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## Plight of Women Entrepreneurs: A Diagnostic Study

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### ABSTRACT

*An earnest attempt is made in this paper to create a sense of self confidence among women who have undertaken certain entrepreneurial assignments and wipeout feelings of gender inequalities among them. In the present scenario of globalization, it is meaningful from the view point of exploring potentialities for empowerment of women and the necessary ameliorating mechanism suited to highly volatile socio economic environment. It is noticed that about 50 per cent of the women entrepreneurs believed that the confronted gender discrimination when dealing with bankers and other financial institutions. In order to curb such gender inequalities and to keep the whole gamut of women entrepreneurship on more viable footing that this study was undertaken.*

**Keywords : Empowerment, Entrepreneurship, Potentialities, Women entrepreneurs.**

### I. INTRODUCTION

The present day corporate sector proves that there is no gender discrimination for entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs are more vehemently carrying out entrepreneurial activities than men. This scenario indicates the equality of gender in a developed economy. Women entrepreneurs are perennially becoming the driving force of many economies, the world over. Once, the main tasks of women were to bear and rear children and carrying out rest of the household assignments within the four walls of the house. This was the age-old concept. In the present day context of (L.P.G) liberalization, privatization and globalization, the role of women has become versatile. The various factors like, cultural expression, tasks and mobility, modern education, health and size of the family, political awareness and cut-throat competition prevailing in the society have compelled women to mould their careers to suit the present day society. Hence enormous changes in the role of women have taken place in recent days. The changing role of women depends upon the various parameters such as a cultural environment, economic and social augmenting process and the impact of information technology, as well as, latest developments in living and working conditions of women in the society.

### II. STATUS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE CONTEMPORARY CORPORATE SECTOR:

It is assessed that women entrepreneurs presently consist of about 10% of the total number of entrepreneurs in India, with the percentage growing every year. If the prevailing trends continue, it is likely that in another five years, women will comprise more than 20% of the entrepreneurial force. With corporates eager to associate and work with women, and profit organizations keen to help them get going, there has rarely been a better time for women with ambition and industry to set up their own entrepreneurial activity.

Although men and women may be motivated by multiple objectives and expectations, women entrepreneurs are just as competent, if not better, than their male counterparts.

Women are more likely than men to admit when they are not aware of something and ask for help. They are normal networkers and developers of interpersonal relations, forging powerful bonds and nurturing relationships with clients and employees alike. They are also more inclined to seek out mentors and develop supportive teams. In business this translates into building rapport with clients and providing

great customer services. This perhaps is the reason why a majority of women tend to launch business that is client based or service-oriented.

Sometimes, however, a lack of training and prior experience can render women entrepreneurs susceptible to a number of pitfalls. The suggestions made in this paper are aimed at helping women entrepreneurs cross some of the typical pitfalls that may crop up on their path to success.

### III. WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEFINED:

The women entrepreneurs may be defined as the women or a group of women who initiate, organize and operate a business enterprise. Women are expected to innovate, intimate or adopt an economic activity to be called women entrepreneurs. The Government of India has defined women entrepreneurs as "An enterprise owned and controlled by a woman having a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and giving at least 51% of the employment generated in the enterprise to women".

The Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh has been chosen as a sample unit for the study:

There are about 38 women entrepreneurs prevailing in the head quarters of Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. These women entrepreneurs have established multiple productive units in the district such as (i) Fruit pulp units; (ii) Match – Box Industries; (iii) Hatcheries; (iv) Jaggery units, (v) Plastic utensils; (vi) Plastic bags; (vii) Indolium vessels; (viii) Interior paints; (ix) Rolling and Polishing; (x) Printing and Dyeing; (xi) Dairy Units; (xii) Chips useful to computers; and (xiii) Plastic pipes and so on. Besides, the real life entrepreneur's problems that they confront, the greatest mental feeling, which pesters them, is that they are women and 'B' grade entrepreneurs when compared to men. Aggressive and domineering male stance is the order of the day. Therefore, women have a tendency to keep away from lucrative economic activities, which are apparently regarded as the prerogative of men. So-called pragmatic financial institutions and banks are also exhibiting bias against the entrepreneurial skills of women and not coming forward to lend the women entrepreneurs on par with men.

The author makes an earnest attempt in this paper to present the various sociological roadblocks confronted by the women entrepreneurs in the present day corporate sector.

#### IV. INDIAN WOMEN – HOGGING THE LIMELIGHT IN AN ENTREPRENEURIAL WORLD:

Across the country and across the globe, women are the worst sufferers. For decades together, at some places, time remains the same and at other places it goes through many transitions. It takes centuries for women's roles to unfold in varied forms, shapes and sizes and to move in versatile heights. There are certain places where women live in a by-gone century, chained and shackled to the social structures and bowing to the wishes of others who carve a code of conduct in stone. Whereas there are other locales where women struggle to find freedom and space to define their roles in the new context with new occupations and forge a new path for their lives.

In the traditional days of society, a large part of the world was of the opinion that men alone can set up enterprises. Then there were women, who, keeping the economic conditions of the family in mind, took up income generating activities to meet the ever growing family expenditure. The men of these women were either not there, or, if they were there, would not or could not take the responsibility of the family.

The role of women in India has undergone dramatic and drastic changes from era to era, while within the eras themselves there have existed considerable contradictions. This in itself has fabricated problems, for contemporary women, in experiencing a continuity of their identity within the society. What a woman growing up in Indian society interjects is perhaps a collage and flues of attitudes, perceptions, roles and locations of her identity. It seems to be difficult to take a logical look at all this. To every fortune there is a misfortune and vice-versa. The interjected collage does not, therefore, make it easy for women to define their role and take leadership roles and to enunciate directions and goals for themselves.

Then came a time when the order of the world changed. A new form and new structure emerged. This took thousands of years and tears of women, who with courage moved the mountain of debris of beliefs and freed themselves from the chains and shackles of centuries. What was this change?

Starting entrepreneurial activity would create a little dilemma in many women who have the requisite potentialities for becoming one. However, to become affluent at once is the basic reason for women to start entrepreneurship. They had a deep-seated need for a sense of independence along with a desire to closet behind their husband's nameplate. Women with high education view entrepreneurship as an opportunity for earning prosperity. These women needed little outside support for venturing ahead as their circumstances forced them. On the other hand, women, coming from affluent sections had resources but wanted their husbands to decide the ways it should be utilized. Also the women of the upper crust of society were hesitant to put forth the idea of taking up a non-traditional role.

It is also found that compared to men, women were less concerned about making money and often choose business proprietorship as a result of career dissatisfaction. Secondly, women find entrepreneurship as a tool of meeting their career needs and childcare role. However, there are drastic differences in the way men and women-owned enterprises view their activities.

Most women business owners in Indian organizations were either housewives or fresh graduates with no previous experience of running a business. These women business owners were in traditionally women-oriented business like garments, beauty care, and fashion designing, which either doesn't require any formalized training or is developed from a hobby or an interest into a business. The classic example will be of 'Herbal Queen Lady', Shehnaz Hussain, who started her herbal-based treatment from a relatively small scale. In fact, she started literally from her kitchen domain to the chain of beauty parlors spread out across the globe.

Various schemes for encouraging entrepreneurship among women and doomed to fail or at best to succeed partially when taken up in isolation. This is because entrepreneurship by definition implies being in control of one's life and activities. It is precisely this independence that society has denied to women all along.

Encouraging entrepreneurship for women will require an even greater reversal of traditional attitudes than the mere creation of entrepreneurs for women would. This does not mean that we should wait for societal change to take place first. But it does imply that the programme should go beyond subsidies and credit allocation to attitudinal changes, group formation, training and other support services.

Training in entrepreneurial attitudes would be helpful at the high school level through well-designed courses which build confidence through behavioral games. This exercise would illustrate practical application of the academic knowledge being imparted regarding management of an enterprise.

To release women from the constraints on mobility that society imposes on them throughout their lives, high school girls should be compulsorily taught to cycle. There is proof that increased mobility contributes immensely to raising confidence levels. An additional measure that may increase mobility and confidence is to compulsorily train girls also in the methods and techniques of self defence.

#### V. The Objectives:

The specific objectives of the paper are:

- (i) To identify the various sociological roadblocks encountered by the women entrepreneurs in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh.
- (ii) To identify and analyze the various reasons for the sociological roadblocks of women entrepreneurs in Chittoor district; and
- (iii) To offer feasible ways and means wipe out the sociological roadblocks
- (iv) Confront the women entrepreneurs in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh and to put the whole gamut of entrepreneurial activities of women on more viable, rational and modern lines.

#### VI. Scope of the present paper

The scope of this paper is confined to the study of sociological roadblocks of women entrepreneurs in Chittoor district head quarters of Andhra Pradesh only. Several women entrepreneurs dispersed in the entire district are excluded from the study in order to maintain some sort of uniformity and convenience.

#### VII. Database

The required data for the study was collected from primary sources only. The women entrepreneurs of various industries located in Chittoor formed a good base of information for this paper.

#### VIII. Sample Size

There are only 38 women entrepreneurs in Chittoor town. A census sampling technique was followed and all the 38 women entrepreneurs were interviewed. A pretested Questionnaire constructed for the purpose was administered to them in order to elicit first hand information from the respondents.

#### IX. Profiles of Sample Respondents

While 36.84% of the respondents are in the age group of 25-30 years, followed by 28.95% of the respondents in the age group of 31-35 years and 34.21% of the respondents in the age groups of 36-40 years, 39.47% of the respondents are graduates, 23.68% post graduates, and 36.85 of the respondent have professional qualifications like B.Tech and diploma in Education and diploma in Personnel Management and Industrial Relations. It is reported that almost all the women entrepreneurs covered in the study have undergone training

in one area or the other related to their industry, as imparted by the District Industries Centre, Kadapa.

Women in Urban areas had to face not only resistance from men, but also from senior citizens, ingrained as they are with an attitude of inequality. The over bearing presence of elders restrain every young woman from venturing out. So one can assume how much a woman will have to put up with if she wishes to become economically independent. The study revealed that the following are the sociological roadblocks confronted by the women entrepreneurs under the study.

#### **X. Ethical accountabilities and domestic obligations:**

An overwhelming majority of the women respondents, 84.29%, reported that their domestic obligations and ethical accountabilities were the greatest hurdles to their career as an entrepreneur. Women still do not find it either possible or desirable for their involvement, in their entrepreneurial activities. Due to this constraint the innate management talent of women and their entrepreneurial skills has gone unrecognized and unaccounted, as it does not show profit or loss in monetary terms. However, unmarried women entrepreneurs may spend little more time with the concern of their enterprise.

#### **XI. Flimsy entrepreneurial training programmes designed for women**

Another integral constraint reported by a modest section of the respondents (57.80%) of women entrepreneurs is inadequate business training, which is a major hurdle for them. It is also aptly glaring in financial areas of the entrepreneurs.

#### **XII.Meager Mobility**

Further, about 44.73% of the respondents have stated that their meager mobility from one market to another reputed market for business purposes is a severe lacuna for their entrepreneurial progress. In the absence of good mobility form one place to another place these entrepreneurs cannot grab good market orders for their products. The various difficulties caused by the Government officials like licensing authorities, labour officers and tax personnel, is another miserable reason for halting the career of women entrepreneurs.

#### **XIII.No-Holds barred Competition**

Minorities of the respondents (31.57%) have stated that they

are facing severe competition for their products form organized corporate industries and male entrepreneurs. Besides, they do not have any organizational set up to spend a lot of money for advertisement and publicity.

#### **XIV.Scant attention towards women entrepreneurial programmes**

When compared to the neighboring and other states, the various programmes to assist women entrepreneurs by the Government are very scant. It is reported by a sizable segment (34.21%), that the other states are offering enormous concessions to women entrepreneurs like tax concessions and subsidies, whereas it is only paltry in their state.

#### **Conclusions and Suggestions**

Despite multiple sociological roadblocks confronted by the women entrepreneurs, there is a growing awareness among women in the country about the profitability of entrepreneurship. We find more women in software companies and their number is growing day by day in the entrepreneurial scenario. There is also a change in the composition of the working force in the service sector.

Women entrepreneurs are now exposed to higher education and training, in a greater measure, and the parents of the female child should give parallel importance to the education of their daughter at par with their male child. This situation helps greatly, the prospective women entrepreneurs, to carry out all works that were once regarded as the prerogative of men. Such educated women will be very much more ambitious, enterprising and can acquire basic skills, competency and self-assurance.

A national level women entrepreneur's meet may also be organized in the area proposed to give the respondents good exposure to national level women entrepreneurs and women executives. This meet will enable the women entrepreneurs to avoid low mobility and to move from one market to another in order to grab favorable market orders. In addition, a package of incentives like offering more subsidies, supply of raw materials at highly concessional prices (for ex: 50% or more concession) and extension of timely financial assistance to these women entrepreneurs may result in carrying out things on modern, action packed and result-oriented lines.

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