



Prospects and Challenges for Women Entrepreneurs of India: A Conceptual Study

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ABSTRACT

Development of women entrepreneurship is very low in India in comparison to developed countries. There are number of obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs during start-up stage and running up of their enterprise. Women entrepreneurship must be molded properly with entrepreneurial traits and skills to meet the changes in trends, challenges from the global markets and also be competent enough to sustain and strive for excellence in the entrepreneurial arena. This study was carried out with the aim of depicting the current scenario of Women Entrepreneurs and to identify the Challenges faced by them and suggestions to overcome the same. Paper also emphasized on the Women Entrepreneur Prospects.

KEYWORDS : Business Women, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Strategies, Equality

Introduction:

Women Entrepreneur is a person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. Women contribute significantly to the running of family businesses mostly in the form of unpaid effort and skills. The value of this effort is underestimated both by the families that take it for granted and in academic studies. 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 high educational and research institutions are imparting knowledge and specialization in varied fields, particularly in the areas of business and entrepreneurship.

Now-a-days women enter not only in selected professions but also in professions like trade, industry and engineering. Many women in India have attained prominent or leadership positions, rising to the highest echelons in every walk of life -- for example as entrepreneurs, industrialists, civil servants, police officers, airline pilots, scientists, engineers. Women's entrepreneurship encompasses self-employment, income generation, and the management of businesses/enterprises. Women are also willing to take up business and contribute to the Nation's growth. Their role is also being recognized and steps are being taken to promote women entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship amongst women in India is relatively a recent phenomenon. Various programmes are being conducted to improve the status of women, their access to resources and so on. But peripheral interest has been shown in developing a realistic and well-designed plan and programme for promoting women entrepreneurs. Any strategy aimed at economic development will be lop-sided without involving women who constitute half of the world population. Evidence has unequivocally established that entrepreneurial spirit is not a male prerogative. In this dynamic world, women entrepreneurs are an important part of the global quest for sustained economic development and social progress. In India, though women have played a key role in the society, their entrepreneurial ability has not been properly tapped due to the lower status of women in the society. In spite of all the hurdles Women entrepreneurs are key players in our country particularly in terms of their contribution to economic development. In recent years, even among the developed countries like USA and Canada, Women's role in terms of their share in small business has been increasing.

Objectives:

1. To highlight the problems faced by Indian Women Entrepreneurs
2. To emphasize prospects of Women Entrepreneurs
3. To showcase the Assistance given by Indian Government towards the development of Women Entrepreneurship in the country
4. To suggest the successful factors to be followed by all Women Entrepreneurs

Methodology:

Study is mainly focused towards the secondary data collected from different sources like Journals (National & International), publications, books and Websites on Women Entrepreneurship.

Literature Review:

The Government of India had ushered in the new millennium by de-

claring the year 2001 as 'Women's Empowerment Year' to focus on a vision 'where women are equal partners like men'. The most common explanation of 'women's empowerment' is the ability to exercise full control over one's actions. The last decades have witnessed some basic changes in the status and role of women in our society.

The discrepancy in the ideology and practice of the empowerment policy of women in India constitutes its continued social, economic and social backwardness. Women make up 52% of our country's population. Hence there can be no progress unless their needs and interests are fully met. Empowerment would not hold any meaning unless they are made strong, alert and aware of their equal status in the society. Empowerment would become more relevant if women are educated, better informed and actively involved in entrepreneurial activities. Despite all the social hurdles, many women have become successful in their works. These successful women have made name & wealth for themselves with their hard work, diligence, competence and will power.

The Government of India had ushered in the new millennium by declaring the year 2001 as 'Women's Empowerment Year' to focus on a vision 'where women are equal partners like men'. The most common explanation of 'women's empowerment' is the ability to exercise full control over one's actions. The last decades have witnessed some basic changes in the status and role of women in our society. Research on problems faced by women entrepreneurs have revealed that women entrepreneurs face specific start-up problems as they are trying to shift their traditional role by venturing into entrepreneurial world. So, researcher has tried to identify these problems and with this objective problems relating to finance have been identified, one relating to start-up and second faced in running up of the enterprise. An attempt is made to test the following hypothesis- "There is no significant difference between the views of women entrepreneurs.

Managerial problems among working female headed households were studied by Mehrotra, in 2003. The sample of this research study comprised of 120 working families selected through purposive random sampling procedure. It was observed that majority of the respondents from both rural and urban areas were highly affected by the general decline in financial position. A large majority, i.e., 80 % were always under constant financial stress in spite of copying strategies adopted by them. Rural families felt that these tasks were very tiring and stressful due to the non-availability of paid help. Further, 75 % of urban and 82 % rural families were either always or sometimes affected by psychological problems.

Challenges faced by Indian Women Entrepreneurs:

Shortage of Finance: Women entrepreneurs always suffer from inadequate financial resources and working capital. They are not able to afford external finance due to absence of tangible security and credit in the market. The complicated procedure of bank loans also creates lot of problems in getting the required finance. Women entrepreneurs even face problems in getting requisite working capital financing day-to-day business activities.

Marketing problems: Women entrepreneurs often depend upon

the middlemen for marketing their products who pocket large chunk of profit. The middlemen exploit the women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs also find it difficult to capture the market and make their products popular. A lot of money is needed for advertisement in these days of stiff competition from male entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs also lack energy and extra efforts needed to be investing and to win the confidence of customers and popularize the products. Women entrepreneurs continuously face the problems in marketing their products.

Shortage of raw materials: The shortage of required raw materials is also one of the big problems faced by women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs find it difficult to procure the required raw materials and other necessary inputs for production in sufficient quantity and quality. The prices of raw materials are quite high and fluctuate.

Stiff competition: Women entrepreneurs have to face severe competition from organized industries and male entrepreneurs having vast experience. Many of the women enterprises have imperfect organizational set up. But they have to face severe competition from organized industries.

Absence of Entrepreneurial Aptitude: One of the biggest problems of women is the lack of entrepreneurial aptitude. They have no entrepreneurial bent of mind. The basic characteristics of an entrepreneur such as innovation, risk bearing etc. are absent in a women entrepreneur. Many women take the training by attending the Entrepreneurship Development Programmes without entrepreneurial bent of mind.

Family Conflicts: A very little time and energy is left for business activities. A married woman entrepreneur has to make a perfect balance between domestic activities and business activities. The woman entrepreneur cannot succeed without the support and approval of husband. Their success in this regard also depends upon supporting husband and family. Thus, occupational backgrounds of families and education level of husbands have a great influence on the growth of women entrepreneurship. Women also face the conflict of performing of home role as they are not available to spend enough time with their families. They spend long hours in business and as a result, they find it difficult to meet the demands of their family members and society as well. Their inability to attend to domestic work, time for education of children, personal hobbies, and entertainment adds to their conflicts.

Educational Facilities: Lack of or insufficient education facilities results in lack of knowledge and information about availability of raw material, access to finance and Government schemes and facilities and other existing or upcoming opportunities.

Patriarchal Society: There is discrimination against women in India despite constitutional equality. Women do not get equal treatment in male-dominated Indian society and male ego puts barriers in their progress. Entrepreneurship has been traditionally seen a male preserve and idea of women taking up entrepreneurial activities considered as a distant dream. Women also have to face role conflict as soon as they initiate any entrepreneurial activity.

Lack of entrepreneurial training: Large number of women is no proper and sufficient technical and professional training to set-up a new venture. All women entrepreneurs are given the same training through EDPs. Second-generation women entrepreneurs don't need such training as they already have the previous exposure to business.

Low risk taking ability: Women entrepreneurs suffer from the problem of low risk taking ability as compared to their male counterparts, because they have led a protected life. They even face discrimination in the selection of or entrepreneurial development training. Inferiority complex, unplanned growth, lack of infrastructure, hesitation in taking quick decision also increases the rate of risk and chances of loss.

Coordinating factors: Coordinating factors for production also represent a challenge for many women entrepreneurs. They cannot easily coordinate the production process, particularly with the ever-changing technology. Very few women can sustain such produc-

tion situations. Women's flair for technology again, depends upon their socio-cultural upbringing, which may make them believe it is a men-dominated field. Women who aspire to become entrepreneurs would find it challenging to keep abreast of technological advancements

Technology utilization: Technology utilization and dependence in businesses vary depending upon the type of enterprises. Women who enter areas requiring highly technical knowledge are either supported by their husband or achievement oriented. Once woman opt for a product or service that is technical in nature however, they become comfortable with it very quickly. They learn to select machineries, product attributes, deal with technical problems and oversee technical engineers.

Society: Society's attitude towards women entrepreneurs, unequal opportunities amongst men and women and broadly a lack of self-confidence haunt women entrepreneurs. This low level of self-confidence, will-power and optimistic attitude amongst women create a fear of committing mistakes which affects their business. The family members and the society are often reluctant to stand beside their entrepreneurial endeavour.

In spite of all the above challenges there are many Indian Women who succeeded in their career as entrepreneurs, few examples include:

Smita has become the only woman entrepreneur in Gujarat to manufacture multimeters and ohm-meters. Her products have become a guarantee of safety and good quality. She plans to supply her products to many reputed industries directly and through dealers. Smita's edge is possessing several appreciation certificates and awards for her commendable work from prestigious industrial institutions and media. In 2011, she was awarded Best Women Entrepreneur Award (Cash Rs. 1 lakh) by TAI, Bombay and she feels very proud about it.

Geetha Premkumar, had no business background whatsoever, before she made her debut as an entrepreneur in the field of UPS (Uninterrupted Power Supply) equipments. However, she had always harbored a secret desire to do something on her own. She started her first job as a teacher and later on took up jobs in the field of computer/IT. Having very limited money and knowledge, Entrepreneurship was the only option which also allowed her to simultaneously fulfill her household duties. The desire to do something on her own motivated her to look around and explore gaps in the industry. She found Power Supply as an increasing issue in major industries. She instantly took up the challenge to manufacture and supply products in that range. Thus were laid foundations of Vector Indojanix (P) Ltd, which is now a well expanded unit having annual turnover of Rs. 5 Crore (At Vector Indojanix (P) Ltd., they are offering different products in the categories of UPS, Stabilizers, APFC Panels, and Inverters).

Shrimati R.K. Ongbi Purnima Devi wife of Shri R.K. Rebatinath Singh of Sagolband Bijoygovinda, Lairenjam Leirak, Imphal West, Manipur, India is a Proprietress of M/S.S.P. Embroidery Centre. As soon as I finished my graduation in 1984, and due to my training from District Industries Centre (D.I.C.) in embroidery and also I stood 2nd in the training, I availed a good chance of being a beneficiary of government scheme – Prime Minister Rojgar Yojna 1995, and training in Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) under the auspices of North Eastern Industrial Consultant Ltd. (NECON). Ashima Dang is satisfied to have arrived at a stage where she is balancing her work and family.

As a start of her career, Ashima took up a job in IT (Information Technology) industry. But soon she started realizing that even though working in an enterprise at a low profile, it became difficult to manage the family and work together. She started at a slow pace, 'New Avenues' has in true sense taken to new and wider avenues at national and international level with Ashima's constant efforts. With her seasoned multimedia solutions for kids and youngsters, Ashima is also assisting her husband in growing his garment business by online marketing through her IT expertise.

Poonam Gupta got inclined to start her enterprise – P.G. Designs Pvt. Ltd. when she realized that if her own crafted product line of silver ware can make wonders in the company where she is working, she can undoubtedly build her own enterprise and take the product to

the next level with her creativity and vision.

Initiatives taken by Government of India towards Indian Women Entrepreneurship:

- Prime Minister Rojgar Yojana and EDPs were introduced to develop entrepreneurial qualities among rural women.
- 'Women in agriculture' scheme was introduced to train women farmers having small and marginal holdings in agriculture and allied activities.
- To generate more employment opportunities for women KVIC took special measures in remote areas.
- Women co-operatives schemes were formed to help women in agro-based industries like dairy farming, poultry, animal husbandry, horticulture etc. with full financial support from the Government.
- Several other schemes like Integrated Rural Development Programs (IRDP), Training of Rural youth for Self employment (TRYSEM) etc. were started to alleviate poverty. 30-40% reservation is provided to women under these schemes.
- Trade Related Entrepreneurship Assistance and Development (TREAD) scheme was launched by Ministry of Small Industries to develop women entrepreneurs in rural, semi-urban and urban areas by developing entrepreneurial qualities.
- Women Component Plan, a special strategy adopted by Government to provide assistance to women entrepreneurs.
- Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana and Swarna Jayanti Sehkari Rozgar Yojana were introduced by government to provide reservations for women and encouraging them to start their ventures.
- New schemes named Women Development Corporations were introduced by government to help women entrepreneurs in arranging credit and marketing facilities.
- Schemes like Mahila Udyam Nidhi, Micro Cordite Scheme for Women, Mahila Vikas Nidhi, Women Entrepreneurial Development Programmes, and Marketing Development Fund for Women are initiated by State Industrial and Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has introduced following schemes to assist the women entrepreneurs.
- self employment of women are introduced by government which include Support for Training and Employment Programme of Women (STEP), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Small Industry Service Institutes (SISIs), State Financial Corporations, National Small Industries Corporations, District Industrial Centres (DICs)
- SIDBI has developed this fund for the entrepreneurial development of women especially in rural areas. Under Mahila Vikas Nidhi grants loan to women are given to start their venture in the field like spinning, weaving, knitting, embroidery products, block printing, handlooms handicrafts, bamboo products etc.
- Rashtriya Mahila Kosh was set up to grant micro credit to poor women at reasonable rates of interest with very low transaction costs and simple procedures.

Key Suggestions for the Indian Women Entrepreneurs for their successful career:

- Policies for women's entrepreneurship should follow a comprehensive approach rather than be piecemeal. They should encourage subsector clusters by providing infrastructure facilities and services, such as training.
- There is a need to periodically evaluate the impact of MSME-related policies on the success of women-owned businesses and the extent to which such businesses take advantage of these policies. Good practices should be disseminated and shared broadly.

- Women entrepreneurs should extensively make use of the various schemes provided by the Government.
- Suggestions should be given to the national mission for entrepreneurship to ensure it is gender-sensitive
- Provision of amenities: It is desirable to establish amenities for women entrepreneurs in industrial areas, such facilities should be characterized by easy mobility and proximity to residential areas with regular bus service, child-care facilities, etc.
- Central and State governments should assist women entrepreneurs to participate in international, national and local trade fairs, exhibitions and conferences. Such activities should be organized regularly.
- Attempts by various NGOs and GOs to spread information about policies, plans and strategies on the development of women in the field of industry, trade and commerce are playing a crucial role and should be supported.
- The procedures and formalities should be simplified for registration of business, financial and legal assistance, subsidies, concessions, relief etc. from different government and nongovernmental departments.
- Banks and financial institutions offer excellent financial schemes for women entrepreneurs.
- There is a dire need to have large number of awareness workshops/camps in different center to introduce financial schemes available to women and to formulate a strategy to avoid discrimination.
- Special efforts should be made to facilitate unmediated access for women to investments in human capital, to the factors of production, to productive assets and productive markets.
- Marketing assistance should be developed by promoting linkages between women enterprises of various sizes, by way of legitimate subcontracting and where appropriate, franchising or other forms of inter-firm cooperation.
- Implementation of infrastructure must be accompanied by policies that encourage women to engage in income-generating activities, including education, training and so on.
- Usually families provide financial and emotional support to sons for setting up a business or profession
- An awareness programme should be conducted on a mass scale among women about the various areas to conduct business.
- Attempts by various NGOs to spread information about policies, plans, and strategies on the development of women in the field of industry, trade and commerce need to be supported and sustained.

Conclusion:

The role of Women entrepreneur in economic development is also being recognized and steps are being taken to promote women entrepreneurship. 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. Women entrepreneurship must be moulded properly with entrepreneurial traits and skills to meet the changes in trends, challenges global markets and also be competent enough to sustain and strive for excellence. The unexplored talents of young women can be identified, trained and used for various types of industries to increase the productivity in the industrial sector.

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