

Women Entrepreneurship in India



Home Science

KEYWORDS :

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INTRODUCTION:

In India, gender discrimination is high and more visible when compared with western countries. Owing to various socio and cultural reasons women are prohibited to enter into the entrepreneurial world. In many field, women participation is very low in India. Entrepreneurship is one such a field where women's participation is very low, through some improvements in women literacy rate are observed. In 1971, the women constituted only two percent of the total entrepreneurs. Now it has increased nearly 10 percent in the present modern world, women entrepreneurs are recognized as powerful instruments for the economic development of any nation as well as the catalyst in bringing out the changes in the society. It is note worthy that increased women participation in the economic platform of USA was greatly helpful to the country to come out from the great depression. In this context, the present paper attempts to study the present status and the problems faced by the women as entrepreneurs.

Definition of Women Entrepreneur:

The meaning and definition of an entrepreneur is common to all irrespective of the sex, caste, religion and race. The wisdom of entrepreneurship is not gender specific. In general, those who are playing the entrepreneurial role can be called as entrepreneurs, irrespective of their sex. Hence, there is no need to define the women entrepreneurs separately. However, in the practical sense, the women entrepreneur is regarded as a women who accepts or taking a challenging role in any business venture to become economically strong by making suitable adjustments in both family and social life.

Global Situation in Brief:

Women owned business are becoming increasingly important in the national economy of many countries in the world. It is estimated that is us economy women contribute more than 250 billion annually and create new business at two to three times the rate of their male counterparts. Since 1970, the share of women owned business has grown from only 5 percent to more than 30 percent, representing nearly 6 million of the nation's 16.5 million non-formal sole proprietorship. Women owned business can today be found in every sector of the economy and in every region of the U.S. In Britain, the role played by the women entrepreneurs are satisfactory, they occupy one third in the total self-employed in the country. It is estimated that the share of women entrepreneur in small business in UK is about 40 percent and it is expected to grow further due to some external factors like improvement in technology, new communication means and improvement in child care, etc. In India the share of women entrepreneur is not satisfactory and significant. However, there has been a remarkable improvement, in their share due to their increased literacy rate, urbanization and changing life styles, etc.

Need for Women Entrepreneurship in India:

In India, a very substantial portion of women are unemployed through they have the ability to undertake varied activities including industrial activity. It is estimated that unemployment rate is higher among women when compared with men and the improvement in women's education is not proportionate to their employment levels in India. It is estimated that women constitute 60 percent of the rural unemployment and 56 percent of the total unemployed in the country. To reduce the unemployment rate among women, it is essential to develop women entrepreneurship in order to expose the women to various

employment and profit-generating avenues. To speed up the economic development of a country, it is essential that the available work force should be optimally utilized. Hence, in India, it is necessary to bring the women in to the hold of entrepreneurship with a motive to attain rapid economic development in the present globalized era.

Avenues for women Entrepreneurs in India:

Classifying the job, business and industrial activity etc on the basis of gender is absolutely a backward thinking. In the modern world, women can venture into any area of business and industrial activities. However, this depends on their interest and their educational background, family, social status, income level, technical knowledge, entrepreneurial back ground and so on. The major portions of housewives are treated as unemployed. The following activities are considered and identified as the convenient business ventures for housewives. They are handmade papers bee-keeping, black smithy, carpentry, bio-gas, making of palmgur, non-edible oils and soaps, gum and pulses processing. Fruit-processing and preservation, bamboo and can work, gums, wearing of door-mats manufacturing of candles etc. It does not, however, mean that housewives, for there are lots of successful married women involved in large-scale manufacturing businesses in India. But this is only meager.

Historical Development of Women Entrepreneurship in India:

Before the Independence, India women were not encouraged to enter into entrepreneurial world. However, the situation changed in India after the Independence. In the fifties, generally, women entrepreneurs were come from the families where there was no income generating male. In the sixties, many women educated in schools and colleges and began to start one - women enterprises at home and from home. In the Seventies, mass of women completed their education entered the work force as professionals. The women in this decade opened up new frontiers. Women in this decade wanted homes, marriage and children as well as an occupation. In the eighties, women were educated in highly sophisticated technological and professional education. Many has Medical, Engineering and similar degrees and diplomas. Women in this decade opened their own clinics and nursing homes and many more opened up small boutiques, small enterprises of manufacturing and entered garment exports. This was the decade of the breakthrough for women in many fields and many frontiers. In the Nineties, there was a qualitative improvement in the women entrepreneurs in the country. In this decade many women entered into the big enterprises and proved their talent with their competencies and capabilities. Women in India are potentially competing with men in almost all the sectors of the economy. However, it has to be improved to a remarkable extent.

Status of Women Entrepreneurs in India:

In India, for a long time, women were prohibited to enter into any serious business ventures due to various socio and cultural reasons. The concept of women entrepreneurship is a recent phenomenon in India which came in to prominence in the late 1970's. In India, in the initial stage of women entrepreneurship, it was concentrated only in the urban areas; however, lately it was extended its wings to rural and Semi-urban areas too. Now, there has been a remarkable improvement in the share has not reached the Satisfactory level. In India, the female population is 945 million as per the census in 2001 contributing to nearly half of the country's population. But, the businesses owned and

operated by women constitute only less than 10 percent. The women's participation in corporate and Large-scale business ventures in India is very meager, even in the small scale sector they contribute only less than 8 percent. It is estimated that in India. Majority of the women entrepreneurs are involved only in the micro enterprise. It is obvious that in the last 20 years, there has been a qualitative shift in women entrepreneurs from low cost, low technology to high cost, high technology and more socially respectable entrepreneurial areas.

In India, the wisdom of women entrepreneurship has been mainly occupied by the upper community educated urban women. The share of do lit and rural women entrepreneurs is meager. Through there has been improvement in their participation yet, it has to be increased to a remarkable extent.

Among the Indian states, Kerala ranks first in motivating women entrepreneurs. In this state, women are well equipped with education and are highly encouraged to do their business independently and are prepared to face any challenge. It is said that is the outcome of high women literacy in the state. The Kerala should be taken as an example to create favorable atmosphere to women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs in Kerala now constitute a significant position in all the industrial activities ranging from readymade garments to high-tech computers.

Barriers to Women Entrepreneurs in India:

In India, women entrepreneurs face several challenges like the problems of finance, marketing, production and personal and social problems.

In the social front, the major problem faced by the Indian women entrepreneurs is that they have to work amidst social taboos and restrictions, etc. It is said that the sense of inferiority in women fostered by custom is a great barrier to their entrepreneurial skill. In India women are forced to be lacking in knowledge. Women's Social interaction is less when compared with men. As a result, they do not have enough practical knowledge about the society and other entrepreneurial related issues. This would be the same even in the case of educated women. Majority of the women lack in confidence and always feel that they may not be successful and hence hesitate to take risks. Thereby, their risk bearing capacity is significantly less. It is obvious that the general attitude of the society is not healthy towards women in India. Many of the India women entrepreneurs are constrained with lack of support from their family members. Moreover, the employed and self-employed women are seen with suspicious eyes by the society and even by their family members. As women entrepreneurs have to play a dual role, they have to strive hard to balance their family life and hence many women feel better to be housewives.

Initiatives Taken for the Promotion Women Entrepreneurs in India:

In India, the Government initiatives so far taken for the overall empowerment of women are satisfactory. However, the government efforts for the promotion of women entrepreneurs are meager. The followings are the few important efforts thereof.

In India, during the early decades of planning, women's role in economic activity were not given much importance and only the draft of sixth five-year plan (1980-85) stressed for special emphasis on the issues of women entrepreneurship and the steps were undertaken.

In 1985, the Government of India established a national level standing committee on women entrepreneurs with a motive to promote women entrepreneurs in the country.

In the Industrial policy 1991, the need for special training programs to support women entrepreneurs had been greatly emphasized. Product and process-oriented courses enabling women to start small scale industry are also recommended in the policy statement.

In India, banks play a key role in promoting women entrepreneurship through various Government programs. As per the recommendations of National perspective plan for women, women development corporations have been setup to provide various supports to the women entrepreneurs in the country. The Government of India has introduced schemes like support to Training and Employment programs (STEP), Mahila Samithi yojana (SYY) and Rashriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) to promote women entrepreneurs in the country.

Suggestions:

The following are the few important suggestions to promote the women entrepreneurs in the country.

It is obvious that education plays an important role in the entrepreneurial performance of an entrepreneur. Among the women entrepreneurs, the major portion is occupied by the educated women. By realizing the importance of Education, due attention should be given to the women's education to promote women entrepreneurs in the country.

By keeping in view the Socio-cultural set-up of India, more motivational training should be organized at the regional levels across the country. It is necessary to increase the number of professional schools for women.

Government should introduce a package of schemes exclusively for the promotion of women entrepreneurs in the country. In order to promote the women entrepreneurship, the government should come forward to give more subsidies to women entrepreneurs. By realizing the worsening status of women in the down trodden communities, a special package of schemes should be introduced to increase their share in the entrepreneurs in the country.

As women entrepreneurs have to face serve marketing problems, they should be taken in to consideration by the Government and steps should be taken to solve them. Markets should be developed in rural and semi-urban areas so that women entrepreneurs can sell them easily.