), Finance and Marketing of goods and services are the two major problems faced by women entrepreneurs. North eastern region, being a remote place geographically, the problems deepens further. A list of such problems are pointed out below-

a. **Lack of proper and adequate resources-** Women entrepreneurs often suffer from this problem as the financial resources are very scarce in this region.Also funds Allotted by Govt. often donot reach the required person.

b. **Lack of proper infrastructure-** Absence of proper and adequate equipment, technology and insufficient arrangement creates hurdle in the process.

c. **Transport bottleneck-** Geographical isolation and poor connectivity also add the struggle of women entrepreneurs in case of transit of shipment.

d. **Lack of support-** Proper support in terms of advise, awareness and skill imparting training, although provided by Govt. Are very inadequate in nature and in sufficient in meeting the required need. Voluntary organisation and NGO play very limited role in this regard.

e. **Negligence of policy makers-** They often overlook various important issues pertaining to the needs of women entrepreneurs.

f. **Corrupt practice-** corruption in buraecratic framework and the increased nexus between polity and officials make the problem more acute by divertingnecessary funds and depriving the much needed section.

g. **Insurgency problem**

**h. Lack of motivation and encouragement**

**i. Absence of innovative ambience**

**j. Non cooperation from the society.**

**k. Gender Discrimination**

**l. Absence of proper skill development training and support mechanism.**

### **Road ahead-**

After the detailed study it is been observed that entrepreneurial motivation should be emphasised upon, specially among women. Also, the innovative ideas should not be nipped in the bud. For this all stakeholders should take better initiative. Also a eye should be on transforming ideas into reality, so that red tappism and external bottleneck donot derail the process. Budding entrepreneurs instead of adopting the same form of business organisation and practice should look beyond to embrace and embark upon innovative venture. With the increased technical education and awareness among women, understanding and adopting technical niity-gritty is no longer a difficulty. Thus, traditional industries and ventures must be tuned into modern lights. With greater emphasis on look east policy, the avenues for profound scope are awaiting. Identification of such avenues and deployment of necessary resources to boost up the same is the need of the hour. Prospective areas where more thrust can be delved upon are- Keeping in pace with digital India, ICT enabled projects can be started for modernisation of the existing ventures and for taking up new ones. In the era of e-commerce, using online platform to showcase, promote and sell the handicrafts, ornaments, garments and craft items directly to a huge group of consumers so as to reap more benefits can be a strategy for sustainable development. Taking up venture for meeting the need of tourism sector, at the time when this sector is to be the pioneer in steering the growth of north east. Women, through their natural instinct and home making experience can cater to the need much more effortlessly.

### **Conclusion**

In the light of the aforesaid study, the following can be the way out to overcome hurdles and proceed ahead-

i) Along with innovation in business venture, effort should be given to organise awareness program for motivating more women entrepreneurs to take up the challenge.

- ii) Conducting workshop involving more and more women entrepreneurs, imparting more practical and technical know how along with life skill can also be organised by the institute like Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship.
- iii) Also, Entrepreneur-Marketing Co. tie-up should be enhanced.

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