



EMPOWERMENT THROUGH WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP –A PRAGMATIC OUTLOOK

KEYWORDS

Entrepreneurship, Empowerment, Self-Employment

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship lies at the centre of socio-economic development of the nation. It is an integral part of the tactic of Industrialization process, particularly in the development of small scale sector. It is a process where one person who is self employed provides jobs to others also. Such a person is called "Entrepreneur". Entrepreneurship creates employment opportunities, promotes livelihoods and extracts the use of natural and human resources for sustainable development of the society. Women entrepreneurship is the process where women take lead and organize a business or industry and provide employment opportunities to others. It is believed that economic strength is the basics of social, political and psychological power in society. Thus the lower status of women mostly stems from their low economic status and subsequent dependence and lack of decision making power. Therefore, if women gain economic strength, they gain visibility and voice to achieve in their expertise. Among the various approaches, the empowerment approach to development is considered best. This process of gaining control over self, resource and decision and making power may be termed as empowerment. Ideally, the empowerment process should aim at "women findings time and space of their own" and should provide mechanisms for their; active participation in the development process. Like involving in cottage industries, Micro enterprises in the field of watershed, Animal Husbandry, micro finance, business and services are the major contributions of women in making their livelihood and to upgrade their family to next level. As there are some problems in women entrepreneurship development programmers, some additional concessions are required. Banks and other financial institution should come forward to give loans to women entrepreneurs without obtaining security from them and at low interest rate. Lastly, to ensure women entrepreneurship development, integrated efforts by various institutions and corporations are needed so that required assistance may be provided to potential women entrepreneurs.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship lies at the centre of socio-economic development of the nation. It is an integral part of the tactic of Industrialization process, particularly in the development of small scale sector. Without it, the capitals of production remain resources and can never become products or services. The relationship between entrepreneurship and economic development is similar to the relationship between cause and effect. It is the spirit of enterprise among people that leads to the development of a particular society. India is one of those countries that have accorded high priority to the entrepreneurship development.

What is Entrepreneurship

It is a process where one person who is self employed provides jobs to others also. Such a person is called "Entrepreneur". He acts as a leader. Entrepreneurship creates employment opportunities, promotes livelihoods and extracts the use of natural and human resources for sustainable development of the society. Entrepreneurship is characterized by self employment and contributes much towards the national income of a country and leads for economic growth. It also created strength and confidence in the minds of women folk. Entrepreneurship is found in both private and public (state) field. The small scale industries and business are in the hands of private entrepreneur. India being a large and diversified country, the development of small-scale entrepreneurship helps in national developmental and provides more employment opportunities for the vast population. It reduces the concentration of wealth in few hands and helps to achieve balanced economic growth. Hence development of small scale sector and entrepreneurship becomes necessary.

Women Entrepreneurs

Women compose almost half of the total population in the world. But their representation in lucrative service is relatively low. Women have confined their activity to easy and selected professions such as education, nursing, medicine and office work.

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Very few women enter in to professions like engineering, trade, etc and excel in their fields and become a number on entrepreneurs. According to Government of India, a women entrepreneur is defines as "an enterprise owned and controlled by women and having a minimum financial interest of 51 % of the capital and giving at least 51% of the employment generated in the enterprise to women".

Women entrepreneurship is the process where women take lead and organize a business or industry and provide employment opportunities to others. Though women entrepreneurship is a recent phenomenon in India which came into prominence in late 1970's. Now we see that more and more women are venturing as entrepreneurs in all kinds of business and service sectors. In the initial stages women entrepreneurship developed only in urban areas, lately it has extended its wings to rural and semi-urban areas too.

Women 's industries mainly fall into informal sector where less than 10 persons with or with out power are engaged and they are labour intensive and rely on indigenous resources, family ownership and only small scale skills are sufficient to become an entrepreneur. Though earlier women concentrated more on traditional activities, due to the stretch of education, favourable government policies towards development of women entrepre-

neurship, women have changed their attitude and diverted towards non-traditional activities also. They show favourable response to changing situations and get adjusted to them and have improved their position in all fields.

The government and voluntary organizations are giving more eminence to self employment among women and building women entrepreneurship. Special financial assistance is provided and training programmes are organized for women to start ventures in all parts of the country.

Empowerment of women

It is believed that economic strength is the basics of social, political and psychological power in society. Thus the lower status of women mostly stems from their low economic status and subsequent dependence and lack of decision making power. Therefore, if women gain economic strength, they gain visibility and voice to achieve in their expertise.

Among the various approaches, the empowerment approach to development is considered best. This approach is modeled to 'power' itself and gain control over resources and freedom to decide. This process of gaining control over self, resource and decision and making power may be termed as empowerment. Ideally, the empowerment process should aim at "women finding time and space of their own" and should provide mechanisms for their; active participation in the development process.

In auxiliary it should make certain their role in decision making and should foster self reliance both socially and economically. Noteworthy contributes towards women empowerment can be made by facilitating their direct participation in income generation activities and decision making capacity. This will enable them to take initiatives for their development into their own hands. Through a well directed package of skill enhancement, credit facilities and educational inputs, women can discover their economic role and gain recognition in society.

Entrepreneurship can help women's socio economic independence and improve their social status. Automatically women get empowered once they attain economic independence. The development of women entrepreneurship enables society to understand and appreciate their abilities. It enhances their status and leads to integration of women in nation building and economic development. It provides the needed psychological satisfaction and gives a deep sense of achievement and an enhanced identity in society.

Status of Women entrepreneurs

Since the turn of the century, the status of women in India has been changing due to growing industrialization and urbanization, mobility and social legislation. Over the years more number of women is going in for higher education, technical and professional education and their proportion in the labour force has also increased. With the spread of education and awareness, women has shifted from extended kitchen, handicrafts and traditional cottage industries to non-traditional higher level of activities during the 1970's the decade of the international women's year, efforts to promote self-employment among women received greater attention from government and private agencies. The industrial policies of the government of India have laid special emphasis on the need for transference of special entrepreneurial training programmes for women to enable them to start their own ventures.

Financial Institutions and banks have also set up special self to assist women entrepreneurs. The result has been the emergence of women entrepreneurs on the economic scene in recent years, though the number of enterprises initiated by women is still quite low. Women's entrepreneurship remains a much neglected field. Almost half of the population of our

country comprises of women while businesses owned and operated by them constitute less than 5 percent. In fact women's contribution and participation in economic activity and production of goods and services is much greater than statistics reveal, since much of it take place in the informal sector and also in households.

As education has spread and compulsions for earning have grown, more and more women have started to go out of the homes and opt for employment-wage, self or entrepreneurial career. However, for women there are several handicaps to enter into and manage business ownership due to conservative and orthodox Indian society.

STEPS INVOLVED IN SELECTION OF VIABLE ACTIVITIES-

1. Identifying economic activities for women,
2. Potential product/ Opportunity identification and feasibility
3. Finalizing the products.

Women as Entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs in India may be classified into three groups-

The First Group consists of women with adequate education and professional qualifications and are heading large industrial units.

The Second Group of entrepreneur consists of middle class women with education but lack of skill and training and are engaged in handicrafts and cottage industries.

The Third Group of entrepreneurs are illiterates, financially weak and are engaged in family business.

Problems of Women Entrepreneurs

- Shortage of finance,
- Inefficient management for marketing and sale,
- Shortage of raw material,
- Inflexible competition,
- High cost of production,
- Low mobility,
- Family responsibilities,
- Social attitudes,
- Low ability to bear risk,
- Lack of education,
- Low need for achievement,
- Inadequate infrastructure,
- Shortage of power,
- Technical knowhow, and
- Other social and economic constraints.

Conclusion

As there are some problems in women entrepreneurship development programmers, some additional concessions are required. Banks and other financial institution should come forward to give loans to women entrepreneurs without obtaining security from them and at low interest rate. Maximum possible assistance should be provided to women for completing documentation and other formalities. Lastly, to ensure women entrepreneurship development, integrated efforts by various institutions and corporations are needed so that required assistance may be provided to potential women entrepreneurs.