

Entrepreneurship and Woman Empowerment in Indian Economy – A Study

***Sachin.S.Malagi, Lecturer in Commerce, Rotary P.U.College, Ranebennur**

Abstract

The educated Indian women have to go a long way to achieve equal rights and position because traditions are deep rooted in Indian society where the sociological set up has been a male dominated one. Despite all the social hurdles, Indian women stand tall from the rest of the crowd and are applauded for their achievements in their respective field. 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. The educated women do not want to limit their lives in the four walls of the house. They demand equal respect from their partners. However, Indian women have to go a long way to achieve equal rights and position because traditions are deep rooted in Indian society where the sociological set up has been a male dominated one. Women are considered as weaker sex and always made to depend on men folk in their family and outside, throughout their life. The Indian culture made them only subordinates and executors of the decisions made by other male members, in the basic family structure. While at least half the brainpower on earth belongs to women, women remain perhaps the world's most underutilized resource. Despite all the social hurdles, India is brimming with the success stories of women. They stand tall from the rest of the crowd and are applauded for their achievements in their respective field. 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. She has competed with man and successfully stood up with him in every walk of life and business is no exception for this. These women leaders are assertive, persuasive and willing to take risks. They managed to survive and succeed in this cut throat competition with their hard work, diligence and perseverance. Ability to learn quickly from her abilities, her persuasiveness, open style of problem solving, willingness to take risks and chances, ability to motivate people, knowing how to win and lose gracefully are the strengths of the Indian women entrepreneurs.

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Key words: Indian economy, women empowerment, sufficiency, skill, service sector, banking.

Introduction

In this golden age of globalization, digitalization and start-up booms, India is clearly seeing a revolution vis-à-vis women entrepreneurs. The sixth economic census released by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) highlights that women constitute around 14% of the total entrepreneurship in India. Today's women entrepreneurs do not

come only from the established business families or from the higher-income sections of the population, they come from all walks of life and from all parts of the country. From running sports media firms to construction companies and security and detective agencies – women are dabbling into fields that have traditionally been bastions of male domination. An increasing number of startups and new businesses have been founded in India over the last decade, the majority of them by men. While many Indian women have entrepreneurial ambitions, it is often more difficult for them to succeed. This brief examines the impediments to greater participation of female founders in India's economy by first gathering available data to describe the situation of women entrepreneurs in the country. It then explores the causes of low female entrepreneurship rates, primary of which are unconscious biases, low confidence in business skills, difficult access to finance and networks, a lack of family support and child-care options, as well as insufficient safety in work and public spaces. The paper offers a set of recommendations that can help push women's entrepreneurial empowerment.

The Indian economy has grown steadily over the last decade, and there has been a parallel surge in the number of startups and new businesses in the country. A majority of these have been founded by men. While many Indian women have ambitions towards entrepreneurship, it is often more difficult for them to succeed. In fact, India has been found to be in a group of countries where women business owners (as well as women leaders and professionals) struggle with less favourable conditions, pronounced cultural biases, and a lack of business resources such as finances, capital, training, and development.

A society in which women cannot realise their full potential loses out on the significant potential for innovation, economic growth, and job creation. For instance, a recent study showed that in India, measures to close the gender gap⁴ could lead to a 6.8-percent gain in GDP. Another study⁵ estimated that advancing women's equality in India could boost its GDP by \$0.7 trillion in 2025 or 16 percent as compared to the 'business as usual' scenario. Moreover, entrepreneurship remains critical to harness the economic potential of women and thus, achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs) by 2030.

This issue brief seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the situation of women entrepreneurs in India. To this end, it gathers information on the share of businesses that are started by Indian women, and in which sectors and states they are active. It explores the underlying reasons that make it difficult for Indian women to succeed, and offers recommendations for pushing women's entrepreneurial empowerment.

Objective:

This paper intends to study the role of women empowerment and their entrepreneurial abilities in the Indian economy of the 21st century

CONCEPT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Women Entrepreneurs 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 per cent of the capital and giving at least 51 per cent 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 stands on their own legs. A sense towards independent decision-making on 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 engaged in business activities due to family compulsion and the responsibility is thrust upon them.

REASONS FOR WOMEN BECOMING ENTREPRENEURS

The glass ceilings are shattered and women are found indulged in every line of business. The entry of women into business in India is traced out as an extension of their kitchen activities, mainly 3P's, Pickle, Powder and Pappad. But with the spread of education and passage of time women started shifting from 3P's to modern 3E's i.e., Energy, Electronics and Engineering. 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. The challenges and opportunities provided to the women of digital era are growing rapidly that the job seekers are turning into job creators. Many women start a business due to some traumatic event, such as divorce, discrimination due to pregnancy or the corporate glass ceiling, the health of a family member, or economic reasons such as a layoff. But a new talent pool of women entrepreneurs is forming today, as more women opt to leave corporate world to chart their own destinies. They are flourishing as designers, interior decorators, exporters, publishers, garment manufacturers and still exploring new avenues of economic participation. The following flow chart shows the reasons for women becoming entrepreneurs

REASONS FOR SLOW PROGRESS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA

The problems and constraints experienced by women entrepreneurs have resulted in restricting the expansion of women entrepreneurship. The major barriers encountered by women entrepreneurs are: § The greatest deterrent to women entrepreneurs is that they are women.

A kind of patriarchal- male dominant social order is the building block to them in their way towards business success. Male members think it a big risk financing the ventures run by women § Male chauvinism is still prevalent in many parts of the country yet. Women are looked upon as —ablal i.e. weak in all respects. In a male dominated society, women are not treated equal to men that act as a barrier to woman's entry into business. § Women entrepreneurs have to face a stiff competition with the men entrepreneurs who easily involve in the promotion and development area and carry out easy marketing of their products with both the organized sector and their male counterparts. Such a competition ultimately results in the liquidation of women entrepreneurs. § Lack of self-confidence, will-power, strong mental outlook and optimistic attitude amongst women creates a fear from committing mistakes while doing their piece of work. The family members and the society are reluctant to stand beside their entrepreneurial growth. § Women in India lead a protected life. They are even less educated, economically not stable nor self-dependent which reduce their ability to bear risks and uncertainties involved in a business unit, § The old and outdated social outlook to stop women from entering in the field of entrepreneurship is one of the reasons for their failure. They are under a social pressure which restrains them to prosper and achieve success in the field of entrepreneurship § Unlike men, women mobility in India is highly limited due to many reasons. A single women asking for

room is still looked with suspicion. Cumbersome exercise involved in starting with an enterprise coupled with officials humiliating attitude towards women compels them to give up their spirit of surviving in enterprise altogether. § Women's family obligations also bar them from becoming successful entrepreneurs in both developed and developing nations. The financial institutions discourage women entrepreneurs on the belief that they can at any time leave their business and become housewives again. § Indian women give more emphasis to family ties and relationships. Married women have to make a fine balance between business and family. The business success also depends on the support the family members extended to women in the business process and management. Women's family and personal obligations are sometimes a great barrier for succeeding in business career. Only few women are able to manage both home and business efficiently, devoting enough time to perform all their responsibilities in priority. § The educational level and family background of husbands also influences women participation in the field of enterprise. § Absence of proper support, cooperation and back-up for women by their own family members and the outside world people force them to drop the idea of excelling in the enterprise field. They are always making many pessimistic feelings to be aroused in their minds and making them feel that family and not business is a place meant for them. § Many women take the training by attending the Entrepreneurial Development programme without an entrepreneurial bent of mind. Women who are imparted training by various institutes must be verified on account of aptitude through the tests, interviews, etc. § High production cost of some business operations adversely affects the development of women entrepreneurs. The installations of new machineries during expansion of the productive capacity and like similar factors discourage the women entrepreneurs from venturing into new areas. § Women controlled business are often small and it is not always easy for women to access the information they need regarding technology, training, innovative schemes, concessions, alternative markets, etc. Just a small percentage of women entrepreneurs avail the assistance of technology and they too remain confined to word processing software in the computer. They hardly make use of advanced software available like statistical software SAP, Accounting Package like TALLY, Animation software 3D MAX, internet, etc. § Lack of awareness about the financial assistance in the form of incentives, loans, schemes etc. by the institutions in the financial sector. So the sincere efforts taken towards women entrepreneurs may not reach the entrepreneurs in rural and backward areas.

§ Achievement motivation of the women folk found less compared to male members. The low level of education and confidence leads to low level achievement and advancement motivation among women folk to engage in business operations and running a business concern. Apart from the above discussed problems there may occur other series of serious problems faced by women entrepreneurs as improper infrastructural facilities, high cost of production, attitude of people of society towards the women modern business outlook, low needs of enterprise.

Women also tend to start business about ten years later than men, on average. Motherhood, lack of management experience, and traditional socialization has all been cited as reasons for delayed entry into entrepreneurial careers.

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE GROWTH OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Right efforts from all areas are required in the development of women entrepreneurs and their greater participation in the entrepreneurial activities. Entrepreneurship basically implies being in control of one's life and activities and women entrepreneurs need to be given confidence, independence, and mobility to come out of their paradoxes. The following measures are suggested to empower the women to seize various opportunities and face challenges in business.

§ There should be a continuous attempt to inspire, encourage, motivate and cooperate women entrepreneurs. § An Awareness programme should be conducted on a mass scale with the intention of creating awareness among women about the various areas to conduct business. § Attempts should be there to enhance the standards of education of women in general as well making effective provisions for their training, practical experience and personality development programmes, to improve their over-all personality standards. § Organize training programmes to develop professional competencies in managerial, leadership, marketing, financial, production process, profit planning, maintaining books of accounts and other skills. This will encourage women to undertake business. § Vocational training to be extended to women community that enables them to understand the production process and production management. § Skill development to be done in women's polytechnics and industrial training institutes. Skills are put to work in training-cum-production workshops. § Educational institutes should tie up with various government and non-government agencies to assist in entrepreneurship development mainly to plan business projects. § International, National, Local trade fairs, Industrial exhibitions, seminars and conferences should be organized to help women to facilitate interaction with other women entrepreneurs. § Women in business should be offered soft loans & subsidies for encouraging them into industrial activities. The financial institutions should provide more working capital assistance both for small scale venture and large scale ventures. § Making provision of micro credit system and enterprise credit system to the women entrepreneurs at local level. The weaker section could raise funds through various schemes and incentives provided by the government to develop entrepreneurs in the state. E.g. the Prime ministers Rozgar Yojana, The Khadi and Rural village industries scheme, etc. § In the initial stages women entrepreneurs may face problems but they must persevere, believe in themselves and not give up mid way. § Attempts by various NGO's and government organizations to spread information about policies, plans and strategies on the development of women in the field of industry, trade and commerce. Women entrepreneurs should utilize the various schemes provided by the Government. § Women should try to upgrade themselves in the changing times by adapting the latest technology benefits. Women must be educated and trained constantly to acquire the skills and knowledge in all the functional areas of business management. This can facilitate women to excel in decision making process and develop a good business network § Self help groups of women entrepreneurs to mobilize resources and pooling capital funds, in order to help the women in the field of industry, trade and commerce can also play a positive role to solve this problem. § Women's entrepreneurship must be examined both at the individual level (i.e. the choice of becoming self-employed) and at the firm level (the performance of women owned and managed firms) in order to fully understand the differences between men's and women's entrepreneurship. § To establish all India forums to discuss the problems, grievances, issues, and filing complaints against constraints or shortcomings towards the economic progress path of women entrepreneurs and giving suitable decisions in the favor of women entrepreneurs and taking strict stand against the policies or strategies that obstruct the path of economic development of such group of women entrepreneurs.

Thus by adopting the following aforesaid measures in letter and spirit the problems associated with women can be solved. Entrepreneurship is not a bed of roses to women. Women participation in many kinds of economic activities to complement to their family income, their participation in no way reduces their family duties. The task of women has become more tedious and full of challenges. Let us all make efforts to help women rediscover her.

STEPS TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT

Development of women has been a policy objective of the government since independence. Until the 70s the concept of women's development was mainly welfare oriented. In 1970s, there was a shift from welfare approach to development approach that recognised the mutually reinforcing nature of the process of development. The 80s adopted a multi-disciplinary

approach with an emphasis on three core areas of health, education and employment. Women were given priorities in all the sectors including SSI sector. Government and non government bodies have paid increasing attention to women's economic contribution through self employment and industrial ventures.

The First Five-Year Plan (1951-56) envisaged a number of welfare measures for women. Establishment of the Central Social Welfare Board, organization of Mahila Mandals and the Community Development Programmes were a few steps in this direction. In the second Five-Year Plan (1956-61), the empowerment of women was closely linked with the overall approach of intensive agricultural development programmes. The Third and Fourth Five-Year Plans (1961-66 and 1969-74) supported female education as a major welfare measure. The Fifth Five-Year Plan (1974-79) emphasized training of women, who were in need of income and protection. This plan coincided with International Women's Decade and the submission of Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India. In 1976, Women's welfare and Development Bureau was set up under the Ministry of Social Welfare. The Sixth Five-Year Plan (1980-85) saw a definite shift from welfare to development. It recognized women's lack of access to resources as a critical factor impeding their growth. The Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985-90) emphasized the need for gender equality and empowerment.

For the first time, emphasis was placed upon qualitative aspects such as inculcation of confidence, generation of awareness with regards to rights and training in skills for better employment. The Eight Five-Year Plan (1992-97) focused on empowering women, especially at the Grass Roots Level, through Panchayati Raj Institutions. The Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002) adopted a strategy of Women's Component Plan, under which not less than 30 percent of funds/ benefits were earmarked for women related sectors.

The Tenth Five-Year Plan (2002-07) aims at empowering women through translating the recently adopted National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001) into action and ensuring Survival, Protection and Development of women and children through rights based approach. At present, the Government of India has over 27 schemes for women operated by different departments and ministries.

Some of these are:

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) Khadi And Village Industries Commission (KVIC) Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM) Prime Minister's Rojgar Yojana (PMRY) Entrepreneurial Development programme (EDPs) Management Development programmes Women's Development Corporations (WDCs) Marketing of Non-Farm Products of Rural Women (MAHIMA) Assistance to Rural Women in Non-Farm Development (ARWIND) schemes Trade Related Entrepreneurship Assistance and Development (TREAD) Working Women's Forum Indira Mahila Yojana Indira Mahila Kendra Mahila Samiti Yojana Mahila Vikas Nidhi Micro Credit Scheme Rashtriya Mahila Kosh SIDBI's Mahila Udyam Nidhi Mahila Vikas Nidhi SBI's Stree Shakti Scheme NGO's Credit Schemes Micro & Small Enterprises Cluster Development Programmes (MSE-CDP).

National Banks for Agriculture and Rural Development's Schemes Rajiv Gandhi Mahila Vikas Pariyojana (RGMVP) Priyadarshini Project- A programme for Rural Women Empowerment and Livelihood in Mid Gangetic Plains' NABARD-KfW-SEWA Bank project Exhibitions for women, under promotional package for Micro & Small enterprises approved by CCEA under marketing support The efforts of government and its different agencies are ably supplemented by NGOs that are playing an equally important role in facilitating women empowerment. Despite concerted efforts of governments and

NGOs there are certain gaps. Of course we have come a long way in empowering women yet the future journey is difficult and demanding.

Conclusion

It can be said that today we are in a better position wherein women participation in the field of entrepreneurship is increasing at a considerable rate. Efforts are being taken at the economy as brought promise of equality of opportunity in all spheres to the Indian women and laws guaranteed equal rights of participation in political process and equal opportunities and rights in education and employment were enacted. But unfortunately, the government sponsored development activities have benefited only a small section of women i.e. the urban middle class women. 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 entrepreneur in economic development is also being recognized and steps are being taken to promote women entrepreneurship. Resurgence of entrepreneurship is the need of the hour emphasizing on educating women strata of population, spreading awareness and consciousness amongst women to outshine in the enterprise field, making them realize their strengths, and important position in the society and the great contribution they can make for their industry as well as the entire economy. Women entrepreneurship must be moulded properly with entrepreneurial traits and skills to meet the changes in trends, challenges global markets and also be competent enough to sustain and strive for excellence in the entrepreneurial arena.

If every citizen works with such an attitude towards respecting the important position occupied by women in society and understanding their vital role in the modern business field too, then very soon we can pre-estimate our chances of out beating our own conservative and rigid thought process which is the biggest barrier in our country's development process. We always viewed that a smart woman can pick up a job any day, but if she becomes an entrepreneur she can provide a livelihood to 10 more women at least..!! Highly educated, technically sound and professionally qualified women should be encouraged for managing their own business, rather than dependent on wage employment outlets. The unexplored talents of young women can be identified, trained and used for various types of industries to increase the productivity in the industrial sector

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