



AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on Women Entrepreneur. Any understanding of Indian women, of their identity and especially of their role taking and breaking new paths, will be incomplete without a walk down the corridors of Indian history where women have paused, lived and internalized various role models. It is in these new beginnings women will create a legacy and a heritage and pass it on to their daughters and their daughters leave family saga of creating an enterprise and make it grow into an industrial empire.

Key Words: Women Entrepreneurship, Indian women, Industrialization, Capital, Market Dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

Women owned businesses are highly increasing in the economies of almost all countries. The hidden entrepreneurial potentials of women have gradually been changing with the growing sensitivity to the role and economic status in the society. Skill, knowledge and adaptability in business are the main reasons for women to emerge into business ventures. Women Entrepreneur is a person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. A strong desire to do something positive is an inbuilt quality of entrepreneurial women, who is capable of contributing values in both family and social life. With the advent of media, women are aware of their own traits, rights and also the work situations. But today, the glass ceilings are shattered and women are found indulged in every line of business from papad to power cables. The challenges and opportunities provided to the women of digital era are growing rapidly that the job seekers are turning into job creators.

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They are flourishing as designers, designers, interior decorators, exporters, publishers, garment manufacturers and still exploring new avenues of economic participation. In India, although women constitute the majority of the total population, the entrepreneurial world is still a male dominated one. Women in advanced nations are recognized and are more prominent in the business world.

The emergence of entrepreneurs in a society depends to a great extent on the economic, religious, cultural and psychological factor prevailing in the society. In the advanced countries of the world, there is a phenomenal increase in the number of self – employed women after the World War. In the United States, women own 25% of all business, even though their sales on an average are less than two – fifths of those of other small businesses. In Canada, one – third of small businesses are owned by women and in France it is one – fifth. In the UK, since 1980, the number of self – employed women has increased three times as fast as the number of self - employed men. Women entrepreneurs have been making a significant impact in all segments of the economy in Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Australia and the US. The areas chosen by women are retail trade, restaurants, and hotels, education, cultural, cleaning, insurance and manufacturing. They have made their mark in business for the following reasons:

1. They want new challenges and opportunities for self- fulfillment.
2. They want to prove their mettle in innovative and competitive jobs.
3. They want the change to control the balance between their family responsibilities and their business lives.

This paper slides from the era of fifties to the 21st centuries and how transformation has occurred in the women roles. Also the paper focuses the status of women entrepreneurs and the problems faced by them. Half the world is woman. Educating a woman means educating a family. These two popular sayings underscore the critical and timeless roles women play in society. Women are known to play incredible and soul- saving roles. Mostly indiscreetly, in difficult times including during wars and natural disasters. Experts believe that leveraging rural women enterprises during the current economic crisis will help mitigate the impact of the crisis especially in rural areas.

Objectives of the study

1. To understand the concept of women entrepreneur.
2. To identify the problems faced by women entrepreneur in India.



Methodology of the study

Secondary Data –

To focus on the critical issues of women entrepreneurs in India relevant information was collected from Periodicals, Research Publications, Reference Books, and Related Websites etc. They proved to be an important source of secondary information.

Origin of Women Entrepreneurship in India

Women Entrepreneurs of the Fifties

As such women in the fifties were few. The woman gave up her education and became the income generator for the rest of the family especially in those activities where there was no income generating male. For many others the businesses were taken away by relatives and the women and their families lived their lives as dependants while they had the resources or did not have the resources.

Women Entrepreneurs of the Sixties

Sixties were the decade when many women educated schools and colleges began to have aspirations. They accepted the social coding of the socio – cultural traditions and married but they soon took small steps to start small one woman enterprises at home and from home. These were still activities for self- occupation and engagement but behind these were the seeds of aspirations to discover a meaning for the self and economic choices.

Women Entrepreneurs of the Seventies

This was a decade when a critical mass of women completed their education and entered the work force as professionals. These women were unlike their mothers and had not only aspirations but also ambitions. They opted for self – employment be the enterprise a one woman enterprise or who employed several others. This was an active step swimming upstream and walking uphill.

Women Entrepreneurs of the Eighties

However, by the time eighties came around, the women were educated in highly sophisticated technological and professional education. This was the decade of the



breakthrough for women in many fields and many frontiers. Women made personal choices, stood up for their convictions and had the courage to make new beginnings. However, all these choices and beginnings was not a smooth sailing. For many, the society was hostile, the family was opposing and non – supportive and the woman carried the guilt of not playing the traditional and appropriate social roles that is of being a good mother.

Women Entrepreneurs of the Nineties

The women entrepreneurs of the nineties were qualitatively a different breed of women. These women already had a role model in the two earlier generations of women. The women of the nineties were capable, competent, confident and assertive women. The nineties have thrown up many names of women who initiated an enterprise, fostered it.

This was the first time the concept of ‘the best’ rather than a ‘male heir’ began to be talked about. The fathers thought of ‘inheritance’ or ‘legacy’ to a ‘daughter’ than just a son who may have been incapable and incompetent. With economic independence, women had acquired a high self – esteem and have also discovered that they are able to deal with situations single – handedly. Today’s women are fearless and have learnt to live alone, travel alone, and rear children alone when failures in marriage and life partnership occur. Many and more and more women in nineties have made up their minds to have a single child in order to meet the demands of home and work and have very well been able to integrate their multiple roles in multiple systems.

Women Entrepreneurs of the twenty – first century

This is the century of telecom, IT and financial institutions. Women’s expertise in all these industries is beginning to emerge and women are emerging as a force to reckon with. Women of today have a new avatar in the free rolling 90’s. She is the Jill of all the trades and her children are tickled by their supermom. Infact, many sons unhesitatedly describe themselves as ‘Momma’s boys’, which in the 90’s is no longer considered to be ‘Sissy’ but ‘Savvy’. These mother – son combination shows that women have been successful in inspiring their son to follow in their path, where earlier the son were prescribed to ride in their father’s way. Indian women would have to cross a major threshold and enter an unknown land. They will have to walk a path where none existed with a sense to discover. They will have to encounter and live with excitement and enthusiasm as well as threat, fears, anxieties and terror. They will have to discover the voice, which have been silenced for centuries to sing the songs of life and living and to discover the joys of experiencing the beauty around.

Women In India

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The Indian sociological set up has been traditionally a male dominated one. Women are considered as weaker sex and always to depend on men folk in their family and outside, throughout their life. They are left with lesser commitments and kept as a dormant force for a quite long time. The Indian culture made them only subordinates and executors of the decisions made by other male members, in the basic family structure. The traditional set up is changing in the modern era. The transformation of social fabric of the Indian society, in terms of increased educational status of women and varied aspirations for better living, necessitated a change in the life style of Indian Women. Indian families do have the privilege of being envied by the westerners, since women here are taking more responsibilities in bringing up children and maintaining a better home with love and affection. At the family level, the task of coordinating various activities in a much effective manner, without feeling the pinch of inconveniences, is being carried out by the women folk.

Thus, the Indian women have basic characters in themselves in the present sociological and cultural set up as follows:

- Indian Women are considered as Sakthi, which means source of power.
- Effectively coordinating the available factors and resources.
- Efficient execution of decisions imposed on them.
- Clear vision and ambition on the improvement of family and children.
- Patience and bearing the sufferings on behalf of others, and
- Ability to work physically more at any age.

Thus it is the need of the hour to promote entrepreneurship among women in India for 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. At this juncture, effective steps are needed to provide entrepreneurial awareness, orientation and skill development programmes for women.

Women Entrepreneurship in India

Out of total 940.98 million people in India, in the 1990s females comprise 437.10 million representing 46.5 percent of the total population. There are 126.48 million women workforce (representing 28.9 percent of the female population), but as per 1991 census, only 1,85,900 women accounting for only 4.5 percent of the total self- employed persons in the country were recorded. Majority of them are engaged in the unorganized sector like agriculture, agro-based industries, handicrafts, handlooms, and cottage based industries. Participation of



women as industrial entrepreneurs, however, is comparatively a recent phenomenon-commencing from 70s onwards. There were more than 2,95,680 women entrepreneurs in India during 1995-96. This is almost double the percentage of women (5.2%) among the total population of self- employed during 1981. Of this a majority were concentrated in low- paid, low-skilled, low technology and low- productivity jobs in the rural and unorganized sector. 90% (79.4 million) women workers were in the rural areas as against only 10% (8.6 million) in urban areas. Only 2.5 million women workers were in the organized sector – a mere 12.4% of the total employed.

During the Eighth Five Year Plan, the number of SSIs expected to rise from 1.7 million to 2.5 million, adding 0.8 million in the 5-year period or 1.60 lakh every year. The rough estimate showed that amongst the SSI entrepreneurs approximately 9% were women entrepreneurs. Considering the trend, women participation in another five years was 20% more, raising the number of women entrepreneurs to about 5, 00,000. Therefore, one could aim at developing at least 3, 50,000 women entrepreneurs during the Eight Five Year Plan through training and other developmental efforts. The present rate of 30% success in EDP training was likely to go up to 45% with growing experience and improved techniques of training and follow-up. Even assuming a very modest target of 335 women entrepreneurs per district, the number of women entrepreneurs would have come to 1, 42,375 per year.

Problems of Women Entrepreneurs in India

- 1. Need for Achievement, Economic Independence & Authority are absent :** Need for achievement, independence and autonomy are the basic ingredients required in a successful entrepreneur but these basic requirements are absent or found in negligible quantities in a women in India. She sees herself only in the image of a perfect mother, wife and house- maker. She is proud to bask in the glory of her husband, father, son etc. This results in a conflict which inhibits achievement, independence and progress. Therefore, when the very urge is absent, how can she be motivated to be an entrepreneur?
- 2. No Risk Bearing Capacity:** All throughout her life time, she has led a protected life dominated by the family members. In her childhood, she relied on her parents or elder family members. In her adulthood, she relied on her husband and in laws and again in her old age, she depended on her husband and sons, i.e., at no time has she faced the risk of life all alone. Therefore, she has no confidence to bear the risk all alone. Then how can she be an entrepreneur, when business is nothing but a risk- bearing enterprise?
- 3. Lack of Education:** The overall literacy percentage among females is only 39.3% in India. Due to this lack of education, she is unaware of technological knowledge,



marketing knowledge etc. Moreover, whatever the bookish knowledge she gathers is not sufficient to meet the various problems in the business field.

4. **Family Involvement:** In India, it is almost only a woman's duty to look after the children and other members of the family. Man plays a secondary or an insignificant role. Her involvement in family problems leaves very little energy and time to come out her shell and play a significant role in economic development.
5. **Lack of Information and Experience:** The lack of information and experience makes it very difficult for her to select technology, market and location, and also to tackle problems related to labor and finance. The Government realizing the need and importance of women entrepreneurs' participation in the contribution to the economy has offered some assistance, thereby trying to create a favourable climate for women entrepreneurs to play a significant role in the rapid development of India.
6. **Male Dominated Society:** Equal treatment to men and women is absent at the family level and social level. When a woman steps into the middle management or top management level, she has to face hostile reactions from her male colleagues, especially from those who are subordinates or at par with her. The male superiority ego complex creates a barrier in the pathway of success.
7. **Then comes the problem of liquidity and easy availability of finance:** As about half of all informed sector small enterprises world wide are run by women, access to bank credit is vital for them, since few women have personal savings available for investment. At present, women have are just marginally covered by the banking system. It has been estimated that only around 11 percent of the total borrowings are by women in India. Many factors have been responsible for this inadequate utilization of bank credit by women, e.g.
 - Inadequate size of loans
 - Margin money requirements
 - Tight repayment schedule
 - Time taken to process loans
 - Ignorance of banking procedure due to illiteracy

However to relieve these women from the vicious circle of indebtedness, exploitation and social disabilities and promoting self-employment amongst women, the nationalized banks and other financial institutions provide them credit at concessional terms. For providing training and extension services to the women entrepreneurs, the Industrial Development Bank

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formulated a scheme of organizing EDPs for the women entrepreneurs. Under this scheme, a subsidy of Rs. 10,000 per beneficiary was provided by the IDBI to cover expenditure incurred on training, post- training follow-up, consultancy and escort services. To meet the organizational deficiency, the Punjab National Bank established a special cell at its head office:

The immediate tasks of the cell are

- To monitor the progress made by the bank in financing women entrepreneurs.
- To collect and disseminate information to branches about the various facilities given by IDBI and government agencies to women entrepreneurs.
- To establish liaison with specialized agencies, voluntary organizations etc involved in this task.
- To organize entrepreneurial training programme for women entrepreneurs.
- To explore possibilities of bringing about specific schemes for women entrepreneurs.

Recommendations

- More awareness programmes should be conducted jointly by development agencies and voluntary agencies.
- Simple technology demonstrations and training be made available at different parts of the state by organizations like SISI and CFTRI.
- There should be a State Advisory Committee for development of entrepreneurship among women.
- Systematic enumeration of women entrepreneurs should be carried out and further registration of women entrepreneurs should have separate coding so that data can be generated without difficulty. Both Commercial Tax Department and the Industries Department should have such coding.
- The period of EDPs being conducted by various agencies is anywhere between three days to six weeks. Only a few of these are recognized for the purposes of incentives. There should be a separate nomenclature of those who are recognized or there should be a clear announcement to this effect as many of the participants in short term EDPs are now being refused the incentives.
- The age limits of 45 years for training in EDPs should be raised to so as many women start their enterprises late in their life at least at this point of time.
- The employment cause of 50% women should be removed from the definition of women entrepreneurs.



- There should be a better co – ordination between development agencies, voluntary agencies and financial institutions in putting together entrepreneurship development programmes.
- Preference in government purchases should be accorded to women entrepreneurs, especially items of downstream supplies.

The present trend does indicate qualitative and quantitative growth in terms of industrial production, exports, investments, modernization and up gradation of technology etc but there is need also to give shape to the policy frameworks adopted till now.

CONCLUSION

Today, there is a greater awakening among women. Given an opportunity, they will deliver the results. In education, they have not only excelled but also become top makers. Likewise, in office and industry, many have shown brilliant results. Even in rural India with education, women have shown better performance. Educating women is absolutely essential in straightening her personality. The need of the hour is to provide an opportunity in a conducive atmosphere free from gender differences. It is, therefore, encouragement of the growing intensity of motivation amongst educated young women for coming in the entrepreneurial stream and extends support with scientifically designed package of the technical and financial assistance.

However, the women of today will touch the magic of enlivening themselves and say,

“This far I have traveled, there are distances to travel but there are moments here and now where I can be.”

In the new order, women will put down roots of a family and discover the freedom of sailing in the open seas. The women will visualize a new horizon and identify directions and make tough decisions. In the cacophony of sounds echoing of the past the women will cross the threshold to listen to their own voices. The silence of centuries will find the first voice, which will beckon women to sail into the unknown and unchartered land to lay the foundations of their growth to contribute to a partnership.

Thus the next millennium offers a space beyond the present horizon where, instead of hope there is active engagement with the world, instead of dreams there are commitments, instead of aspirations there are choices, instead of ideals there are convictions. And there is the acknowledgement of one’s own uniqueness of identity. It is in this discovery that she can create and built an industrial empire from the first steps that she would have taken.

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