

Women Entrepreneurship Issues, Challenges And Empowerment Through Self Help Groups

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ABSTARCT: Entrepreneurship is considered as one of the most important factors contributing to the economic development of the society. Entrepreneurs have been considered instrumental in initiating and sustaining socio-economic development. In India, concept of women entrepreneurship is of recent origin. Women have become aware about their rights and situations and entered in different fields of business. They have established their own successful business empires. They are contributing towards the growth of economy and improvement of their socio-economic conditions. Government of India has given due importance to women empowerment in the country and several schemes has been introduced for the upliftment of women entrepreneurs. Women workforce ratio in the country is increasing due to the increase in the women literacy rate in India.

The concept of Self Help Groups (SHGs) is proved to be boon for the rural women in some states of India. It has not only raised their income but also their social status. This paper particularly focuses on various issues pertaining to women entrepreneur's issues, challenges and future perspective in India.

The women in rural areas are showing interest to become entrepreneurs because there is lot of financial facilities from the SHGs. SHGs are self-governed with decisions about production and marketing taken collectively, although the group leader is responsible for identifying potential marketing centers and consumer in formal groups. Informal groups empower rural women to manage rural industries and make decisions collectively for their common economic interests. The encouragement of women towards entrepreneurship leads to the development of the nation as they constitute half of the population. The study reveals the reasons for which they wanted to become entrepreneurs, the problems faced by them in the context of carrying out the entrepreneurial activities and suggestions to overcome the problems.

I. 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. Today women are aware of their own traits, rights and also the work situations. Women

Entrepreneurs are having confidence to initiate, organize and operate a business enterprise. This paper highlights the Self help Groups an instrument of the development of women entrepreneurship.

Since ages India has been men-dominated country. But, time is changing now. Women in India have outraged the fact that since hundreds of years they had been following the orders of men. They now know their rights and duties and with the spreading awareness amongst the women they are now no less than the men. They are walking with men at the same pace in each and every field.

Poverty and unemployment are the major problems of any under- developed country, to which India is no exception, hr India, at the end of the ninth five year plan 26.1 per cent of the population was living below poverty line. In the rural areas 27.1 per cent of the population was living under poverty. The overall unemployment rate is estimated to 7.32 per cent. The female unemployment rate is 8.5 per cent. The rate of growth of women's unemployment in rural areas is 9.8 per cent. This is because of the low growth rate of new and productive employment. At the end of the ninth plan various schemes were implemented to reduce poverty and to promote gainful employment. But the more attractive scheme with less effort (finance) is that of self-help groups. It is a tool to remove poverty and spurt up rural development

II. SELF HELP GROUP AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP:

Self help group and entrepreneurship are very much linked together, self help group draws mainly from the motivation and built confidence as being the part of the group. The entrepreneurship development is directly linked to the creation of the Self Help Group. The successful creation of the SHG eventually bolsters women to take initiative of an entrepreneur. Woman, while being in the family and limiting self from interacting with the large world and so with opportunities, are being provided with the financial, social and economic support from the group of self help, if not family. Virtual presence of the other group members help woman to come out of the gender segregated patriarchal walls of limitation. The outside world does provide an industrial climate to women where they can assert for self and start venture of their choice. The support of SHG also ensures the financial backing from the group and bank with which the SHG was associated with. Also on the other hand, the state and central government also plan for the upliftment of the processes of equitable economic development which can be gained through the active participation of women in either already job places for creating job for self and others. Hence, the plans of the state government for microfinance and other initiation for creating an atmosphere for the development empower women to take part in the initiatives of entrepreneurship.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The study was planned with the following objectives:

1. To evaluate the factors responsible for encouraging women to become entrepreneurs
2. To understand the problems and prospectus encountered by women
3. To suggest suitable measures for strengthening women entrepreneurs

IV. REASONS FOR BECOMING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS:

The entry of women into business in India is traced out as an extension of their kitchen activities. 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 and are flourishing as designers; interior decorators, exporters, publishers, garment manufacturers and still exploring new avenues of economic participation. The following are the reasons to women becoming entrepreneurs

- Innovative thinking
- Education and qualification
- Self identity and social status
- Employment to others
- Role model to others
- Government programmes and policies
- Support of family members
- Need for additional income
- Family occupation
- Economically independent

V. CHALLENGES OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS:

Recent surveys indicate that the gender gap in entrepreneurship persists at different levels and varying widely in India. Yet a quick scan of current research suggests that there are some commonalities as to the proximate and ultimate determinants of these differences:-

1. Access to financial resources

Even though the literature is not conclusive, a common challenge for women to establish and run a business is access and control over finance. Women entrepreneurs appear to have less access to external sources of capital than men when securing finances.

2. Inadequate training and access to information

One challenge often mentioned in research on women entrepreneurs in developing countries is that they enjoy a relatively low level of education and skill training. This, combined with lack of career guidance, generally seems to limit their access to various publically and privately offered support services including business development services and information on business growth. Others found that a lack of experience and skills also accounted for the fact that

women entrepreneurs had a preference in industry orientation and thus were less well represented in industrial activities. In particular professional agencies have not been efficient in disseminating information to entrepreneurs, and that the training and assistance provided by support services do not meet the specific needs of women entrepreneurs. Similar challenges identified in other developing countries are a lack of access to ICTs, insufficient entrepreneurial and management skills, together with problems in finding the markets and distribution networks.

3. Work-family interface

Another more recently frequent mentioned challenge is the combination of the business with family responsibilities, which may undermine the success of the business. Women entrepreneurs indicate that they deploy several strategies to cope with the double workload and challenges deriving from combining business with family but while self-employment may provide flexibility.

4. Women's safety and gender based violence

Others identify the issue of safety and protection of women entrepreneurs, especially those operating in the informal economy. Even though less documented in academic research, there are numerous stories of killings, harassment and rape of female vendors and micro-business owners. This results in stress, constant fear and not having the opportunity to freely choose your business location and time of opening hours which seriously limits the chances and choices of becoming a successful entrepreneur for women in some developing country.

5. Lack of societal support

Furthermore, research point out that normative constraints and societal attitudes based on cultural and religious beliefs in some countries are not supportive of the work of women in general or that of women in entrepreneurship in particular. In a variety of countries, the perception is that entrepreneurship is an appropriate career choice for men and not women, or only for the poor and not the educated, which in most cases are women. These perceptions are mostly based on the association of entrepreneurship with traditional male stereotypes.

6. Legal barriers and procedures

Varying across countries, the lack of government support in terms of policy, laws and services has been identified as a barrier for women entrepreneurs. Even though this varies greatly across countries, most research indicates that regulations, taxation and legal barriers can pose serious obstacles for running and starting a business. This may affect both men and women to a certain extent.

VI. OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Education is a boon to mankind, while lack of education to a person is a bane now-a-days throughout the world, we can observe that the ratio of women entrepreneurs is growing tremendously. The emergence as well as development of women entrepreneurs is quite visible in India and their over-all contribution to Indian economy is also very significant. Today the role of Women entrepreneur in economic development is inevitable because women are entering not only in selected professions but also in professions like trade, industry and engineering. The industrial structure and the enterprises are undergoing a radical change. Information Technology has transformed the very technique of doing business. Individually, business ownership provides women with the independence they crave and with economic and social success they need. Nationally, business ownership has great importance for future economic prosperity. Globally,

women are enhancing, directing, and changing the face of how business is done today. Ultimately, female business owners must be recognized for who they are, what they do, and how significantly they impact the world's global economy. ·

Women should be considered as specific target group for all development programmes. Govt. should extend better educational facilities and schemes to women folk. Adequate training programs on management skills should be provided to women community. Encourage women's participation in decision making. Vocational training should be extended to women community to enable them to understand the production process and management. · Training on professional competence and leadership skills should be extended to women entrepreneurs. Activities in which women are trained should focus on their marketability and profitability. State Finance Corporations and financing institutions should permit by statute to extend purely trade related finance to women entrepreneurs. And lastly women's development corporation has to gain access to open-ended financing.

VII. WOMAN ENTREPRENEUR EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA:

Women have survived so far. They weren't killed before they could take their first breath, they are not asked to stop studying and they had the freedom to dream and to follow their dreams. But does that mean they are really empowered? Empowering women is giving the right to be on the streets, allowing the same access hours. It's not chastising and not feeling that we need to be taken care of and to be helped. When it comes to choosing to drop a friend off at her house, waiting outside for the light to switch on at her window and on the other hand to not assume that the girl is an idiot who cannot see herself home, she asked the audience to choose who would be a better friend And defying the popular answer, she chose the latter. Being women, she tend to assume that she need protection, that she is not strong enough or brave enough to stand up alone. But women need to get their identity right and understand that they don't have to be protected, that they can be smart, beautiful and independent...all at the same time. There are quite a few differences between men and women when it comes to entrepreneurship. Men mostly become entrepreneurs with the end aim being to make money. Women tend to create something to make a positive impact on the world. Women bring to the table a specific skill set, be it stronger communication skills or better listening skills. Typical women entrepreneurs tend to be a little risk averse, aiming at slow and steady growth, also tending to help empower other women in the process. Bridging skill gaps, social and cultural gaps...letting a woman know that she is in no way inferior to others, all of this will help ensure empowerment of women and this help make the women entrepreneur more empowered.

VIII. WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Women entrepreneurs need to be encouraged positively in terms of understanding the reality of entrepreneurship with exceptional potential. They have to be directed in a righty way to come up with lot of ideas into their focus. Appropriate efforts to be taken into account for effective development of women entrepreneurs.

- Consider women as specific target group for all developmental programmes.
- Better educational facilities and schemes should be extended to women folk from government part. Adequate training programme on management skills to be provided to women community. Encourage women's participation in decision-making.

- 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.
- Training on professional competence and leadership skill to be extended to women entrepreneurs. Training and counseling on a large scale of existing women entrepreneurs to remove psychological causes like lack of self-confidence and fear of success.
- Counseling through the aid of committed NGOs, psychologists, managerial experts and technical personnel should be provided to existing and emerging women entrepreneurs.
- Continuous monitoring and improvement of training programmes.
- Activities in which women are trained should focus on their marketability and profitability. Making provision of marketing and sales assistance from government part.
- To encourage more passive women entrepreneurs the Women training programme should be organized that taught to recognize her own psychological needs and express them.
- State finance corporations and financing institutions should permit by statute to extend purely trade related finance to women entrepreneurs.
- Women's development corporations have to gain access to open-ended financing.
- 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.
- Repeated gender sensitization programmes should be held to train financiers to treat women with dignity and respect as persons in their own right.
- Infrastructure, in the form of industrial plots and sheds, to set up industries is to be provided by state run agencies.
- Industrial estates could also provide marketing outlets for the display and sale of products made by women.
- A Women Entrepreneur's Guidance Cell set up to handle the various problems of women entrepreneurs all over the state.
- District Industries Centres and Single Window Agencies should make use of assisting women in their trade and business guidance.
- Programmes for encouraging entrepreneurship among women are to be extended at local level. Training in entrepreneurial attitudes should start at the high school level through well-designed courses, which build confidence through behavioral games.
- More governmental schemes to motivate women entrepreneurs to engage in small scale and large-scale business ventures.
- Involvement of Non Governmental Organizations in women entrepreneurial training programmes and counseling.

IX. STATUS OF SHG IN IDIA:

The total number of Self Help Groups (SHGs) promoted under National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) was 1864742 as on 31.03.2014. Their number increased to 2305513 as on 31.07.2015, recording a growth of 440771 SHGs as compared to 31.03.2014. In percentage terms, the progress made in the number of SHGs between 31.03.2014 and 31.07.2015 was 23.64%.

The number of predominantly SC Self Help Groups (SHGs) promoted was 285580 as on 31.03.2014. Their number increased to 394041 as on 31.07.2015, recording a growth of 108461

SHGs as compared to 31.03.2014. In percentage terms, the progress made in the number of SHGs between 31.03.2014 and 31.07.2015 was 37.98%.

The number of predominantly ST Self Help Groups (SHGs) promoted was 128885 as on 31.03.2014. Their number increased to 195820 as on 31.07.2015, recording a growth of 66935 SHGs as compared to 31.03.2014. In percentage terms, the progress made in the number of SHGs between 31.03.2014 and 31.07.2015 was 51.93%.

The number of predominantly Minority Self Help Groups (SHGs) promoted was 81900 as on 31.03.2014. Their number increased to 117177 as on 31.07.2015, recording a growth of 35277 SHGs as compared to 31.03.2014. In percentage terms, the progress made in the number of SHGs between 31.03.2014 and 31.07.2015 was 43.07%.

The number of predominantly PWD Self Help Groups (SHGs) promoted was 19900 as on 31.03.2014. Their number increased to 26764 as on 31.07.2015, recording a growth of 6864 SHGs as compared to 31.03.2014. In percentage terms, the progress made in the number of SHGs between 31.03.2014 and 31.07.2015 was 34.49%.

The number of Village Organisation (VOs) promoted under National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) was 119688 as on 31.03.2014. Their number increased to 147567 as on 31.07.2015, recording a growth of 27879 VOs as compared to 31.03.2014. In percentage terms, the progress made in the number of VOs between 31.03.2014 and 31.07.2015 was 23.29%.

Note: Original Source: Ministry of Rural Development and also published in statistical year book 2016 by MOSPI.

Resource Title: Physical and Financial Progress under National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) as on 31.07.2015

X. CONCLUSION

The challenges and opportunities provided to the women in this digital era are growing rapidly fantastic rather job seekers. They are flourishing as designers, interior decorators, exporters, publishers, garment manufacturers and still exploring new avenues of economic participation. Independence brought promise of equality of opportunity in all sphere to the Indian women and laws guaranteeing for their 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. The large majority of them are still unaffected by change and development activities have benefited only a small section of women i.e. the urban middle class women. Women entrepreneurs can contribute largely to the wealth of the society in a most efficient manner. But they need to perceive fully the role and significance of entrepreneurship. So the forthcoming days are definitely meaningful and decisiveness to the Indian women entrepreneur.

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