
Entrepreneurship and Women Empowerment**Dr. Veena. M**Associate Professor,
Maharani's Arts and Commerce College,
Mysore**Abstract**

Women's lack of empowerment is considered as an important determinant of gender development. Therefore, they need to be empowered economically, socially and politically. The women empowerment is a critical determinant of their economic well-being, social status and political power. Entrepreneurship plays an important role in creating an employment opportunity for rural communities, providing self-employment for those who have started-up a business of their own and enhancing the economic status of the rural sector as well. Now women are also interested to establish their own business as professionally both in the urban and rural areas due to overcome poverty, generate family income and increasing Standard of living. Women's development is not nearly about reducing poverty by increasing productivity, but also about women's liberation and empowerment. So it is necessary to empower women socially, economically and technologically to enable them to stand in society on their own with confidence. It includes both controls over resources and ideology, greater self-confidence and an inner transformation of one's consciousness that enables one to overcome external affairs (Sharma & Varma, 2008). In today's competitive world, there are various ways by which women get themselves empowered. Entrepreneurship development and income generating activities are a feasible solution for empowering women who leads to economic independence, the opportunity to have control over their lives, self-reliance, self-determination, and a way to achieve for themselves.

Introduction

In India, though 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. The development of women entrepreneurship has become an important aspect of our plan priorities. Several policies and programmes are being implemented for the development of women entrepreneurship in India.

There is a need for changing the mindset towards rural women so as to give equal rights as enshrined in the constitution. The progress towards gender equality is slow and is partly due to the failure to attach money to policy commitments. In the words of president APJ Abdul Kalam "Empowering rural women is a prerequisite for creating a good nation, when women are empowered, society with stability is assured. Empowerment of rural women is essential as their thoughts and their value systems lead to the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation."

When a woman is empowered it does not mean that another individual becomes powerless or is having less power. On the contrary, if a woman is empowered her competencies towards decision- making will surely influence her family's behavior.

Entrepreneurship and Women Empowerment

Bisht& Sharma (1991) argued that the entrepreneurship of women is considered to be an effective instrument to the economic development and empowerment of women. Considering this need the government of India has begun the process of empowering women through various national policies and developmental programmers and organizing women in Self Help Groups. At present, rural women involvement in economic activities is marked by a low work participation rate, excessive concentration in the unorganized sector and employment in less skilled jobs.

United Nations Development program (1994) states that empowerment is a process which enables individuals or groups to change balances of power in social, economic and political relations in society. Therefore, women empowerment means giving the capacity and means to direct women's life towards desired goals. It is a process by which women gain greater control over resources (income, knowledge, information, technology, skill and training), decision making process, enhance the self-image of women, to become active participants in the process of change and to develop the skills to assert themselves.

"Women Entrepreneur" is a person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. The Government of India has defined women entrepreneurs as an enterprise owned and controlled by women having a minimum financial interest of 51 per cent of the capital and giving at least 51 per cent of the employment generated in the enterprise to women. In the simplest sense, women entrepreneurs are those

women who take the lead and organize the business or industry and provide employment to others. Entrepreneurship development among rural women helps to enhance their personal capabilities and increase decision making status in the family and society as a whole.

Current Scenario of Women Entrepreneurship

Now women's entrepreneurship has been recognized as an important untapped source of economic growth. In India it is estimated that women entrepreneurs presently comprise about 10% of the total number of entrepreneurs with the percentage growing every year. If the prevailing trends continue, it is likely that in another five years' women will comprise 20 % of the entrepreneurial force. Even though women own around 10% of the total enterprises in the small sector, the gross output of these units is just 3.5% of the total output of the SSI sector. In contrast, in developed countries such as United States, women own nearly 91 lakh small businesses and the number of women-owned start-ups is going at nearly twice the rate of their male counterparts. India has 397 million workers, 123.9 million are women, 106 million are in rural areas, 18 million are in urban areas, only 7% of India's labour force is in the organized sector; 93% is in unorganized sector.

Problems faced by Women Entrepreneurs

1. 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.
2. Women's family obligations also bar them from becoming successful entrepreneurs in both developed and developing nations. 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.
3. 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.

4. 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.
5. The male - female competition is another factor, which develop hurdles to women entrepreneurs in the business management process.
6. 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 rural areas lack the education needed to spur successful entrepreneurship. They are ignorant of new technologies or unskilled in their use.
7. 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 cession making profession.
8. Achievement motivation of the rural women found less compared to male members. The low level of education and confidence leads to low level achievement and advancement motivation among rural women to engage in business operations and running a business concern.

Women Entrepreneurs – Ways to Empowerment

- Better educational facilities and schemes should be extended to women.
- Adequate training programme on management skills to be provided to women.
- Encourage rural women's participation in decision-making.
- Vocational training to be extended to rural women community.
- Skill development to be done in women's polytechnics and industrial training institutes. Training on professional competence and leadership skill to be extended to women entrepreneurs.

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- Counseling through the aid of committed NGOs, psychologists, managerial experts and technical personnel should be provided to existing and emerging women entrepreneurs.
The financial institutions should provide more working capital assistance both for small scale venture and large scale ventures in rural areas.
 - District Industries Centers and Single Window Agencies should make use of assisting women in their trade and business guidance.

Conclusion

Women today are more willing to take up activities that were once considered the preserve of men, and have proved that they are second to no one with respect to contribution to the growth of the economy. Women entrepreneurship must be moulded properly with entrepreneurial traits and skills to meet the changes in trends, challenges global markets and also be competent enough to sustain and strive for excellence in the entrepreneurial arena and an increase in self-confidence, self-reliance and independence of rural women due to the involvement in the entrepreneurial and other activities, and raised literacy level could be helpful for the rural women to overcome cognitive constraints and to understand government policies, technical understanding and gaining required skills.

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