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WOMEN AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract:-Women perform an important role in building the real backbone of a nation's economy. There is considerable entrepreneurial talent among women. Many women's domestic skills such as people and time management and household budgeting are directly transferable in the business context. Women have the ability to balance different tasks and priorities and tend to find satisfaction and success in and from building relationships with customers and employees, in having control of their own destiny, and in doing something that they consider worthwhile. They have the potential and the will to establish and manage enterprises of their own. These qualities and strengths of women are to be tapped for productive channels. But simultaneous creation and development of small business among women is a difficult task. According to Brady Anderson J., "Even though women's contributions to business are one of the major engines of global economic growth, too often, women do not have access to basic business education, commercial credit and marketing opportunities..." Maintenance of proper quantitative balance among various economic activities is one of the principal functions of the economic system, which should operate to give equal freedom of choice to men and women. The paper analysis Women Entrepreneurship in India, Evolution of Women Entrepreneurship, Organisations Promoting Women Entrepreneurship in India.

Keywords: Women and Entrepreneurship , women's domestic .

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship plays an imperative role in the growth of any society. Development of entrepreneurship culture and qualitative business development services are the major requirements for industrial growth. Entrepreneurship emerges from an individual's creative spirit into long-term business ownership, employment creation, capital formation and economic security. Entrepreneurial skills are essential for industrialisation and for alleviation of mass unemployment and poverty.

As technology speeds up lives, women are an emerging economic force, which cannot be neglected by the policy makers. The world's modern democratic economy depends on the participation of both sexes. Irene Natividad has observed that "Global markets and women are not often used in the same sentence, but increasingly, statistics show that women have economic clout most visibly as entrepreneurs and most powerfully as consumers". Today, women in advanced market economies own more than 25 per cent of all businesses and women-owned businesses in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America are growing rapidly. In some regions of the world, transformation to market economy, women entrepreneurs is a growing trend. However, in India, the actual participation of women in income generating activities is quite unsatisfactory, only eight per cent of the small scale- manufacturing units are owned and operated by women.

In the closing years of the 21st century, multi- skilled, productive and innovative women entrepreneurs are inextricable for achieving sustained economic growth. Globalisation of industrial production and economic interdependence have become the torch-bearers for all international cooperations. In the dynamic world which is experiencing the effects of globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation, women entrepreneurs are likely to become an even more important part of the global quest for sustained economic growth and social development. The

economic status of woman is now accepted as an indication of the society's stage of development. Women (especially rural women) are vital development agents who can play a significant role in the economic development of a nation, but they should have an equal access to productive resources, opportunities and public services. It has also been realised in the last few years that the widespread poverty and stunted economic growth can be overcome only by gainful and sustainable economic participation of women. National development will be sluggish, if the economic engine operates only at half power. Women in Enterprise Building has emerged as an agenda for many policy makers, researchers, and trainers and as well as for associations and organisations involved in women development. If women acquire skills, they can carve a niche for themselves in the outside world too. This is the reason why women entrepreneurship development has become a subject of great concern and serious discussion in recent times.

CONCEPT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship is an economic activity which is undertaken by an individual or group of individuals. Entrepreneurship can be defined as the making of a "new combination" of already existing materials and forces; that entrepreneurship throws up as innovations, as opposed to inventions and that no one is entrepreneur for ever, only when he or she is actually doing the innovative activity.

Women entrepreneurship is the process where women organise all the factors of production, undertake risks, and provide employment to others. The definition of women entrepreneurship has never been differentiated on the basis of sex and hence could be extended to women entrepreneurs without any restrictions.

According to Medha Dubhashi Vinze, a woman entrepreneur is a person who is an enterprising individual with an eye for opportunities and an uncanny vision, commercial acumen, with tremendous perseverance and above all a person who is willing to take risks with the unknown because of the adventurous spirit she possesses.

Thus, a woman entrepreneur is one who starts business and manages it independently and tactfully, takes all the risks, faces the challenges boldly with an iron will to succeed. Women entrepreneurship is an economic activity of those women who think of a business enterprise, initiate it, organise and combine the factors of production, operate the enterprise and undertake risks and handle economic uncertainty involved in running a business enterprise.

EVOLUTION OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Although women form a very large proportion of the self-employed group, their work is often not recognised as "work". The prevailing 'household strategy' catalyses the devaluation of women's productive activities as secondary and subordinate to men's work. Women's contributions vary according to the structure, needs, customs and attitudes of society. Women entered entrepreneurial activities because of poor economic conditions, high unemployment rates and divorce catapult. In Babylonia, about 200 B.C., women were permitted to engage in business and to work as scribes. By 14th century, in England and France, women were frequently accepted on a par with men as carpenters, saddlers, barbers, tailors and spurriers. Dressmaking and lace making guilds were competed more with men for some jobs, but were concentrated primarily in textile mills and clothing factories⁷. In 1950, women made up nearly 25 per cent of both industrial and service sectors of the developing countries. In 1980, it increased to 28 per cent and 31 per cent respectively. Meanwhile, in 1950, 53 per cent of females and 65 per cent of males of industrialised countries were in non-agricultural sectors.

As a result of the economic crisis of the 1980s and the commercialisation and modernisation of the economy, women lost employment in agriculture and industries. This pushed women in urban areas to find out a suitable solution for generating income, which resulted in the emergence of self-employment, largely in micro-businesses in the informal sector.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN INDIA

Women entrepreneurship in India represents a group of women who have broken away from the beaten track and are exploring new vistas of economic participation. Women in India entered business due to pull and push factors. Their task has been full of challenges. In spite of the family opposition, many women have proved themselves independent and successful entrepreneurs. The emergence of women entrepreneurs and women-owned firms and their significant contributions to the economy are visible in India and these businesses are ready for continued growth in the future. In India, women constitute half of the total population (495.74 million), but their participation in the economic activity is very low. The Female work participation rate was 25.7 percent in 2001.

In India, women are relatively powerless with little or no control over resources and little decision making power. Women in the informal sector are found to be home-based workers, engaged in the petty manufacture of goods, either on piece rate basis or on own account, petty traders and petty shopkeepers or service specialists. Studies reveal that 89 per cent of India's women workers toil in the informal sectors in sub-human conditions. Over 2/3 of the enterprises are self owned and have a fixed capital of less than Rs.50/- . Over 4/5 of the women workers in this sector earn less than Rs.500/-p.m. The income earned by women in this sector is said to be about 1/4 of that of a woman in the

organised sector”.

Nowadays women are well-educated with technical and professional qualifications. Many of them have medical, management and similar degrees and diplomas. Many entered their family business as equal partners. Women set up their own clinics or nursing homes, small boutiques, small manufacturing enterprises and entered garment exports. They have their own personal choices and the courage to undertake new ventures. However, many have to face family antipathy and do not get adequate support from their family.

EVOLUTION OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN INDIA

In India, women’s participation in economic activity is common from time immemorial. The role of women has gone through several transitions. It took centuries for women’s roles to move in the present direction. There are some regions where women live in a barbarian era, chained and shackled to the social taboos, restrictions and lakshmanarekhas of others who frame a code of conduct. At the same time there are other regions where women fight for and win freedom and opportunity to play their roles in a new context with new occupations and a new way of life.

As regards the ancient industries of India, family was the unit of production where women played an important role in the production process. Even in Mohenjodaro and Harappa culture, women shared a responsible position with men and helped in spinning and clay modelling and other simple arts and crafts. Women played a very pivotal role in creating household utility requirements and agricultural activities and weaving during the Vedic Period. In the traditional economy, they played vital roles in agriculture industry and services. They were the makers of intoxicant soma-juice, a skilful task. In the 18th century, women had a significant role in economy and a definite status in the social structure. Women’s informal trading activities in the international distribution system have been well documented since early 1950s. Since 1970 systematic efforts have been made by the Government to promote selfemployment among women. Women entrepreneurship in India became popular in the late 1970s and now more and more women are emerging as entrepreneurs in all kinds of economic activities.

According to the 1971 Census, the total female working population is about 13.8 per cent of the total work force. It was only from Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards that women’s development was recognised as an identified sector. 1980s provided the real breakthrough for women in many fields and many frontiers. During the 1990s, women were capable, competent, confident and assertive and had a clear idea about the ventures to be undertaken and they succeeded in them. Many women entered large-scale enterprises of their parents or husbands and proved their competence and capabilities. Women acquired high self-esteem and the capability of solving the problems independently through economic independence.

In the 21st century women are becoming experts in all the fields. With the growing awareness about business and the spread of education, they have entered new areas such as engineering, electronics and energy and acquired expertise in these fields. Many of the new industries are headed and guided by women. However, in India a large number of highly educated women do not seek employment. Marriage and family have always been the first choice for most Indian women. Female role prescriptions have created mind blocks. Men are more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities. The number of men in autonomous start-up category is twice that of women, thrice in the category of manageresses.

Organisations Promoting Women Entrepreneurship in India

1. National Resource Centre for Women (NRCW)

An autonomous body set up under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990 to orient and sensitise policy planners towards women’s issues, facilitating leadership training and creating a national database in the field of women’s development.

2. Women’s India Trust (WIT)
WIT is a charitable organisation established in 1968 to develop skills of women and to earn a regular income by providing training and employment opportunities to the needy and unskilled women of all communities in and around Mumbai.

3. Women Development Corporation (WDC)
WDCs were set up in 1986 to create sustained income generating activities for women to provide better employment avenues for women so as to make them economically independent and self-reliant.

4. Development of Women and Children in Urban Area (DWCUA)
DWCUA was introduced in 1997 to organise the urban poor among women in socio-economic self-employment activity groups with the dual objective of providing self-employment opportunities and social strength to them.

5. Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Karnataka (AWAKE)

AWAKE was constituted by a team of women entrepreneurs in Bangalore with a view to helping other

women in different ways –to prepare project report, to secure finance, to choose and use a product, to deal with bureaucratic hassles, to tackle labour problems, etc.

6. Working Women's Forum (WWF)

WWF was founded in Chennai for the development of poor working women to rescue petty traders from the clutches of middlemen and to make them confident entrepreneurs in their own right. The beneficiaries are fisher women, lace makers, beedi making women, landless women, labourers and agarbathi workers.

7. Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Small Scale Industries (AWESSI)

It was founded in Ambattur in Chennai in 1984 to promote, protect and encourage women entrepreneurs and their interests in South India to seek work and co-operate with the Central and State Government services and other Government agencies and to promote measures for the furtherance and protection of small-scale industries.

8. Women's Occupational Training Directorate

It organises regular skill training courses at basic, advanced and post advanced levels. There are 10 Regional Vocational Training Institutes (RVTIs) in different parts of the country, besides a National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI) at NOIDA.

9. Aid The Weaker Trust (ATWT)

ATWT was constituted in Bangalore by a group of activists to impart training to women in printing. It is the only one in Asia. Its benefits are available to women all over Karnataka. It provides economic assistance and equips girls with expertise in various aspects of printing and building up self- confidence.

10. Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)

SEWA is a trade union registered in 1972. It is an organisation of poor self- employed women workers. SEWA's main goals are to organise women workers to obtain full employment and self- reliance.

11. Women Entrepreneurship of Maharashtra (WIMA)

It was set up in 1985 with its head office in Pune to provide a forum for members and to help them sell their products. It also provides training to its members. It has established industrial estates in New Mumbai and Hadapsar.

12. Self- Help Group (SHG)

An association of women, constituted mainly for the purpose of uplifting the women belonging to the Below Poverty Line (BPL) categories to the Above Poverty Line (APL) category. The major activities of the group are income generation programmes, informal banking, credit, unions, health, nutritional programmes, etc.

13. The National Resource Centre for Women (NRCW)

An autonomous body set up to orient and sensitise policy planners towards women's issues, facilitating leadership training and creating a national data base in the field of women's development.

14. Women Development Cells (WDC)

In order to streamline gender development in banking and to have focused attention on coverage of women by banks, NABARD has been supporting setting up of Women Development Cells (WDCs) in Regional Rural Banks and Cooperative Banks.

Financial Institutions Assisting Women Entrepreneurship in India

For the past several years, financial institutions have been playing a pivotal role in giving financial assistance and consultancy services to women entrepreneurs. These institutions include: i) National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC), ii) All-India Development Banks (AIDBs), viz. IDBI, IFCI, ICICI, IIBI, IDFC and SIDBI, iii) Specialised Financial Institutions (SFIs), viz. Exim Bank and NABARD, iv) Investment Institutions, viz. LIC, GIC,

NIC, NIA, OIC, UII and UTI, v) Regional/ State-Level Institutions, viz. NEDFI, SIDCs and SFCs, vi) Commercial Banks, vii) Co-operative Banks, etc.

Participation of Women in SSI Sector in India

The participation of women in SSI sector has been identified in three different roles-as owners, as managers and as employees. As per the 1981 census, there were only 150000 self-employed women, accounting for 5.2 per cent of the total self employed persons in India. There were more than 153260 women entrepreneurs claiming 9.01 per cent of the total 1.70 million entrepreneurs in 1988-8916. As on 1995-96, the number of women entrepreneurs in the SSI sector was 297696 with a share of 11.2 per cent in the total SSI sector.

It is estimated that women entrepreneurs currently constitute about 10 per cent of the total number of entrepreneurs in India and the percentage is growing every year. If the prevailing trends continue, it is likely that in another five years, women will constitute 20 per cent of the entrepreneurial force.

As per the Third All India Census of SSI-2004 (given in Table 1) the percentage of women enterprises was more than the percentage of units managed by women. Again, the number of women enterprises in the unregistered sector was more than the number of women enterprises in the registered SSI sector. Similar was the case in the number of units managed by women.

Table 1. Participation of Women in SSI Sector in India - Third All India Census-2004 (Reference Period 2001-02)

Size of the sector	Total SSI sector	No. of women enterprise	Percentage	No. of units managed by women	Percentage
Regd. SSI sector	1374974	137534	10.1	114361	8.32
Un regd. SSI sector	9146216	926187	10.13	880780	9.63
Total	10521190	1063721	10.11	995141	9.46

Source: Ministry of Small Scale Industries, Government of India, New Delhi, 2004. Principal Characteristics of Women-managed SSI Units in India

The principal characteristics of women-managed SSI units in India as per the Third All India Census of SSI-2004 (given in Table 2) show that the share of women-managed units in the total SSI sector in terms of number of units (9.46 %) and employment (7.14 %) was higher than that of their share in other aspects, viz. original value of plant and machinery (4.11%), market value of fixed assets (4.63%), gross output ((3.46 %) and exports (2.37 %). The share of women-managed units in the unregistered SSI sector in terms of number of units, employment, original value of plant and machinery, market value of fixed assets and gross output are higher than that of the registered SSI sector.

Table 1.2 Principal Characteristics of Women-managed SSI Units in India Third All India Census-2004 (Reference Period 2001-02)

Units managed by women	No. of Units	Employment	Original value of plant & machinery (Rs.in crores)	Market value of fixed assets (Rs.in crores)	Gross Output (Rs.in crores)	Exports (Rs.in crores)
Registered SSI sector	114361	349342	11047.85	3362.46	6031.68	331.48
Percentage to total of the respective category	8.32	5.67	3.64	3.66	2.97	2.69
Unregistered SSI sector	880780	1429962	1149.61	3776.33	3732.48	5.38
Percentage to total of the respective category	9.63	7.62	4.68	6.04	4.72	0.28
Total SSI sector	995142	1779304	2254.40	7318.80	9764.17	336.86
Percentage to total of the respective category	9.46	7.14	4.11	4.63	3.46	2.37

Source: Ministry of Small Scale Industries, Government of India, New Delhi, 2004.

CONCLUSION

Women entrepreneurship has gained momentum in the last three decades with the increase in the number of women enterprises and their substantive contribution to economic growth. In the dynamic world, women entrepreneurs are likely to become an important part of the global quest for sustained economic development and social progress. There has been a rapid increase in the efforts to encourage women entrepreneurship in developing countries with the adoption of concrete industrial development goals and strategies. The role of women entrepreneurs is undergoing profound changes in the wake of technological innovations which have brought fresh opportunities to consolidate, enhance and derive the benefits reaped in promoting women entrepreneurship.

Women development is closely associated with national development. Since women constitute half of the total population and account for the second largest group of potential entrepreneurs in India, they also have to play a very important role in the advancement of the country. The Government of India has taken conscious efforts to substantially enhance the spirit of entrepreneurship among women from the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards. Since then, several developmental programmes have been implemented in this direction. Still, it is a major problem for the Government and promotional agencies to identify potential women entrepreneurs, their current status and problems and to decide, implement and derive optimum benefit of promotional measures to achieve sustained and speedy growth of women entrepreneurship.

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