

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN INDIA: A CASE STUDY ON SWARNA JYOTHI MAHILA SAMAKHYA (SHG) IN WARANGAL DISTRICT OF A.P

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Abstract

Women are generally perceived as home makers with little to do with economy or commerce. But this picture is changing. In Modern India, more and more women are taking up entrepreneurial activity especially in medium and small scale enterprises. Even as women are receiving education, they face the prospect of unemployment. In this background, self employment is regarded as a cure to generate income. The Planning commission as well as the Indian government recognizes the need for women to be part of the mainstream of economic development. Women entrepreneurship is seen as an effective strategy to solve the problems of rural and urban poverty. The transition from homemaker to sophisticated business woman is not that easy. But the trend is changing. Women across India are showing an interest to be economically independent. The myth that women cannot engage in productive employment needs to be dispelled. They can be encouraged to set up small and medium scale industries on their own initiative. Entrepreneurship development for women is an important factor in economic development of India. The present paper high lights the role played & problems faced by women entrepreneurs. It also presents a case study on rural entrepreneurs with special reference to a self-help group, the Swarna Jyothi Mahila Samakhya in Warangal district.

Key Words: Women Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurship Development, Self-Help Group

Women Entrepreneurship in India

The Indian sociological set up has been traditionally a male Dominated one. Women are considered as weaker sex and always to depend on men folk in their family and outside, throughout their life. They are left with lesser commitments and kept as a dormant force for a quite long time. The Indian culture made them only subordinates and executors of the decisions made by

other male members, in the basic family structure. The traditional set up is changing in the modern era. The transformation of social fabric of the Indian society, in terms of increased educational status of women and varied aspirations for better living, necessitated a change in the life style of Indian women. Indian families do have the privilege of being envied by the westerners, since women here are taking more responsibilities in bringing up children and maintaining a better home with love and affection. At the family level, the task of coordinating various activities in a much effective manner, without feeling the pinch of inconveniences, is being carried out by the women folk. Traditionally, women in India have been generally found in low productive sectors such as agriculture and household activities. Human Development Report 2004 ranks India 103 in Gender related Development Index (GDI). As per 2001 census; women constitute nearly half of India's population. Out of this total, 72% were engaged in agriculture, 21.7% in other non agricultural pursuits with only 6.3% in household industries. Women entrepreneurs in India are handicapped in the matter of organizing and running businesses on account of their generally low levels of skills and for want of support system. Women are coming forth to the business arena with ideas to start small and medium enterprises. They are willing to be inspired by role models- the experience of other women in the business arena. The role of women entrepreneurs is especially relevant in the situation of large scale unemployment that the country faces. The modern large scale industry cannot absorb much of labour as it is capital intensive. The small scale industry plays an important role absorbing around 80% of the employment. . Rural women can be encouraged to start cottage industries. Rural based micro enterprises have been encouraged by the government by various schemes-such as Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP), Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM), and Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA). The aim is to remove poverty through entrepreneurial programs.

Thus, the Indian women have basic characters in themselves in the present sociological and cultural setup as follows.

- Indian women are considered as Sakthi, which means source of power.
- Effectively coordinating the available factors and resources.
- Efficient execution of decisions imposed on them
- Clear vision and ambition on the improvement of family and children.
- Patience and bearing the sufferings on behalf of others and
- Ability to work physically more at any age.

Need of the Hour

Women sector occupies nearly 45% of the Indian population. The literary and educational status of women improved considerably during the past few

decades. More and more higher educational and research institutions are imparting knowledge and specialisation. At this juncture, effective steps are needed to provide entrepreneurial awareness, orientation and skill development programmes to women. The institutions available at present are very limited. Moreover, their functions and opportunities available with them are not popularised much.

Qualities Required for an Entrepreneur

An effective entrepreneur requires certain basic qualities, which can be listed as follows.

- Innovative thinking and farsightedness.
- Quick and effective decision making skill.
- Ability to mobilise and marshal resources.
- Strong determination and self confidence.
- Preparedness to take risks.
- Accepting changes in right time.
- Access and alertness to latest scientific and technological information.

Matching the basic qualities required for entrepreneurs and the basic characters of Indian women, reveal that, much potential is available among the Indian women on their entrepreneurial ability. This potential is to be recognized, brought out and exposed for utilization in productive and service sectors for the development of the nation.

Problems Of Women Entrepreneurs In India :

Problems of Women entrepreneurs in India Women in India are faced many problems to get ahead their life in business. A few problems can be detailed as:

1. The greatest deterrent to women entrepreneurs is that they are women. A kind of patriarchal – male dominant social order is the building block to them in their way towards business success. Male members think it a big risk financing the ventures run by women.
2. The financial institutions are skeptical about the entrepreneurial abilities of women. The bankers consider women loonies as higher risk than men loonies. The bankers put unrealistic and unreasonable securities to get loan to women entrepreneurs. According to a report by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), "despite evidence that women's loan repayment rates are higher than men's, women still face more difficulties in obtaining credit," often due to discriminatory attitudes of banks and informal lending groups (UNIDO, 1995b).

3. Entrepreneurs usually require financial assistance of some kind to launch their ventures - be it a formal bank loan or money from a savings account. Women in developing nations have little access to funds, due to the fact that they are concentrated in poor rural communities with few opportunities to borrow money (Starcher, 1996; UNIDO, 1995a). The women entrepreneurs are suffering from inadequate financial resources and working capital. The women entrepreneurs lack access to external funds due to their inability to provide tangible security. Very few women have the tangible property in hand.
4. Women's family obligations also bar them from becoming successful entrepreneurs in both developed and developing nations. "Having primary responsibility for children, home and older dependent family members, few women can devote all their time and energies to their business" (Starcher, 1996, p. 8). The financial institutions discourage women entrepreneurs on the belief that they can at any time leave their business and become housewives again. The result is that they are forced to rely on their own savings, and loan from relatives and family friends.
5. Indian women give more emphasis to family ties and relationships. Married women have to make a fine balance between business and home. More over the business success is depends on the support the family members extended to women in the business process and management. The interest of the family members is a determinant factor in the realization of women folk business aspirations.
6. Another argument is that women entrepreneurs have low-level management skills. They have to depend on office staffs and intermediaries, to get things done, especially, the marketing and sales side of business. Here there is more probability for business fallacies like the intermediaries take major part of the surplus or profit. Marketing means mobility and confidence in dealing with the external world, both of which women have been discouraged from developing by social conditioning. Even when they are otherwise in control of an enterprise, they often depend on males of the family in this area.
7. The male - female competition is another factor, which develop hurdles to women entrepreneurs in the business management process. Despite the fact that women entrepreneurs are good in keeping their service prompt and delivery in time, due to lack of organisational skills compared to male entrepreneurs women have to face constraints from competition. The confidence to travel across day and night and even different regions and states are less found in women compared to male entrepreneurs. This shows the low level freedom of expression and freedom of mobility of the women entrepreneurs.

8. Knowledge of alternative source of raw materials availability and high negotiation skills are the basic requirement to run a business. Getting the raw materials from different source with discount prices is the factor that determines the profit margin. Lack of knowledge of availability of the raw materials and low-level negotiation and bargaining skills are the factors, which affect women entrepreneur's business adventures.
9. Knowledge of latest technological changes, know how, and education level of the person are significant factor that affect business. The literacy rate of women in India is found at low level compared to male population. Many women in developing nations lack the education needed to spur successful entrepreneurship. They are ignorant of new technologies or unskilled in their use, and often unable to do research and gain the necessary training (UNIDO, 1995b, p.1). Although great advances are being made in technology, many women's illiteracy, structural difficulties, and lack of access to technical training prevent the technology from being beneficial or even available to females ("Women Entrepreneurs in Poorest Countries," 2001). According to The Economist, this lack of knowledge and the continuing treatment of women as second-class citizens keeps them in a pervasive cycle of poverty ("The Female Poverty Trap," 2001). The studies indicates that uneducated women do not have the knowledge of measurement and basic accounting.
10. Low-level risk taking attitude is another factor affecting women folk decision to get into business. Low-level education provides low-level self-confidence and self-reliance to the women folk to engage in business, which is continuous risk taking and strategic decision making profession. Investing money, maintaining the operations and ploughing back money for surplus generation requires high risk taking attitude, courage and confidence. Though the risk tolerance ability of the women folk in day-to-day life is high compared to male members, while in business it is found opposite to that.
11. Achievement motivation of the women folk found less compared to male members. The low level of education and confidence leads to low level achievement and advancement motivation among women folk to engage in business operations and running a business concern.
12. Finally high production cost of some business operations adversely affects the development of women entrepreneurs. The installation of new machineries during expansion of the productive capacity and like similar factors dissuades the women entrepreneurs from venturing into new areas

Action Plan

Proper planning and execution are required at all levels. Proper training in right direction is to be planned meticulously.

The steps to be taken can be listed as follows:

- Identifying women with different literary levels in proper groups and to create awareness about entrepreneurship and its importance as job providing avenues rather than job seeking ventures.
- skills to be provided to selected women group are to be identified.
- making them to realise the income generation and recognition giving orientation and skill training on selected trades on their choice and suitability.
- assisting them in preparation of project reports for their own proposed units and helping them to follow up the venture to start the new enterprise.
- providing consultancy and guidance, continuously.

A training capsule of around 15 days may be provided by expert institutions, voluntary agencies and Govt. departments. The financial resources are to be mobilised to provide this type of programmes, by the government organizations like banks, public sector organizations and voluntary agencies. The higher education institutions, which are spreading throughout the country, may conduct programmes like this, regularly, in addition to their academic programmes, with or without govt. aid. Young graduates of that area and the final year students of U.G/P.G courses may also be provided with such training. Normally, infrastructures are available with such institutions. Getting expertise and mobilizing other requirements will also be easier for such institutions, since they are already having good establishment facilities.

Voluntary agencies like Rotary clubs, Lions clubs, and etc. Govt. sponsored institutions like UGC, Science and technology Councils may interact with the colleges/universities, through financial assistance, to carry out the programmes.

With proper financial assistance and effectively using them, each college/university may train 300 to 1000 youths, in the area of entrepreneurship development. When women are going to be the target groups, the benefit will reach a larger section of the society.

Thus ED culture is to be developed gradually among the women, in addition to providing educational facilities to use the vibrant women force in right direction. Thus programmes combining, technical skill and entrepreneurship skill, to selected groups, will make the Indian women more self reliant and confident and would lead them to be envied by people at the international level.

Training Components

Even though there are very efficient institutions at the national level, like EDI Ahmadabad, NSTED BOARD, New Delhi, NISIE, Hyderabad and at State level, CED in Madurai and Chennai, TANSTIA in Chennai, such programmes are to be conducted at regional level, at the residential area of the women, in their vernacular language and to the specific requirement of the people of that area.

The essential components of such training may be listed as follows.

- Awareness, career building and attitudinal change towards enterprise formation.
- Effective training on building up self-confidence and communication skills.
- Skill training on specific trades suitable to their option.
- Training on quick and effective decision making techniques and managerial skills.
- Training on marketing strategies.
- Training on effective financial management.
- Training on project formulation and implementation.
- Scope for increasing access to new technologies and scientific knowledge.
- Information on persons/offices to be contacted.
- Interaction with successful entrepreneurs for sharing their experiences

Training in such areas are not going to have much financial burden to the govt., when compared to other developmental projects. This type of programmes can be conducted in all the parts of the country. A consistent and continuous effort in this project will add more dimensions Indian women and their empowerment. and to the economic development of the nation as a whole.

CASE STUDY: The Swarna Jyothi Mahila Samakhya

The Swarna Jyothi Mahila Samakhya, a self help group (SHG), which is based in Dharmasagar mandal of Warangal district, has been attracting international attention for its achievements in the SHG movement. Pakistan-based Shoib Sultan Khan, who was given the Ramon Magsaysay award, has also visited Dharmasagar and interacted with SHG women to get an insight into their achievements.

Now, the women of Andhra Pradesh are teaching their sisters in Uttar Pradesh the dynamics of empowerment through self-help groups. More than 100 women from the state are now in Amethi, imparting awareness on self-help

initiatives to womenfolk there. From forming simple thrift groups to turning entrepreneurs using local resources, AP women are pioneers of the SHG movement.

To make the SHGs organizationally sound and functionally effective, training is imparted on group formation, micro-credit planning, bank linkage, and maintenance of records through proper book keeping and creating awareness on social evils such as child marriages, child labour, illiteracy and superstitions. The strategy of weekly meetings introduced in the UP women's groups is apparently working wonders. Each training team comprises three senior women community resource persons, one community activist, and one book keeper.

The Dharmasagar women are also getting good remuneration for their services.

Each trainer is being paid Rs 700 a day and the Swarna Jyothi Samakhya collects Rs 50 per day as resource fee, which would be added to the corpus fund. Till now they have earned more than Rs 2 lakh. They were initially trained in Hindi for three weeks before being taken to UP for their tasks. Besides the Dharmasagar team, SHG women from the Orvakal in Kurnool district are also taking part in the training programmes. The SHG movement and the training programmes are being implemented under the aegis of the Rajiv Gandhi Mahila Pariyojana project sponsored by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation in the UP. As the bank linkage concept to the SHG women is also a new concept in UP, a total of 70 bank managers from the Amethi and Rai Bareilly have also visited Warangal district and have interacted with the bank officials here.

After hearing about their unfolding success story in UP, the Bihar government too has invited the AP women to build up the SHG movement in villages of the state. Already, women from the Pragathi Mahila Samakhya in Geesukonda mandal of the Warangal district are training Bihar women under the Rural Livelihood Promotion Project sponsored by the World Bank.

It seems AP women are showing the way to the entire nation.

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