

Women Entrepreneurship In India – Problems And Prospects

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Abstract: Due to deep rooted traditions in Indian society where there is a male dominated sociological setup, it was never easy for women to achieve equal rights and position for themselves. It is a general belief in many cultures that the role of women is to build and maintain the homely affairs like task of fetching water, cooking and rearing children. Since the turn of the century, the status of women in India has been changing due to growing industrialization, globalization, and social legislation. Despite all social hurdles, Indian women today stand tall from the rest of the crowd and are applauded for their achievements in their respective fields. The transformation of social fabric of Indian society in terms of increased educational status of women and varied aspirations for better living necessitated a change in lifestyle of Indian women. Entrepreneurship has been a male-dominated phenomenon from the very early age, but time has changed the situation and brought women as today's most memorable and inspirational entrepreneurs. These women entrepreneurs are assertive, persuasive and willing to take risks. They have managed to survive in this cut-throat competition with their hard work, diligence, and perseverance. They are in no way contributing less than men in Nation's growth.

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, educated women do not want to limit their lives in the four walls of the house. They demand equal rights and respect from their partners and other family members. However, Indian women have to go a long way to achieve equal rights and position they demand because of deep rooted traditions in male-dominated Indian society. Women are considered weaker sex and always made to depend on men folk in their family and outside. The Indian culture has always considered them as subordinates and executors of decisions taken by male members in the basic family structure. While at least half of the brainpower on earth belongs to women, women remain perhaps the world's most underutilized resource. Despite all social hurdles, Indian is brimming with the success stories of women. Women have competed with men and successfully stood up with them in every walk of life and business is no exception for this. Ability to learn quickly, persuasiveness, willingness to take risks and chances, ability to motivate people, knowing how to win and lose gracefully are some of the strengths of the Indian women entrepreneurs.

II. CONCEPT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Women entrepreneur may be defined as the women or a group of women who initiate, organize, and operate a business enterprise. The government of India has defined women entrepreneurs as – an enterprise owned and controlled by women 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 entrepreneurs engaged in business due to push-and-pull factors which encourage women to have an independent occupation and stand on their own legs. A sense towards independent decision making for their life and career is the motivational factor behind this urge. Saddled with household chores and domestic responsibilities, women want to get independence. Under the influence of these factors, the women entrepreneurs choose a profession as a challenge and as an urge to do something new. Such a situation is described as pull factors while in push factors women engage in business activities due to family compulsion and the responsibility is thrust upon them.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Lall & Sahai (2008), conducted a comparative assessment of multi-dimensional issues and challenges of women entrepreneurship and family business. The study identified psychographic variables like degree of commitment, entrepreneurial challenges and future plan of expansion based on demographic variables. Through stratified random sampling and convenience sampling the data have been collected from women entrepreneurs working in urban area of Lucknow. The study identified business owners' characteristics as self perception, self esteem, entrepreneurial intensity and operational problem for future plans for growth and expansion. The study suggested that though there has been considerable growth in number of women opting to work in family owned business but they still have lower status and face more operational challenges in running business.

Bernard and Victor (2013) examined the growth of women entrepreneurs in Dares Salam city of Tanzania on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It used a sample of 130 women entrepreneurs and simple random sampling technique for the selection of sample. The study found that a major strength was the need for financial independence for women entrepreneur. It also observed that the major opportunity was the desire to own boss which leads to women entrepreneurship. It further found that the weakness behind most women entrepreneurs' failure was lack of education and the major threat to be the pressure of childcare in the family.

Jayan (2013) analyzed women entrepreneurship in MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) and the relationship between industry-related factors and success of entrepreneurs with special reference to Coimbatore city. The study identified that the factors which motivate women to become a successful entrepreneur are achievement, motivation, and human relation.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- ✓ To study the Current Scenario of women entrepreneurs in India.
- ✓ The study the Problems and Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in India.

CURRENT SCENARIO OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA

Women in India are generally perceived as homemakers with little to do with economy or commerce. In Modern India, more and more women are taking up entrepreneurial activities, especially in medium and small scale enterprises.

Even as women are receiving education, they face the prospect of unemployment. In this background, self employment is regarded as a cure to generate income. The Indian government recognizes the need for women to be a part of the mainstream of economic development. Women entrepreneurship is seen as an effective strategy to solve the problems of rural and urban poverty. Traditionally, women in India have been generally found in low productive sectors such as agriculture and household activities.

Human Development Report 2017 ranks India 125 of 159 countries in Gender Inequality Index (GII). As per 2011 Census, women constitute nearly half of India's population but around 77% of them belong to rural area and are involved in agriculture.

ASSOCHAM in its recent statement has said, "it is very necessary to create entrepreneurial and employment opportunities to encourage Women Empowerment in the real sense, so that women become financially empowered. It is disappointing to know that Female Labour Force Participation in India has decreased by 10 percent in the last decade.

Following are the Female Labour Force Participation (FLFC) rates in BRICS countries:

CHINA	-	64%
BRAZIL	-	59%
RUSSIA	-	57%
SOUTH AFRICA	-	45%
INDIA	-	27%

Even though the enterprise network in the hands of women entrepreneurs is spreading at a fast pace in India, there are many hurdles and obstacles they still face in their course of action towards it. Along with gender inequality, question raised by the society on potential of women to run an enterprise successfully still remains one of the most widespread challenges they face today. This is one of the most important reasons India holds 70th rank out of 77 countries in International Women Entrepreneurial Index.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA

Though in practice, the same entrepreneurial process is followed for both men and women, but there are many problems and challenges, which are being faced by women entrepreneurs in India. These problems and challenges are:

- ✓ **MALE DOMINATED SOCIETY:** The utmost constraint to women entrepreneurs is that they are women. A male dominant social order is the biggest hurdle to them in their way towards business success. Male members consider it to be a big risk funding the ventures run by women.
- ✓ **DISTRUST IN THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ABILITIES OF WOMEN:** The financial institutions do not trust the entrepreneurial abilities of women. The bankers put impracticable and absurd securities to get loan to women entrepreneurs. According to the report by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), "despite evidence that women's loan repayment rates are higher than men's, women still face more difficulties in obtaining credit, "often due to biased attitudes of banks and informal lending groups.
- ✓ **INADEQUATE FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND WORKING CAPITAL:** Entrepreneurs generally need financial assistance of some kind to take off their ventures, be it a formal bank loan or money from a savings account. The women entrepreneurs are suffering from inadequate financial resources and working capital. They do not have access to external funds due to their incapability to provide tangible security. Very few women have tangible property in hand.

- ✓ *FAMILY OBLIGATIONS*: Women's family obligations also restrict them from becoming effective entrepreneurs in both developed and developing nations. "Having primary responsibility for children, home and older dependent family members, few women can devote all their time and energy to their business." The financial institutions dishearten women entrepreneurs on the belief that they can at anytime leave their business and become housewives again. The consequence is that they are compelled to depend on their own savings and loan from relatives and family friends.
- ✓ *MORE IMPORTANCE TO FAMILY TIES AND RELATIONSHIP*: Indian women give more importance to family ties and relationships. Married women have to make a reasonable equilibrium between business and home. Moreover, the success of a business depends on the support of the family members to married women who are engaged in the business process and management.
- ✓ *LACK OF MANAGERIAL SKILLS*: Another dispute is that women entrepreneurs have low-level management skills. They have to rest on office staffs and intermediaries to get things done, especially the marketing and sales side of business.
- ✓ *HARD COMPETITION BETWEEN MALE AND FEMALE*: The male-female competition is another reason which develops hurdles in the path of women entrepreneurs in the business management process. In spite of the fact that women entrepreneurs are good in keeping their services prompt and delivery in time, due to lack of organizational skills compared to male entrepreneurs women have to face constraints from competition.
- ✓ *LOW MOBILITY*: The confidence to travel across day and night and even different regions and states are less found in women as compared to male entrepreneurs. This shows the low level of freedom of expression and freedom of mobility of women entrepreneurs.
- ✓ *LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF AVAILABILITY OF RAW MATERIALS*: Information of different sources of raw-material availability and high negotiation skills are the basic prerequisites to run a business. Receiving the raw materials from different sources with discount prices is the factor that defines the profit margin. Lack of knowledge of availability of the raw materials and low-level negotiation and bargaining skills are the factors, which affect women entrepreneurs' business adventures.
- ✓ *LACK OF EDUCATION*: Knowledge of modern technological changes, know how, and education level of the person are the major factors that affect business. The literacy rate of women in India is found a low level compared to male population. Many women in developing nations lack the education required to build up successful entrepreneurship. They are unaware of new technologies or inexpert in their use, and often incapable to do research and gain necessary training.
- ✓ *INABILITY TO TAKE RISKS*: Low-level risk taking attitude is another factor affecting women entrepreneurs. Investing money, maintaining the operations and ploughing back money from surplus generation requires high risk taking attitude, courage and confidence.
- ✓ *MANAGING EMPLOYEES*: Managing employees is another challenge that women entrepreneurs in India face. Finding and retaining good employees is vital for the success of a business, but can be problematic for women entrepreneurs in India. Since women-owned business tend to be smaller, they are often less likely to provide job security and retain good talent.
- ✓ *INEFFICIENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR MARKETING AND SALES*: For marketing their products, women entrepreneurs are frequently at the mercy of the middlemen who pocket the chunk of profit. Further, women entrepreneurs find it tough to capture the market and make their products popular. This problem is all the more serious in the case of food production and processing ventures.

IV. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that Women Entrepreneurs who were traditionally kept behind the four walls of their houses, now in modern society are capable of managing both their family and business. Though they face many problems and challenges in their path of becoming a successful entrepreneur, the government has taken many initiatives for the growth of women entrepreneurs. Today, we are in a better position wherein women participation in the field of entrepreneurship is increasing at a considerable rate. Women sector occupies nearly 45% of the Indian population. At this juncture, effective steps are needed to provide entrepreneurial awareness, orientation, and skill development programs to women. The role of Women Entrepreneurs in economic development is also being recognized and steps are being taken to promote women entrepreneurship. From these suggestions, it is quite visible that for development and promotion of women entrepreneurship in the region, there is a need for multidimensional approach from different sectors, namely from the government side, financial institutions, individual women entrepreneurs and many more, for a flexible integrated and coordinated specific approach. The principal factor in developing entrepreneurship among women is not in terms of infrastructure, financial assistance or identifying an enterprise, but it is a question of clearing the ground for their movement into entrepreneurship. It is of utmost importance today that women come out of the confinement of their homes and instead of playing only a secondary role in the society they become self-reliant and self-respecting enterprising people. Though there several factors contributing to the emergence of women as entrepreneurs, the sustained and coordinated effort from all dimensions would pave the way for the women moving into entrepreneurial activity thus contributing to the social and economic development of the members of the family and thereby gaining equality and freedom for themselves. Finally, it can be said that there is a long way to go for women entrepreneurs in India and their success is the success of Indian society.

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