

CHALLENGES FACED BY INDIAN WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is regarded as one of the most significant factors contributing to the economic development of the society. Entrepreneurs have been considered helpful in come out with and sustaining socio-economic development. The 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.

Key words: Entrepreneurship, Women Entrepreneurs, Education, Motivation

Introduction

Entrepreneurship contributes the most energetic economically empowering pathway for women, for the community, and the nation. All over the world there are only roughly 9.35 million women-owned formal small and medium enterprises in over 140 assessed countries, which is relatively one third of all formal SMEs. Women entrepreneurs create new jobs for themselves and others and also provide society with different answers to management, organization and business problems. However, they still represent a minority of all entrepreneurs. Women's entrepreneurship can make a particularly solid 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). Many women in India have attained prominent or leadership positions, rising to the highest echelons in every walk of life -- for example as entrepreneurs, industrialists, civil servants, police officers, airline pilots, scientists, engineers. Yet women must beat further barriers to have equitable access to the labour market, to access control over economic resources and entrepreneurial opportunities. The Entrepreneurship Development Process for Women in India is increasingly being recognized as an important untapped source of economic growth since women entrepreneurs create new employment opportunities and pathways for women's economic independence. Thus globally, governments as well as various developmental organizations are actively undertaking promotion of women entrepreneurs through various schemes and incentives.

Women entrepreneurs may be defined as the women or a group of women who take initiative, 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 49 percent of the population but their labour force participation rate is 32% and Indian women's share in GDP is 17% (MGI, 2015)

Women entrepreneurs are persuaded by both push and pull factors. Pull factors include: Aspirations for autonomy and independence, personal satisfaction and achievement, or Search for a challenge, challenging/rejecting gender stereotypes, gap in the market, etc. Push factors include: dissatisfaction with the labour market, need for greater income, unemployment, desire for a better life or higher earnings, financial incentive and motivation From

government/schemes for assistance, attraction of high profit margins, etc. In the area of women's entrepreneurship, government policies and promotion strategies have been giving new opportunities to women but few have come forward. It is primarily since the last two decades that attempts to design programmes to promote women entrepreneurs as a part of national development plans have begun to be taken notice of by women. Today India ranks 70 out of 77 in countries covered in the 2014- Female Entrepreneurship Index. According to 4th MSME census report 2011, only 13.72 per cent of enterprises in the registered MSME sector were enterprises managed by women, representing about 2.15 lakh (or 215,000 enterprises across the country). These women-owned enterprises contribute 3.09 percent of industrial output and employ over 8 million people. Approximately, 78 percent of these women enterprises belong to the services sector. Women entrepreneurship is largely skewed towards smaller sized firms, as almost 98 percent of women-owned businesses are currently micro-enterprises.

The main reasons for low number of women enterprises in India are:

Gender inequality

Gender inequality remains widely prevalent within the Indian society. According to the 2014 Human Development Report (UNDP, 2014) India ranks 127th out of 186 countries in its Gender inequality index. High levels of illiteracy, the lack of decision-making power over child bearing and early marriage of women, limit the chances of women starting a career and becoming entrepreneurs.

Women in India are mostly economically dependent from their husbands which reduces their Ability to bear the risks and uncertainties involved in launching a business. The educational Level and family background of their husbands also influence women's participation in Entrepreneurship.

Society's attitude towards women entrepreneurs,

Unequal opportunities amongst men and women and broadly a lack of self-confidence haunt women entrepreneurs. This low level of self-confidence, will-power and optimistic attitude amongst women create a fear of committing mistakes which affects their business. The family members and the society are often reluctant to stand beside women's entrepreneurial endeavor.

Lack of education

Lack of or insufficient education facilities results in lack of knowledge and information about Availability of raw material, access to finance and Government' schemes and facilities and Other existing or upcoming opportunities. In India, as per the 2011 census 30 per cent of Women are illiterate, compared with 13 per cent illiteracy among men.

Lack of awareness about opportunities and existing schemes

Lack of awareness amongst women about the financial assistance offered (incentives, loans, and schemes) by the institutions in the financial sector is one of the major challenges. Hence, in spite of financial policies and programmes for women entrepreneurs, financial support has reached only few women entrepreneurs. Moreover most of the lending and supporting institutions do not have any awareness -building mechanisms

Lack of mentoring

Mentoring (guidance) is also a big issue before women entrepreneurs. Women need a mentor, who can guide or motivate them to start a business.

Low Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation is found to be scarce among women because of the Indian Socialization pattern and socio-cultural factors which are gender biased. Their domesticated role is widely accepted and assumed.

Dual responsibility

Women need to devote considerable amount of time for their business if they want it to grow.

Indian women place more emphasis on family ties and relationships. Married women have to walk a fine line between business and family. Women's family and personal obligations are sometimes a great barrier for succeeding in a business career. Only few women are able to manage both home and business efficiently, devoting enough time to perform all their responsibilities

Gender biased business support systems

Gender-insensitive business development support systems (BDS Providers) often create discriminatory environment for women entrepreneurs in the process of starting and managing Their businesses, especially during registration, finances procurement, marketing, etc. sectors Those are all male-dominated.

Operational problems

Women entrepreneur in India not only struggle at the time of establishment of enterprises but at operation stage also, they have to overcome functional difficulties. Usually women face two fold operational problems and have to overcome with problems of production process like, scarcity of raw material, lack of technical skills, lack of utilities and infrastructure facility.

Financing

In the initial business stages, most women rely on personal funding even for meeting working capital requirements. According to a report released by International Finance Corporation in 2014 there was a finance gap of Rs 6.37 lakh crore (Rs 6.37 trillion) when it came to meeting requirements of women entrepreneurs in the MSME (micro, small and medium enterprise) sector. Lack of collateral and a misogynist mindset are the main stumbling blocks women face in accessing loans.

Lack of women oriented venture capital funds

India lacks large-scale women-oriented venture capital funds or institutions, which provides customized offerings to women entrepreneurs, like Wells Fargo in the US which provides collateral-free loans of up to USD 100,000 (Rs 63 lakh) and Golden Seeds, a US-based VC Fund which invests exclusively in women-led enterprises.

Marketing problems

Maintaining an existing business or accessing fresh business opportunities requires strategic marketing skills. Due to socio-cultural factors Indian women tend to be less assertive, less communicative and less able to negotiate and garner support for their decisions. Also, the size of operations is often too small to allow marketing at national/state level, women lack mobility owing to their household responsibilities or their inability to travel alone, in addition to the lack of information regarding channels of distribution, or even their centralized business processes may prevent them from travelling outstation (production and other factors may suffer in their absence.)

Policies and Schemes for Women Entrepreneurs in India

Central and state governments provide assistance to women entrepreneurs for setting up training-cum-income generating activities for needy women to make them economically independent. Recently, the government has launched MUDRA (Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency) to provide finance to small businesses and micro-enterprises, it provides unsecured credit to women entrepreneurs. 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.

SCHEMES FOR WOMEN	SCHEMES FOR WOMEN
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	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

On the basis of problems faced by women entrepreneurs and various other problems too, there is a provision of a number of solution measures to overcome the aforesaid problems. Such solutions are :-

- * There should be a continuous attempt to inspire, encourage, motivate and cooperate women entrepreneurs.
- * 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 improvise their over-all personality standards.
- * Attempts to establish for them proper training institutes for enhancing their level of work-knowledge, skills, risk-taking abilities, enhancing their capabilities.
- * Attempts to bring about a society attitude change, generation of awareness and consciousness on the policy of self-development of women entrepreneurs.

- * 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.
- * Establishing various policies to offer easy finance schemes for economically strengthening the position of women. and designing active programmes to enhance financial inclusion among women, particularly micro-payments and microfinance can potentially be a very effective tool to enable the participation of women as entrepreneurs
- * Forming a cooperative association of women entrepreneurs to mobilize resources and pooling capital funds, in order to help the women in the field of industry, trade and commerce.
- * Offering seed capital, up-liftment schemes, women entrepreneurs fund etc. to encourage them economically.
- * Extending concessional rates facilities and schemes for women entrepreneurs, particularly promoting women specific venture capital funds, to prosper in the field of enterprise.
- * Establishing all India platforms to develop linkages with national and international markets, develop partnerships with value chain operators and network with persons in related industries.
- * Establishing 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 favors 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.

CONCLUSION

Women participation in the field of entrepreneurship is increasing at a considerable rate. 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. Though there are several factors contributing to the emergence of women as entrepreneurs and they are facing many challenges in the path. So, a sustained and coordinated effort from all dimensions would pave the way for the women moving into entrepreneurial activity thus contributing to their social and economic development.

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