Women Empowerment through Entrepreneurship: Emerging Issues and Challenges

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A nation can only be developed if its women are given ample opportunities. Developing entrepreneurship among women will be a right approach for women empowerment. This would enhance their socio-economic status. Once a woman feels that she is economically strong, she will feel equal to man in all respect. This is perhaps 'the need of the hour. Present review paper is emphases on analyze the contribution by women entrepreneurs in economic development of nation and also to find out the current problems, which they are facing in their businesses. Women entrepreneurship is gaining importance in India in the wake of economic liberalization and globalization. The policy and institutional framework for developing entrepreneurial skills, providing vocation education and training has widened the horizon for economic empowerment of women. However, women constitute only one third of the economic enterprises. There exist a plethora of successful business women entrepreneurs both in social and economic fields in India. They are performing well. Government of India has also introduced National Skill Development Policy and National Skill Development Mission in 2009 in order to provide skill training, vocational education and entrepreneurship development to the emerging work force.

"You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women"

- Jawaharlal Nehru.

Introduction:
Women are regarded as better half of the society. In traditional Indian societies, they were confined to four walls. In modern society, they come out of four walls to participate in all types of activities including entrepreneurship. In India empowering women through entrepreneurship has become an integral part of our development efforts because of 3 important reasons:

i). Women development,

ii). Economic growth and

iii). Social stability.

Entrepreneur is the one who is not only the owner of the manufacturing unit but also holds the responsibility to manage the industrial unit which includes everything from mooting the ideas of establishing the concern and arranging capital to exploring and creating the market for the product. Basically, there are two major criterions for identifying the women entrepreneurial activity. These are level of women participation in equity and employment position of the enterprise. In this way, women entrepreneurship is defined as an enterprise owned and controlled by a woman having minimum financial interest of 51 percent of the capital and giving at least 51 percent of the employment generated in the enterprise to women.

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. With the spread of education and awareness, women have shifted from kitchen to higher level of professional activities. 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. In almost all the developed countries in the world women are putting their steps at par with the men in the field of business. Now-a-days women enter not only in selected professions but also in professions like trade, industry and engineering. Women are also willing to take up business and contribute to the Nation's growth. There role is also being recognized and steps are being taken to promote women entrepreneurship. Women entrepreneurship must be molded properly with entrepreneurial traits and skills to meet the changes in trends, challenges global markets.

Qualities A Women Entrepreneur has to Inculcate-

- Accept challenge, Ambitious, Keen to learn, Conscious, Enthusiastic,
- Industrious, Motivator, Skillful, Unquenchable optimism, Adventurous,
- Educated, Experienced, Intelligent, Perseverance and studious.

Features of Women Entrepreneurs-

- **Value of Self-Fulfillment over Money:** Generally, women entrepreneurs are not driven by the desire to make money. To the contrary, self-fulfillment seems to be women entrepreneurs' basic motivating force because women possess creative urge to them. Money is simply a way of keeping the enterprise running.
- **Sense of Responsibility:** Women entrepreneurs feel a deep sense of personal responsibility for the outcomes of ventures they start.
- **Imagination:** Women entrepreneur's possess a good sense of imagination, fantasy and creativity. They always remain innovative and thinking for the new.
Persistence: Women entrepreneurs have strong desire to convert their dreams into reality. They prefer to achieve self determined goals.

High Level of Optimism: Women entrepreneurs generally succeed in their venture due to their confidence in their ability and a high level of optimism.

Tolerance for Ambiguity: Women entrepreneurs have a high degree of patience and tolerance for ambiguous and risky situations. Most often they can operate in ever-changing environment.

Flexibility: Due to feminine nature, women entrepreneurs have their ability to adapt to the changing demands of their customers and their businesses.

Organizing Capacity: Women are good managers. That is why women entrepreneurs knowhow to put the right people and resources together to accomplish a task or to achieve a goal.

The Activities Which Taken Up By the Women Entrepreneurs

- Professional entrepreneurs like architects, beauticians, pathological laboratory owners and Computer center owners etc.
- Manufactures, Trading
- Printing, publication, running nursery school, advertising agencies, catering business, hostels and Tailoring jobs
- Agriculture and animal husbandry like landscaping, poultry farming, pisi culture, silk rearing, Floriculture, gardening, farming etc.
- Handloom and Handicraft

Present scenario of Women Entrepreneur-

Traditionally, women were concentrated to their family life and were satisfied with 3Ks-kitchen, kids and knitting. Apart from the household activities, they were engaged mostly in agriculture or at the most in families trade activities. But, with the development of small scale industries in the post independent era, there was extension of kitchen activities of women from 3Ks to 3Ps viz. pickles, powder and pappad. With the spread of education and awareness, the women entrepreneurs had further shifted from the 3Ps to the higher level of activities, i.e. 3Es viz. engineering, electronics and energy. Although the number of such units is not large, but the situation is changing slowly. The Harvard school experts feel that women have a natural deeper sense of commitment towards their work than their male counterparts. The basic quality of efficient management of having a futuristic outlook and planning for the unknown, hard work, patience and perseverance comes naturally to women. Now women entrepreneurs have come to occupy a significant place in most of the countries, particularly in terms of their contribution towards economic development. Even in developed countries like U.S.A, Canada, U.K, France, there has been a phenomenal increase in the number of self employed women in recent years. While in U.S.A, women own 1/4th of the small business, it is 1/3rd in Canada, 1/5th in France and 1/4th in China. In U.K since 1980, there has been over three times increase in the number of self employed women. Japan too has noticed a similar trend. However, picture is quite different in the case of India, though it started earlier than China and Japan. In India, as per 1991 census, Only 185900 women accounting only for 4.5 percent of the total self employed persons were recorded. Majority of them were engaged in unorganized sectors. In 1995-96, there were more than 2, 95,680 women entrepreneurs claiming 11.2 percent of the total 2.64 million entrepreneurs in India which was almost double of the total self employed population in 1981. The Harvard school experts feel that women have a natural deeper sense of commitment towards their work than their male counterparts. The basic quality of efficient management of having futuristic outlook and planning for the unknown, hard work, patience and perseverance comes naturally to women. Since the inceptions of the National Awards to small entrepreneurs instituted in 1983, 10 women entrepreneurs have received special recognition awards.

Women face the following main problems as entrepreneurs:-

Functional problems:-
- a) Lack of awareness of Potentials
- b) Lack of training
- c) Start up problems like seeking approvals and licenses
- d) Obtaining seed capital: lack of own savings.
- e) Providing guarantees to lenders: no own assets
- f) Recruitment of skilled manpower: cultural constraints
- g) Problem in financial management: lack of exposure
- h) Problems in production: physical limitations.
- i) Raw material procurement: less mobility and unable to make longer tours
- j) Administrative problems: social cultural factors
- k) Marketing problems in the era of globalization: less mobile.
Cultural problems:-
  a) Fear of success: may lose affiliation with friends if successful as an entrepreneur
  b) Low recognition in society
  c) Pardha system
  d) Family and religious duties given more importance in life.

Social problems:-
  a) Discriminating treatment: do not get a share in father’s business/ property
  b) Family notions about “Ideal woman”
  c) Conflicts with values
  d) Role conflicts: professional Vs personal life
  e) Low image associated with working women
  f) Male dominance in family and market
  g) Problems in production: physical limitations and can not stay out at night.

Psychological problems:-
  a) Susceptibility to negative attitudes
  b) Low level of motivation
  c) Lower level of self-confidence
  d) Lower self-conceptualization
  e) Easily fall into depression
  f) Lack of persistence

Promotional Efforts Supporting Women Entrepreneurs in India-

Women’s entrepreneurship is a relatively new concept in India. The concern to develop more women entrepreneurs emerges from the fact that women represent 50 percent world population, but receive only per cent of the world income and less than 1 per cent of the world’s assets. Efforts have been made by various governmental and non-governmental agencies all over to promote women entrepreneurs. The results are somewhat encouraging. Entrepreneurship development in India has received much attention during the last few years. Several policies, Programmes, procedures and institutions have been formulated to support development of entrepreneurship among women in India. The following measures may be adopted to solve the problems faced by women entrepreneurs in India:-

1. Finance Cells: In various public financial institutions and banks, special cells may be opened for providing easy finance to women entrepreneurs. Women officers and clerks should man these cells. Efforts should be made to provide finance at the local level. Finance to women entrepreneurs may be provided at concessional rates of interest and on easy repayment basis.

2. Marketing cooperatives: - Encouragement and assistance should be provided to women entrepreneurs for setting up cooperatives. These cooperatives will pool the inputs of women enterprises and sell them on remunerative prices. Such cooperatives will help to eliminate the middlemen. Central and State Government should give priority to women entrepreneurs while purchasing for their requirements.

3. Supply of Raw materials: Scarce and imported raw materials may be made available to women entrepreneurs on priority basis. A subsidy may also be given to make the products manufactured by women entrepreneurs cost competitive.

4. Education and Awareness: - It is necessary to change negative social attitudes towards women. Elders particularly mothers and mother-in-law need to be made aware of the potential of girls and their due role in society. Unless the social attitudes are made positive, not much progress can be made by women entrepreneurs.

5. Training Facilities: - Training and skills are essential for the development of entrepreneurship. Training schemes should be so designed that women can take full advantage. Family members do not like women to go away to far off places for training. Therefore, mobile training centers should be arranged. Similarly, part time training facilities, especially during afternoons will attract more women to acquire skills. Additional facilities like stipend, good hygienic crèches, transport facilities etc. should be offered to attract more and more women to the training centers.

Agencies for Helping Women Entrepreneurs-

Some of the agencies which help new entrepreneurs to set up their new enterprises are.

- National Laboratories and Institutes.(National physical Laboratory, New Delhi, Central Fuel Research Institute, Dhanbad, Bihar)
Commodity Boards and other organizations. (The all India Handicrafts Board, Ramkrishapuram, New Delhi, Tea Board, Kolkata)

Specialized Trade Publications and (Automobile India, new Delhi, Central Glass & Ceramic Research Institute Bulletin, Kolkata)

Technical Consultancy Organizations. (Andhra Pradesh Industrial & Technical Consultancy Organization Ltd Hyderabad, Gujarat Industrial & Technical Consultancy Organization Ltd. Ahmadabad) However, entrepreneurs are advised to contact at least the following agencies to acquire essential knowledge about small scale industries, procedures and formalities.

District Industries Centre
Directorate/Commissioner of Industries Office
State Financial Corporation
Technical Consultancy Organization & Agencies Conducting Entrepreneurship Development Programmes.

Programmes Supporting Women Entrepreneurship:

- **Swa-Shakti Project**: A project for women’s development, with assistance from International Funds for Agricultural Development (IFAD), was initially taken up in Tamil Nadu. That project, under implementation for the last 9 years, has shown significant results insofar as empowerment of women is concerned.

- **Rural Women Development and Empowerment Project**: The department has been exploring, for some time past, the possibility of a women’s development project, with assistance from the various aid agencies. The overall objective of the project is to launch a programme which strengthens the processes to promote the social and economic development of women and raise an environment for social change to improve their quality of life.

- **Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY)**: The IMY is a scheme that aims at organizing women at grass root level to facilitate their participation in decision making and their empowerment. The scheme was launched in 1995 on pilot basis in 200 blocks. Over a strategy to co-ordinate and integrate components of sectoral Programmes and facilitate their convergence to empower women.

- **Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)**: The programme of STEP launched in 1987 aims to upgrade the skills of poor and asset less women, mobilize, concentrate and provide employment to them on a sustainable basis in the traditional sectors of agriculture, animal husbandry, dairy, fisheries, handlooms and handicrafts.

- **Employment and Income Generation-cum- Production Units (NORAID)**: Under the scheme, which is assisted by Norwegian Agency for International development (NORAID), projects of skill development and training of achieving self reliance through income generation for women are supported. These projects of training for income generation are in the non-traditional trades of electronics, watch manufacturing/assembly, computer programming, garment making, handlooms etc.

- **Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)**: The National Credit Fund for Women is an innovative mechanism for reaching credit to poor women. Through access to credit, it aims to raise the earning capacity of women by enhancing their productivity and self-reliance.

Conclusion: To conclude one can say that self employment is the best employment which helps nation to grow, the entrepreneur to develop and to others the chance to have employment. Home science gives ample opportunity to go into self employment and we self reliant.

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