

Women entrepreneurship in India at Cross-Roads

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Women entrepreneur may be defined as a woman or a group of women who innovates, initiates or organizes and operates a business enterprise. the government of India defines a woman entrepreneur as, "an enterprise owned and controlled by a woman? Just as entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs are those women who generate business ideas or select the best opportunity, mobilize resources, combine the factors of production, undertake risks and operate the enterprise in the most effective way to earn profit.

Some examples about the status of women in the area of entrepreneurship include.

Women won one-third of Small business in USA and Canada of total workforce is being covered by women in Asian Countries. In China, women outnumber men by at least two times in entrepreneurship. This shows that women have desires and aspire to enter entrepreneurship and want to succeed in all the fields at par with men.

Like male entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs perform various functions of different nature. Some of them are:

Generating new business ideas, undertaking risks, decision making in economic crisis, introducing new invocations etc.

Indian women has been able to overcome the hurdle of society's perception of considering her to be confined in the four walls of the entrepreneur caught up in the limited areas of business such as papad making, pickle making, painting and handicrafts etc.

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There has been a remarkable shift of women from these small scale businesses towards modern, technology based business ventures such as –

Computer services and information technology, computer maintenance, quality control labs, travel and tourism, establishing recreation and culture centers screen-printing, photography, video shooting, Mini laundry and community kitchens etc.

There are also opportunities for woman in semi-urban and rural areas. These are those projects which are considered to have low investment and low technical know-how. These are production of liquid soap, detergents, Readymade instant food products, office stationary, child care centres, coaching classes, nursery classes, garment industry etc.

In-the recent industrial policy, the govt. has been importance to agro-based products and allied products. As we know that only one or two of the total production of fruits and vegetables is processed every year in India, so the scope for funds, fruits and vegetable processing industry would be fruitful for women. There are plenty of opportunities for baby food, cold drinks and canned foods and traditional medicine preparations.

In spite of various efforts, women entrepreneurs are facing various problems, they may be categorized as 'general problems' and 'specific problems' the problems in gathering finance is regarded as "Life-blood" for any enterprise be it big or small. However, women entrepreneurs suffer from shortage of funds on two counts, firstly, women do not generally have property in their names. So the eternal source of fund becomes very limited. Secondly, the bank also considers women less credit-worthy and discourage women borrowers on the belief that they can at any time block their business. In these situations women are bound to rely on their own savings and some loan from their friends and

relatives.

Next problem is regarding raw material and necessary inputs. This problem becomes more serious as women do not get raw materials on credit or on a very minimum discount. This shortage of funds also hampers their business as they do not have organization setup for canvassing and advertisement and they have to face a stiff competition advertising their products.

Second problem due to our society structure and their status in family and society. In our male-dominated society, women suffer from male reservation over women's role ability and capacity. Though the constitution of India speaks of equality between sexes, even then in our male patriarchal society women are not treated equal to men and this serves as a hurdle to the entry of women into business. With this problem their mobility is also related. Unlike, men, women mobility is highly limited due to various reasons. Such as, a single women asking for room on rent still looked upon with suspicion and also the humiliating attitude of concerning officers towards women compels them to give up the idea of starting an enterprises.

Lastly, our family ties because, in India it is mainly a woman's duty to look after the children and other members of the family. A married woman has to strike a fine balance between her business and family. Her total involvement in family leaves little or no energy and time for her to devote for business. Support and approval of husbands is a necessary condition for women's entry into business. Besides this, the educational level and family background of husband influenced women's entry into business activities.

Over all these problems is the problem of education of women. In India, around three-fifth, 60% of women are still illiterate. Illiteracy is the root cause of major socio-economic

problems. Due to lack of education and qualitative education, women are not aware of business, technology and market knowledge and this factor also causes low achievement motivation among women and reduces her ability to bear risks involved in running an enterprise.

In addition to above problems, inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of power, social attitude and other socio-economic constraints hold the women back from entering into business.

If we really want to increase women's participation in business we need a drastic change in the condition of women.

Under the seventh five year plan, a special chapter was for women development and the suggestions were:

- (a) to treat women as specific in target groups in all development programs.
- (b) to increase appropriate technologies, equipments and practice for reducing their drudgery and increase their productivity.
- (c) to provide marketing assistance at the state level.
- (d) for increasing women's participation in decision making the new industrial policy of the govt, of India has stressed the need for conducting special entrepreneurship programs for women product and process oriented courses would be started to enable women to start business.

The international agencies like UNCTAD, UNDP and ILO and our national govt, should adopt appropriate measures to increase free flow of trade or products, manufactured by women entrepreneurs and should provide fiscal and expert assistance in the promotion of entrepreneurship among women.

In India, the federation of India, chambers of commerce

and Industry (FICCI) FICCI Ladies organization (FLO) National Alliance of young entrepreneurs (NAYE) and other voluntary agencies assist women entrepreneur under the social education scheme of community development program. Mahila Samagams were organized and women's industrial cooperatives were set up in 1958.

The Nationalized Banks and state financial corporation's advance loan to women entrepreneurs on preferential basis. State industrial Development Corporation and District Industries Centers provide loans, subsidies to women to start business. State level agencies assist women in preparing project reports, buying machines, training and hiring staff.

In rural areas, women are already helping men in agriculture and agro-based industries, what they really need is education and proper training for food preservation, bakery, dairy and handloom areas.

In the end we can say that women possess a futuristic outlook and the capacity to nurture new enterprise, what is needed is proper training, helpful attitude, facilities and assistance. At present women polytechnics are starting traditional skill courses such as embroidery interior decoration, tailoring, knitting etc. Many institutions are now imparting training under various schemes. But majority of women are not benefitted because of family attitude, so mobile training centers part time training facilities can overcome this problem.

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