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Women entrepreneurship: Opportunities and challenges at a glance in Indian context

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship refers to the process of setting up of a new business by involving innovation and take advantages from the opportunities. Entrepreneurs play a key role in contributing for the economy where they organize all factors of production, undertake risk and they help in creating new wealth and new jobs. Women entrepreneur organizes and manages business enterprise by introducing ideas and taking risk. Women entrepreneurship is gaining attention and importance on creation of new business for growth and development. The need of entrepreneurship has emerged because of the dependency on service sector and hence created opportunities for women to come forward and utilise their skills to enhance social status and reputation. Government of India has taken many initiatives especially in rural area like providing special training facilities to women by developing their skills and ability to participate in the labour force, ensuring childcare, improving their position in society and equal treatment at workplace. The present study is an attempt to explore about women entrepreneurship in Indian context. India is recognized as male dominated country where women are considered as weaker and inferior in comparison with male counterparts. For the development of women, this differential treatment proved to be the major obstacle in all fields of life especially in entrepreneurship. The objective of this research is to identify the challenges and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs and also study the schemes provided by Government of India. Data has been collected through secondary sources.

Keywords: Women entrepreneurship, economy, development and growth, opportunities and challenges, male dominated

Introduction

The Indian economy is witnessing a major change since from the mid of 1991, Government of India has taking initiatives for adopting and introducing new policy of liberalization, globalization and privatization. There are huge entrepreneurial potential is available in India but women involvement marked as low work participation in economic activities. In last three decades the increase in number of women enterprises has gained momentum in their contribution to economic growth. By overcoming several hurdles and challenges women entrepreneurs become an important part for economic development and social progress. Though women in our country considered as an important pillar but due to lower status in the society their entrepreneurial ability has not been tapped properly. There is a change required for this mindset about women so that they can get equal rights as per the constitution of India and amendments in new Companies Act 2013. The purpose of this paper is to throw light on several schemes launched by Indian government for promoting women entrepreneurship by taking examples of some leading business women in India, their role in the society and contribution for the development of economy. To begin with let's understand the concept of women entrepreneurship and identify the opportunities available for women entrepreneurs in India.

Meaning and definition of entrepreneurship: Women entrepreneurs are those entrepreneurs, who initiate, organize and manage enterprise usually by considering new ideas and taking risk. Government of India has defined women marketers primarily based on female participation in business enterprise and holding a position of employer by providing jobs to other. Accordingly, a female dominated organization is as owned and managed by women having a share of min. 51% of the equity capital and holds minimum 51% of the total employment generated inside the organization for women". The increase in self-employment of women, who starting new ventures is showing a growth of three times than of men.

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The 50% of total population constitute female having the lower literacy rate than the male. For the economic growth of the country women should have to come forward and contribute their share in economic development by becoming successful entrepreneurs. In the conventional society, role of female members have been limited to the four walls, to taking care of child and playing several roles for family and society, but in the contemporary society, they are now moving forward to participate in all kinds of activities. From decades generally women entrepreneurship is found inside the kitchen involving in activities like preparing Pickles, Papads and Powder for selling purpose. In this contrast some of them are also engaged in industries those offering hospitality, beauty services, nursing, handcrafts and paintings, education sector, catering, public relations and consultation, and many others. Due to dependency on male, related to financial issues and social recognition, concept of women entrepreneurship came into existence, which pushed them to do something independently. Women enter into entrepreneurial field to get appropriate jobs related to their education and interest area and desire for social popularity encourage them in the direction of self-employment. Now India is leading a developing nation where focuses mandating for women representation on corporate boards, we have numerous leading female experts in banking and finance, engineering, medicine, law and they also are setting up hospitals, providing training facilities, and many others.

Concept of women entrepreneurship: Women entrepreneurship is a concept of having share of 51% or more in any business or in any venture i.e. managed and organised by female and holds the major share in the business and in today's global business environment women are playing a very important role for the economy. Breaking glass ceiling of gender biasness in top level management, they are coming forward and making their own identity. In developing country like India, women entrepreneurs are also playing a vital role in improving the status of economy as well as their social living index. Women entrepreneurship is nothing but the synonym of women authorization in the business. Women are moving parallel to male counterparts and contributing for the economy by innovative ideas, creating jobs, undertaking risk and making contribution to the value of economy. Indian women despite of all the social hurdles and challenges, they stand tall from the remainder of group for the achievements in their individual field. Entrepreneurship is an economic phenomenon where the focus is to get advantages from new opportunities and profits are the sum of all the activities that come out with the contribution of female, that represent half the total population within the world.

Literature review

In the words of (Kabeer, N. Natali, L., 2013) ^[2], gender inequality leads to inefficiencies that stifle economic growth by raising gender-based barriers against women's entrepreneurship development. Study of (Lathwal, 2011) ^[4] shows that most of women entrepreneurs belonging to semi-educated or uneducated class of workers cannot visualize a female boss in their field of work. Where Cohoon, Wadhwa & Mitchell, (2010), discussed that about women entrepreneur's background, motivation, experiences and financial & psychological factors motivating women to

become entrepreneurs. These desire helps in making wealth, the wish to capitalize own business ideas they had, the appeal of start up culture, a long standing desire to own their own company and working with someone else did not appeal them. According to (Shastri & Sinha, 2010) ^[9], Women Entrepreneurs need support and encouragement from their families, friends, society, and most importantly the government. Government should make initiations to provide financial supports to women entrepreneurs. The study of (Tambunan, 2009) ^[11], found that in Asian developing countries SMEs are gaining overwhelming importance; more than 95% of all firms in all sectors on average per country. The study also depicted the fact that representation of women entrepreneurs in this region is relatively low due to factors like low level of education, lack of capital and cultural or religious constraints. (Rizvi & Gupta, 2009) ^[8], found that government sponsored development activities have benefited only a small section of women, namely the urban middle class. This may be primarily due to their level of education, access to information and family support. (N & D, 2008) ^[6] Explained women need for effective enterprise management, a large quantity of co-operation and encouragement in the sphere of activity, at all levels home and in society and from governmental organisations. The study of (Lall, Madhurima; Sahai, Shikha; 2008) ^[3] identified a comparative assessment of multi-dimensional issues & challenges of women entrepreneurship, & family business. The study identified Psychographic variables like, degree of commitment, entrepreneurial challenges & future plan for expansion, based on demographic variables. The study suggested that though, there has been considerable growth in number of women opting to work in family owned business but they still have lower status and face more operational challenges in running business. (Singh, 2008) ^[10], identifies the reasons & influencing factors behind entry of women in entrepreneurship. He explained the characteristics of their businesses in Indian context and also obstacles & challenges. He mentioned the obstacles in the growth of women entrepreneurship are mainly lack of interaction with successful entrepreneurs, social unacceptance as women entrepreneurs, family responsibility, gender discrimination, missing network, low priority given by bankers to provide loan to women entrepreneurs. He suggested the remedial measures like promoting micro enterprises, unlocking institutional frame work, projecting & pulling to grow & support the winners etc. The study advocates for ensuring synergy among women related ministry, economic ministry & social & welfare development ministry of the Government of India (P & Singh, 2006) ^[7] has studied on Constraints Faced by Women Entrepreneurs in Jammu" on 240 respondents engaged in various industrial activities. The study suggested that the attitude of women entrepreneurs need to be reoriented towards the promotion of leadership qualities. The government has to take efforts to provide market assistance, provision of land, create awareness of its schemes and assistance to women entrepreneurs. Greene et al. (2003), evaluate the research & publication contribution in the area of women entrepreneurship. The study categorized various journal & resources of research on the basis of certain parameters concerned with women entrepreneurship like gender discrimination. Reitz & Henrekson (2000) has studied that that women-owned businesses were "underperforming" only because the

growth preferences of women were lower than those of men by analyzing the sales, profitability and employment. Das, (2000) performed a study on women entrepreneurs of SMEs in two states of India, viz, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The initial problems faced by women entrepreneurs are quite similar to those faced by women in western countries. However, Indian women entrepreneurs faced lower level of work-family conflict and are also found to differ from their counterparts in western countries on the basis of reasons for starting and succeeding in business. Similar trends are also found in other Asian countries such as Indonesia and Singapore. Again the statistics showed that the proportion of business setup and operated by women is much lower personal attributes, financing challenges, business unit, context and feminist perspectives.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs.
- To study the schemes that are provided by Government of India for women entrepreneurs.
- To identify the opportunities for women entrepreneurs in India.

Challenges faced by Indian women entrepreneurs

From the recent studies, it's clearly shows that the journey of women entrepreneurs is not easy whether it is a home or workplace, in business they have to come across by facing lot of challenges, hurdles related to financial issues, socio-cultural barriers and many others. The discussions of these problems are as follows

- a. **Lack of finance:** As we know finance is the key to start any venture and no business enterprise can run properly in the absence of adequate funds. Finance is one of the important challenge that women entrepreneur are facing and have less access over the external sources of finance than in the comparison of men. The women mostly rely on self generated finance during in starting days of business but in middle of the time they need more funds to meet out other expenses and in that of course of action they find difficulty in acquiring sufficient funds and get deviated from route to success. Due to lack of finance and mismanagement sometimes leads to closure of venture. Even though various financial institutions extended their maximum limit of financial assistance like incentives, loans, schemes etc. but in the rural and backward areas women entrepreneurs may not get aware of it.
- b. **Lack of training and education:** The next challenge related to women entrepreneurs in developing countries is lack of access to ICTs i.e. Information and Communication Technology. In India 60% of women are still illiterate. This illiteracy causes insufficiency in management and entrepreneurial skills. Due to lack of education and training women are not aware of new changes in business market, technology and distribution network. Lack of education results in low achievement, less experience may also lead to low representation in business industry. Hence training programs, workshop and proper career guidance is required for the development of young and rural women entrepreneurs who want to set up their own business.
- c. **Safety and security issues:** The next challenge in the line is very sensitive issue in case of women

entrepreneurs and i.e. safety and security at work or home place. From the several studies made on women protection and security, article in newspapers, shows total registered cases of sexual harassment at Indian workplaces increased 54% from 371 in 2014 to 570 in 2017. Nearly two cases reported everyday as per government data tabled in lok sabha of rape and sexual assault of female workers at small or micro level of business. Due to constant fear and stress women entrepreneurs didn't get the opportunity to freely choose their working hours, nature and mode of business and this limits the chance of becoming successful business entrepreneur.

- d. **Family interference and motivational factor:** India is a male dominated society and especially in the field of entrepreneurship, a woman is dominated by men in her family and business. She has to take care of family, children and business, this is the reason why her freedom is restricted by male, she has to take permission before doing anything new for business and family. The interference of family may reduce the quality and success rate of business, because business requires time. By performing dual responsibilities at the same time, one has to compromise and this interference may create psychological and motivational issues. Women may feel low motivated, behavioural changes may also occur. By this she cannot take up risk for the business.
- e. **Lack of social support:** From the past researches, it is clear that societal- and cultural barriers may hamper the growth of women for business as a career. In India, where multi tradition and multi cultural dimension persist, sometimes socio-cultural attitude based on religious belief and tradition are not very supportive and not in favour of women to do business or go out from home. Wrong attitude of society against women, family and person obligations due to lake of education and backwardness may become a barrier is success of women in business.
- f. **Legal barriers and support:** Another barrier identified in the path of women entrepreneur is legal support. The terms and regulation policy, various taxes and bureaucratic procedures may create of obstacles in entrepreneurial field and affect both men and women to a great extent. These laws and service taxation varies across countries and create problems for running and starting a business especially when these bureaucratic authorises come to know that business unit being run and managed by woman.
- g. **Inadequacy of raw material:** The other challenge faces by women entrepreneurs in business is procurement and collection of adequate resources. For production of any product the raw material requires in a bulk but due to less support by family and other vendors of business and insufficiency of funds may sometimes hinder the production process. The heavy amount and time is required for purchase and gathering of resources. For every women, a favourable environment and friendly work culture is necessary to perform entrepreneurial activities and inculcate values involving greatly in business dealings.
- h. **Market related risk:** In India, women are known for dependency on their parents before marriage and after marriage husbands takes the command. Hence right

from the childhood women dependency rely on male members and thus possesses ability of low risk bearing. Many women entrepreneur may find difficulty in capturing the market, lack of mobility make women dependent on middlemen, they are not aware the terms of marketing, product and sales services, their competitors, liking and disliking of consumers and others marketing services like distribution channel and so on. In stiff competition, major problems faced by women entrepreneurs in lacking in sales and marketing skills, as a consequences, she find difficult to make their product popular in the market.

Opportunities for women entrepreneurs in India

Despite of all the challenges and obstacles that women entrepreneurs are facing to establish and run the business, there are several opportunities available in the market for those women who want to enter into entrepreneurship. Some of the women choose this profession to do something for their career growth and want to live independent life and some of them come into business due to family responsibilities and to overcome from financial crisis. Across the world, we can observe that rate of women entrepreneurs is progressing day by day, their role become more important as they are contributing for economic development by entering into dynamic fields like, information and technology, science and engineering, trade and industry and making it their choice of profession. Today Women Entrepreneurs are changing the face of business by directing and enhancing the economic prosperity nationally and globally. The women are easily targeted group for all development programmes and schemes; assistance by government and Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for better education and training facilities for enhancing management skills should be provided and to encourage Indian women to become entrepreneur and participate in decision making. As women are good in decision making and they are contributing pretty well for the economy and society by playing several roles and have many responsibilities towards competitors, customers, corporate, government, family and society. Women entrepreneurs presume to be good business person and can excel in following fields by taking best advantage of it. There are following opportunities for women entrepreneurship and these are as follows

1. Plastic Materials,
2. ICT Enterprises,
3. Textiles,
4. Telecommunication,
5. Eco-friendly Technology,
6. Event Management,
7. Bio-technology,
8. Travel and Tourism,
9. Vermi and Horticulture,
10. Floriculture,
11. Foods, Fruits and Vegetables,
12. Mineral Water,
13. Herbal and Health Care

Schemes Launched by Government of India for Women Entrepreneurs

According to All India Census survey conducted in 2001-2010, report made on Small Scale Industries in India only 10.11% owned by women and 9.46% in the Micro and Small Enterprises are owned and managed by women. In order to promote women entrepreneurs in SSI and MSE sector, the Ministry of India formulated various schemes that will help them in training and vocational programs and some of the major listed schemes are discussed below:

1. Support to training and employment program for women (STEP) (2003-04)

2. Tamil Nadu corporation for development of women (1983)
3. Rashtriya Mahila Khosh (1993)
4. Integrated rural development program (IRDP)
5. Women’s development corporation scheme (WDCS)
6. Indira Priyadarshini Yojana
7. SIDBI’s Mahila Udyam Nidhi Mahila Vikas Nidhi
8. Mahila Samiti Yojana
9. SBI’s Stree Shakthi scheme
10. Mahila Vikas Nidhi
11. Working women’s forum
12. SWA-Shakti Project
13. Indira Mahila Yojana (IMY)
14. Rural Women Development and Empowerment Project
15. Employment and Income Generation-cum- Production Units

There are various institutions present at different levels spreading awareness about training programmes related to entrepreneurship, providing information and vocational training to enhance entrepreneurial skills and motivational inputs so that they become confident to proceed business by their own. These institutions are as follows:

1. Central Level Infrastructure Development Organisations

- a. Khadi and Village Industry Commission (KVIC)
- b. National Small Industry Corporation (NSIC)

2. Central Finance Institutions

- a. Industrial Finance Corporation of India (IFCI)
- b. Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI)
- c. Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI)

3. National Level Training Institutions

- a. Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship, Guwahati
- b. National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development, New Delhi
- c. National Institute for Small Industry Extension Training, Hyderabad
- d. Entrepreneurship Development Institution of India, Ahmedabad

4. Apex National Level Government Organisation

- a. Small Industry Development Organisation (SIDO) under the Development Commissioner, SSI, Ministry of Industry, Govt. of India

5. State Level Entrepreneurship Training Institutions

- a. Centre of Entrepreneurship and Management Development
- b. Institute of Entrepreneurship Development
- c. Centre of Entrepreneurship Development

Research Methodology

The data for the research have been collected from various secondary sources. The statistical data have been collected from websites, working papers periodicals, journals, books and publication. The nature of the study is descriptive.

Conclusion

India is a male dominated society where women are presumed to be weaker and dependent on male members whether economically or socially. Due to this mindset, woman of our society faced lot of challenges like lack of financial stability, education, social-cultural barriers, lack of confidence, these are the factors that create hinders in the

success of women entrepreneurs. A radical change is required for this mindset of society because various studies show that women entrepreneurship is a significant factor for the economic development of country. Hence it is necessary to promote entrepreneurship among women to improve economic condition of country as a whole. This can be made possible with the help of providing proper education and training for rural women entrepreneurs, establishing training institutes that can enhance their level of understanding, work knowledge, capabilities and risk-taking ability. Therefore, Government of Central & State level should train and assist them to participate in workshops, seminars, exhibitions, & trade-fair by setting up various training institutes where continuous monitoring is required to improve the quality of women entrepreneurs. So, the right monitoring and assistance is needed very first from family, society and government to make women entrepreneurs an important part for economy's wealth and progress in this era of globalization.

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