

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN INDIA: ROLE OF WOMEN IN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

DR. K. VENKAT SATISH

Abstract: Women entrepreneurs are playing a vital role. They have become important part of the global quest for the sustained economic development and social progress. In our country women have played a key role in the society. Their entrepreneurial ability has not been properly tapped due to the lower status of women in the society. Their role has been explicitly recognized with a market shift in the approach from women welfare to women development and empowerment from the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79). Today the significant role of women in entrepreneurship constantly increases due to various global factors. The Government of India has been implementing several policies and programs for the development of women entrepreneurship in India. In India, entrepreneurship among women is of recent origin. Socio – economic background is an important factor that influences the woman to start their business. 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 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. The present paper focuses on the factors influencing women entrepreneurship in India.

Introduction: In developing economies, the small, medium and cottage industries are able to create livelihood to the poor and needy of the society. The small savings of rural areas are contributing more in establishing the small and micro enterprises in India. In the light of demise of rural artisanship, entrepreneurship has been given much importance as well as empowerment too. The women empowerment has been important role of Governments and other non-governmental organizations. The women are endowed with innate power that can make them successful entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurship is inherent and also a natural process. 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. There are evidences to believe that countries which have proportionately higher percentage of entrepreneurs in their population have developed much faster as compared to countries, which have lesser percentage of them in the society.

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 a woman entrepreneurship as "an enterprise owned and controlled by a woman having a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and giving at least 51% of the employment generated in the enterprise to women". In India, women constitute around 48 percent of the population but their participation in the economic activities is only 34 percent. As per the Human Development Report (2007), India ranks 96th on the gender related

development index of 137 nations. The gender empowerment measures, which estimate the extent of women participation in the country's economic and political activities, rank India as 110th of the 166 nations. In the emerging complex social scenario, women have a pivotal role to play. Now women have taken up entrepreneurial role in order to create a meaning for themselves. The traditional roles of housewives are gradually changing into women entrepreneurs. Some of the factors responsible for these changes are better education, changing socio cultural values and need for supplementary income.

Women Entrepreneurship: Women entrepreneurs are key players in the developing countries. They are recognized as an important source of economic growth. They create new jobs for themselves and others. They provide solutions to management, organization and business problems. However, they still represent a minority of all entrepreneurs. Women's entrepreneurship makes a particularly strong contribution to the economic well-being of the family and communities, poverty reduction and women's empowerment, thus contributing to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Thus, governments across the world as well as various developmental organizations are actively undertaking promotion of women entrepreneurs through various schemes, incentives and promotional measures. Today the roles of women are not confined to the traditional one as a mother / housewife. A woman has to play multiple roles. Besides playing the role of housewife/mother/daughter, she has to play different roles in community in the social settings simultaneously. Playing all the roles, women sometimes submerged herself and her real identity.

Development Of Women Through Entrepreneurship In Small And Cottage Industries:

Status of women freedom depends on economic conditions even more than political. If a woman is not economically free and self-earning, she will have to depend on her husband or someone else, and dependents are never free. These were the ideas of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, who vividly highlighted the importance of economic independence of women. These views are antagonistic to the laws of Manu written early in the Christian era which stress the need to control women because of the "evils" of female character.

The 1991 Industrial Policy has envisaged special training programs to support women entrepreneurs. Accordingly women entrepreneurs are receiving training through Entrepreneurship Development Programs (EDPS) conducted by various institutions and organizations both at central and state levels. The Small Industries Development Organization (SIDO), with its field offices all over the country has been carrying out development programs for women entrepreneurs and is providing technical schemes for setting up of SSI units. In view of the changing outlook for the promotion of women enterprises, the SSI Board in 1991 revised the definition of women enterprises by omitting the condition of employing 50 per cent of women workers. This provided a boost to women entrepreneurs to take up business and avail all facilities / concessions as are applicable to SSIs. "Women in business" is considered a recent phenomenon in India. The fact that almost half the population of this large country comprises of females while businesses owned and operated by them constitute less than five per cent is a reflection on social, cultural as well as economic distractions in the decades of development. Indeed, women's participation in economic activity and production of goods and services is far greater than formal statistics might reveal, since much of it takes place in the informal sector as also in the households.

Factors Influencing Women Entrepreneurs

1. Building Confidence
2. Developing risk taking ability
3. Economic Independence
4. Establishing their own Creative Idea
5. Establishing their own Identity
6. Motivation
7. Equal Status in Society
8. Greater Freedom and Mobility
9. Achievement of Excellence

Setting up an enterprise is not an easy job for women entrepreneurs and at the same time running the enterprise is a greater task. A challenge is always there for these women entrepreneurs to run their enterprise successfully earning profit and ensuring the growth of the enterprises which will severely test

their entrepreneurial skill and survival of the unit. Despite various odds against them, several women are off to run their own enterprises. Even though there has been a considerable increase in the number of women entering in entrepreneurial activity, they are being introduced to many constraints and difficulties with regard to control and decision making, social status and enthusiasm in the product or serviced in which they are dealing. It is found that women are entering more in this venture as compared to man to start their own business to make social contribution in addition to desire of exploring their inner self and fulfilling their means of livelihood.

Policies And Schemes For Women Entrepreneurs

In India: 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 recognized 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.

In India, the Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises development organizations, various State Small Industries Development Corporations, the nationalized banks and even NGOs are conducting various programs including Entrepreneurship Development Programs (EDPs) to cater to the needs of potential women entrepreneurs, who may not have adequate educational background and skills. The Office of DC (MSME) has also opened a Women Cell to provide coordination and assistance to women entrepreneurs facing specific problems. There are also several other schemes of the government at central and state level, which provide assistance for setting up training-cum-income generating activities for needy women to make them economically independent. Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has also been implementing special schemes for women entrepreneurs. In addition to the special schemes for women entrepreneurs, various government schemes for MSMEs also provide certain special incentives and concessions for women entrepreneurs. For instance, under Prime Minister's RozgarYojana (PMRY), preference is given to women beneficiaries. The government has also made several relaxations for women to facilitate the participation of women beneficiaries in this scheme. Similarly, under the MSE Cluster Development Program by Ministry of MSME, the contribution from the

Ministry of MSME varies between 30-80% of the total project in case of hard intervention, but in the case of clusters owned and managed by women entrepreneurs, contribution of the M/o MSME could be up to 90% of the project cost. Similarly, under the Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises, the guarantee cover is generally available up to 75% of the loans extended; however the extent of guarantee cover is 80% for MSEs operated and/ or owned by women. Some of the special schemes for women entrepreneurs implemented by the government bodies and allied institutions are provided below. 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 Program (IRDP)
- Khadi And Village Industries Commission (KVIC)
- Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM)
- Prime Minister's RojgarYojana (PMRY)
- Entrepreneurial Development program (EDPs)
- Management Development program
- 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 MahilaYojana
- Indira Mahila Kendra
- MahilaSamitiYojana
- MahilaVikasNidhi
- Micro Credit Scheme
- RashtriyaMahilaKosh
- SIDBI's MahilaUdyamNidhi
- SBI's Stree Shakti Scheme
- NGO's Credit Schemes
- Micro & Small Enterprises Cluster Development Programs (MSE-CDP).
- National Banks for Agriculture and Rural Development's Schemes
- Rajiv Gandhi MahilaVikasPariyojana (RGMVP)
- Priyadarshini Project- A program 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.

Women Entrepreneur Associations: The efforts of government and its different agencies are supplemented by NGOs and associations that are playing an equally important role in facilitating women empowerment. List of various women associations in India is provided below.

Details Of Women Entrepreneur Associations In India

- Federation of Indian Women Entrepreneurs (FIWE)
- Consortium of Women Entrepreneurs (CWEI)
- Association of Lady Entrepreneurs of Andhra Pradesh
- Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Karnataka (AWAKE)
- Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)
- Women Entrepreneurs Promotion Association (WEPA)
- The Marketing Organization of Women Enterprises (MOOWES)
- Bihar MahilaUdyogSangh
- Mahakaushal Association of Woman Entrepreneurs (MAWE)
- SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneurship Council
- Women Entrepreneurs Association of Tamil Nadu (WEAT)
- Tie Stree Shakti (TSS)
- Women Empowerment Corporation

Suggestions For Women Entrepreneurs

- Start a business that works for you and your personal life
- Research the product/ service
- Assess the market
- Start business with adequate funds
- Do networking.
- Consult with professionals
- Proper technical education to the women and opening of women development cells.
- Improvement of identification mechanism of new enterprise.
- Assistance in project formulation and follow up of training program.
- Credit facilities, financial incentive and subsidies.
- Adequate follow-up and support to the women enterprises.
- Women Enterprises research and application from time to time have to be documented.

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. 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. From these suggestions it is quite visible that for development and promotion of women entrepreneurship, in the region, there is a need for multi dimensional approach from different sector, 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 or financial assistance or identifying an

enterprise but it is a question of clearing the ground for their movement into entrepreneurship. For ages together they have been confined to a secondary role and confined to the homes and you have to bring out so that they become self-reliant, self-respecting enterprising people. Though there are 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 equal importance for themselves.

References:

1. D'Cruz., N. K. (2003), Constraints on Women Entrepreneurship Development in Kerala: An Analysis of Familial, Social and Psychological Dimensions. Thiruvananthapuram, India, Centre for Development Studies.
2. Baporikar, N. (2007) Entrepreneurship Development & Project Management- Himalaya Publication House.
3. Dhaliwal S. (1998), "Silent Contributors: Asian Female Entrepreneurs and Women in Business", Women's Studies International Forum, Vol. 21 (5), pp. 469-474.
4. Handy F., Kassam M. and Ranade S. (2003), Factors Influencing Women Entrepreneurs of NGOs in India, Nonprofit Management and Leadership, Vol. 13 (2), pp. 139-154.
5. Hookoomsing P. D. and Essoo V. (2003), promoting female entrepreneurship in Mauritius: Strategies in Training and Development. SEED Working Paper No. 58: Series on Women's Entrepreneurship development and Gender Equality-WEDGE, International Labour Office, Geneva and ILO Antananarivo.
6. Lalitha, I. (1991), Women entrepreneurs' challenges and strategies, Frederich, Ebert Stiftung, New Delhi.
7. Desai, V: (1996) Dynamics of Entrepreneurial & Development & Management Himalaya Publishing House - Fourth Edition, Reprint.
8. Pillai N. C. and Anna V. (1990), "The Entrepreneurial spirit Among Women, A study of Kerala", Indian Management, Nov-Dec. pp. 93-98
9. Rani D. L. (1996), Women Entrepreneurs, New Delhi, APH Publishing House.
10. Robinson S. (2001), "An examination of entrepreneurial motives and their influence on the way rural women small business owners manage their employees", Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship, Vol. 6 (2), pp. 151-167.
11. Singh Kamala. (1992), Women entrepreneurs, Ashish publishing house, New Delhi
12. Gordon E. &Natarajan K.: (2007) Entrepreneurship Development - Himalaya Publication House, Second Revised edition.

Dr. K. VenkatSatish/Associate Professor of English/
Mother Teresa Institute of Science and Technology/Sattupally-507303/
Khammam-Dist 9912878008/Kodhmuri.satish72@gmail.com