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Problems & Prospects of Rural Women Entrepreneurs

Dr. Prof. R. Subramanian¹

Prof. G. Murugesan²

ABSTRACT

The emergence of woman entrepreneurs and their contribution to the national economy is quite visible in India. The number of woman entrepreneurs has grown over a period of time, especially in the 1990s. Woman entrepreneurs need to be lauded for their increased utilization of modern technology, increased investment, finding a niche in the export market, creating a sizable employment for others and setting the trend for other woman entrepreneurs in the organized sector. The woman in business is a recent phenomenon in India. The spread of education and increased awareness are aiding women to spread their wings in to areas which are hitherto the monopoly of men. The number of women entrepreneurs in the field of engineering, electronics and energy are on the rise. Majority of the educated woman entrepreneurs having qualities such as accepts challenges, ambitious, enthusiastic, hard-working, skillful etc.

Key words: Woman entrepreneur, problems & prospects, woman enterprise, woman contribution, woman business

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship can help women's economic independence and improve their social status. Automatically the 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 them psychological satisfaction and imbibes a deep sense of achievement to create their enhanced identity in society.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF ENTREPRENEURS

To be successful entrepreneurs one has to acquire and develop certain qualities, namely:

- 1) High motivation for achievement of goal,
- 2) Insatiable drive and persistent enthusiasm,
- 3) Ready to take risk and face challenge,
- 4) Technical expertise,
- 5) Spirit of innovation,
- 6) Hard working, dedication, commitment and self – confidence,
- 7) Willingness to take advice/ learn from the failure and use of Feedback,
- 8) Effective management of time.

TO WOMAN ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA

In India comprise 40% of the population. Yet they have secondary position in the society. Their role is confined with in the four walls of the household activities. In the male dominated society discrimination against the fair sex is still being practiced in different forms. At this juncture can we expect that a woman can act as entrepreneurs? In yester-years the life of Indian women was like a well – defined predictable master plan. It began with a girl playing with dolls and built to the crescendo of marriage.

However, in this modern age things

have been changed a lot. Spread of education coupled with a revolutionary change in the field of information and technology brings a significant change of the status of women in the society.

WOMEN ENTERPRISES IN PRACTICE

The Government of India has defined women enterprise as “an enterprise owned and controlled by women having a minimum financial investment of 51 % of capital and giving at list 51 % of the employment generated in the enterprise to women.” In India the following features have been found in respect of woman entrepreneurship.

- 1) Women account for only 5.2% of the total self employed persons in the country.
- 2) There were more than 1, 53,260 woman entrepreneurs claiming 9.01% of the total entrepreneurs in India during 1998-99.
- 3) Decision relating to site selection for establishment of enterprise of for women is based on proximity to home.
- 4) Women entrepreneurs face more difficulties than their male counterparts in the start up stage of enterprise due to lack of experience of technical training and marketing.
- 5) Self-assessment by woman entrepreneurs shows great differences from the characteristics normally associated with male entrepreneurs such

as: passive Vs active; private Vs social.

In past rural women concentrated on traditional activities, but now due to spread of education and favorable government policies towards self - employment and skill development, women have changed their attitude and diverted towards non-traditional Activities too. We find woman entrepreneurs engaged themselves in different type of Activities such as: Engineering, Electronics, Readymade Garments, Textile Designing, Jewelers Designing. Handicrafts. Doll-making, Toy- making. Painting. Knitting. Plastics, Soap. Ceramics, Creches, Canning. Leaf Paper Products, Mushroom farming, Beekeeping, Duckery, Poultry, Dairy. Fishing and Drv-fishing. Livestock Management, Floriculture, etc.

PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

The problems faced by woman entrepreneurs are briefly analyzed below:

1) Access to Start-up Finance

Access to start-up finance is the greatest single issue faced by women entrepreneurs. It is observed that women entrepreneurs face greater problems in this regard than small business in general. As family members are not in favor of supporting their ladies to take up the business in which they have skills, naturally they will be unwilling to support

with the finance required for starting a business unit.

2) Working Capital Management

Another key disturbing factor for women entrepreneur is managing the working capital. Working capital is required for maintaining finished stock to meet the market demand, for production and meeting marketing and other administrative expense. It will be very difficult for women entrepreneurs to avail such loan facilities from financial institutions as they are unable to provide security.

3) Marketing Skills

Regarding marketing skills, women entrepreneurs have the problem of access to markets as their marketing skills are weak compared to male entrepreneurs. Maintaining existing business and access to fresh business requires strategic marketing skills. This is the most commonly repeated problem faced by women entrepreneurs after finance.

4) Access to Technology

Co-ordinating factors of production is really a challenge to woman entrepreneurs. Woman entrepreneurs cannot easily co-ordinate the production process particularly with the ever changing technology. Very few women can sustain such production instants. Women who aspire to become entrepreneurs cannot keep pace with technology advancement.

This puts down their initiative to become entrepreneurs.

5) Regulatory Requirements

Regarding administrative and regulatory requirements, may face that this is a significantly greater problem for women entrepreneurs than their male counterparts. Micro- enterprises of every type experience these problems. It is because of the disproportionate effect of compliance costs on small companies compared with large firms. In spite of this, women entrepreneurs do not face that it, is a major issue.

6) Management Skills

Another vital problem encountered by woman entrepreneurs is lack of management skills. In majority of the cases woman entrepreneurs lack management skills. Because they have lower propensity of previous business experience. Besides this, support providers discriminate against women entrepreneurs to a greater extent providing these skills.

7) Lack of Confidence

Other problems' like society's attitude towards woman entrepreneurs, unequal opportunities between men and women and very important amongst all the 'Lack of Confidence' in women are also haunting entrepreneurs.

ASSOCIATION PROMOTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

A brief analysis of various associations and agencies that are functioning at State and national levels to promote women entrepreneurs are discussed as follows:

1) Self-Help Groups (SHGs)

This is an association of small group of self-employed rural or urban women entrepreneurs who join together to take care of group welfare. The group with the help of financial institutions and other NGOs get their needs satisfied. This is a voluntary association. Each member contributes little amount of cover seed money. Rest will be taken care off by NGOs and Government.

2) Federation of Indian Women (FIWE)

It is the outcome of resolution passed in 4th International Conference Women Entrepreneurs held at Hyderabad. This was founded in the year 1993. It mainly interacts with various women association of the country through network to facilitate the member in diversified activities.

3) Women's India Trust (WIT)

This trust was established in 1968. The trust was started with the main objective of helping woman entrepreneurs. Establishing Kamila Trust in U.K. in 1994 to market the products of WIT members a shop in London under the name "Kashi" and extended export activities to Australia, Europe and Germany from 1995.

4) SIDBI

Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) is institution established at the national level to provide facilities so small scale industries. As a part of developing small industries by woman entrepreneurs, SIDBI has introduced two special schemes for women;

- (i) Mahila Udyam Nidhi to provide equity to women entrepreneurs and
- (ii) Mahila Vikas Nidhi to provide development assistance for pursuit of income generating activities to women.

5) SIDO

Small Industries Development Organisation (SIDO) is conducting various programmes including Entrepreneurship Development Programmes (DEPs) for women. To later she needs of potential women entrepreneurs, who may not have adequate educational background and skills, SIDO has introduced product orient EDPs in areas like TV repairing, printed circuit boards, leather goods, screen printing etc.

6) Consortium of Women Entrepreneurs in India (CWEI)

The CWEI is a voluntary organisation consisting of NGOs, SHGs, voluntary organisations and individual business units. This came into being in 2001. The objective is to be provide technology upgradation facilities to women entrepreneurs and other facilities in

marketing, finance, HRD and production. The consortium is also having international business connections and provides its members marketing and export support through this connection.

7) NABARD

National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) is an autonomous financial institution provides liberal credit to rural women entrepreneurs.

8) Central and State Government Schemes

State Government has come out with several schemes to develop women entrepreneurs. Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) a scheme designed for State governments were implemented in 1982-83. Uncountable women throughout the country have availed the facilities to develop themselves as entrepreneurs.

9) Self-employed Women's Association (SEWA)

SEWA is a trade union of women which was registered in 1972 under Trade Union Act. The members of SEWA has extended its operations to the global level and has the opportunity of receiving grants from international organizations such as Ford Foundation, UNICEF, ILO, etc. and Government of India is also providing funds to this organization.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT TO DEVELOP WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

The Government of India has also formulated various training and development cum employment generation programmes for the women to start their ventures. These programmes are as follows:

Steps taken by Government during Seventh Five- year Plan

In the 7th Five-year Plan, a special chapter on the “Integration of Women in Development” (IWD) was introduced by Government with following suggestions:

- (i) It was suggested to treat women as a specific target groups in all major development programmes of the country.
- (ii) It is also suggested in the chapter to devise and diversity vocational training facilities for women to suit their changing needs and skills.
- (iii) Efforts should be made to increase their efficiency and productivity through appropriate technologies, equipments and practices.
- (iv) It was suggested to provide the required assistance for marketing the products produced by women entrepreneurs.
- (v) It was also suggested to involve the women in decision-making process.

SUGGESTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Thus we can say that women face lots of problems in the male dominated society. There are many unwritten rules, which the society scrupulously follows. Most of the rules pertain to women and encompass a wide variety of social activity like women’s education, their employment hours of work, dress outing, and the like can interact only with known persons.

The following suggestions are made to solve the problems of women entrepreneurs.

- 1) Central and State governments should assist woman entrepreneurs to participate in International trade fair, exhibition and conferences.
- 2) Several policy initiatives have been made by the government like Manila smoky, Swarnajayanthi, Gram Swarojgar Yojna (SGSY), Development of Women and Children of Rural Areas (IAY) and many other policies. Recently, the government has enacted the national policy for the empowerment of women: 2001. The goal of the policy is to bring about the advancement development and empowerment of women.
- 3) The family members of woman entrepreneurs should also activity participate and extended all possible support in the matter of managing units set

up at by woman entrepreneurs.

4) Efforts should be made in the direction of simplification of the procedures. Formalities, rules and regulations, etc. required to be fulfilled by the women entrepreneurs in all matter of registration of their and seeking assistance, subsidies, concessions, relief etc, from different departments and governments sponsored organization involved in providing a variety of services to women entrepreneurs.

CONCLUSION

In present scenario due to modernization, urbanization, globalization and development of education, with increasing awareness, women are now seeking gainful participation in several fields. The entrepreneurship among women will help them in earning money and becoming economically independent. Due to social networking women will develop self-confidence, awareness and ability to marshal environmental support. This will lead to an improvement is not only the women, from the point of view of better health, education and skill but an improvement in her living condition also by being able to use cleaner fuel, better house, better sanitation, facilities and infrastructural facilities. This will lead to saving of resources like time, energy, transforming women into stronger

personality and an overall improvement in her quality of life.

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