

CHALLENGES OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

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Abstract: The word “Entrepreneur” is derived from the French word *Entreprendre* which means a person who undertakes the task of bringing together various resources and manages them to achieve desired results and takes some share. Entrepreneur is a highly respected word in the developed world. She is an important change agent in every society. She bridges the gap between plan and reality. To an economist, an Entrepreneur is one who brings resources, labour, materials and other assets into combinations that make their value greater than before, and also one who introduces changes, innovations and a new order. To a businessman, an Entrepreneur appears as a threat, an aggressive competitor, whereas to another businessman, the same entrepreneur may be an ally, a source of supply, a customer or someone who creates wealth for others, as well as finds better ways to utilize resources, reduce waste, and produce jobs others are glad to get.

Keywords: Entrepreneur, Entrepreneurship, women Entrepreneurship.

1. INTRODUCTION

An entrepreneur is a dynamic agent of changes or catalyst who transforms the physical, natural and human resources into corresponding production possibilities. She is the key person who envisages new opportunities new techniques, new lines of production, new products and co-ordinates all other activities. Basically an Entrepreneur is a person who is responsible for setting up a business or an enterprise and strives to maximize profits by adopting innovations. A proper environment is necessary along with the other infrastructure facilities for the growth of Entrepreneurship. Risk-taking and putting up with uncertainty are essential functions of entrepreneurship.

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 individual 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 industrialization and for alleviation of mass employment and poverty.

Women in general are socially backward, economically dependent and politically not conscious enough. Thus the women carried a sense of being at a disadvantageous position, born as a girl in the family; they carried many unresolved feelings. The being of a women had been mortgaged to traditional culture, while her becoming had been mortgaged to the wishes of her husband/family.

Since there is a change in the trend now, it is realized that women have to play their role in the economic mainstream of the country. The reason for this change is the increase in the number of educated women and their desire for economic independence. Women are engaged in non-traditional activities which were one time regarded as men’s domain. These activities related to ready-made garments, printing, furniture, utensils, tailoring and electronic goods.

In olden days entrepreneurial world in India is mainly a man’s world. Recent emphasis is that women can also contribute towards the economy of the nation. Women have some strong desirable qualities relevant to entrepreneurship such as their ability to manage, dedication to the work they take up, tolerance and kindness towards people. In today’s world women have not only established themselves in jobs, but have also emerged successful as professional. Considering this, they should enter the fiercely competitive business and industrial field where achieving success is an arduous task.

2. WOMEN AS ENTREPRENEURS

Women as entrepreneurs are now successfully gaining importance in men's world because of their economic independence combined with the challenge of doing something on their own and the encouragement they get from the members of their family. Their involvement in business, their aggressive nature, patience, humanity and gentleness, compared to those of men under similar conditions, make women sound personnel managers in both outside and inside homes. Women entrepreneurs always display an innate capacity to calculate and shoulder risks, with a problem – solving approach, they have a very high degree of achievement motivation and women also do not tag behind men in projecting a positive image of their talents and achievements. The other characteristics of women entrepreneurs can be listed as ability to think independently, imagination and creative activity, easy adaptability to any change at home or elsewhere and resilience and the ability to cope with setbacks.

Women entrepreneurs represent a group of women who have broken away from the beaten track and are exploring new avenues of economic participation. Today women entrepreneurs are in non-traditional fields as leading doctors, consultants, distributors, exporters, manufacturers of electric goods, publishers, designers, and interior decorators. Small units are run for the manufacture of ready-made garments, handicrafts, textile printing, toys and dolls, plastics, processing and preservation of fruits by enterprising ladies. Women entrepreneurs are no more confined to manufacturing 3p's namely pickle, powder and papad but are venturing into modern technological field of 3E's namely energy, electricity and electronics which is very heartening to see and speak for the brighter future of women entrepreneurs. When woman moves forward, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves, these words of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru are often repeated because it is an accepted fact that only when women are in the mainstream of progress any economic development can be meaningful. Thus an entrepreneur is a person who organizes, manages and controls the affairs of a business unit that combines the factors of production from supply and services.

During 1970's the decade of the International Women's Year, efforts to promote self-employment among women received greater attention from the government and private agencies. The New Industrial Policy of the Government of India has laid special emphasis on the need for conducting special entrepreneurial training programmes for women to enable them to start their own ventures. Financial institutions and banks have also set special cells to assist women entrepreneurs. The five year plans have consistently placed special emphasis to improve the conditions of women and integrate them in economic development process. National and International women associations are also setup with a purpose to create a congenial environment for developing women entrepreneurship in rural and urban areas.

In a nutshell, entrepreneurship involves a whole range of aptitudes and capabilities of an enterprising person like capacity to bear risks, forecast prospects of an enterprise, organize various functions of production, manage various affairs of the business, and to innovate or imitate new things, confidence and competence to meet unforeseen and adverse situations.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

- **Drive and energy:**

Entrepreneurs have a tremendous amount of personal energy and drive. They possess the capacity to work for longer hours for several days with less than a normal amount of sleep. Many researchers have proved drive and energy as the characteristics desired by Entrepreneurs and frequently observed in successful entrepreneurs.

- **Self Confidence:**

Successful entrepreneurs have a high level of self- confidence. They tend to believe strongly in themselves and their ability to achieve the goals they set. They also believe that events in their lives are mainly self determined and that they have a major influence on their personal destinies and have little belief in fate.

- **Long term Involvement:**

Entrepreneurs who create high potential ventures are driven to build a business rather than simply get in and out in a hurry with someone else's money. They make a commitment to a long-term project and to working towards goals that they may be quite distant in the future.

- **Money as a Measure:**

Money has a very special meaning for the successful entrepreneur profits, capital gains and net worth are seen as measures of how well the entrepreneur is doing in pursuit of self established goals.

- **Persistent problem solving:**

Entrepreneurs who successfully build new enterprises possess an intense level of determination and desire to overcome hurdles, solve problems and complete the jobs. They are not intimidated by difficult situations. In fact, their self-confidence and general optimism seem to translate into a view that the impossible just takes a little longer.

- **Goal Setting:**

Entrepreneurs are goal oriented. They have the ability and commitment to set clear goals for themselves. These goals tend to be high and challenging but they are realistic and attainable. Entrepreneurs are doers; they are goal and action oriented. According to psychologists, they are motivated by a high need for achievement. They also have a great concern for time. Hence having clean measurable goals is an effective way for entrepreneurs to set priorities.

- **Statement of Feedback:**

Entrepreneurs as high achievers are very much concerned about their performance especially about doing well. If there is no feedback about performance, the entrepreneur cannot know how well or poorly they are doing. Successful entrepreneurs demonstrate a capacity to seek and use feedback on their performance in order to take connective action and improve.

- **Dealing of Resources:**

Several studies have emerged in recent years which show that successful entrepreneurs know when and how to seek outside as well as inside help in building their companies. Successful entrepreneurs seek expertise and assistance that is needed in the accomplishment of their goals. The willingness to seek and utilize outside resources is one key characteristic which distinguishes the high-potential entrepreneurs.

- **Tolerance of Ambiguity and Uncertainty:**

Entrepreneurs have long been viewed as having a special tolerance for ambiguous situations and for making decisions under conditions of uncertainty. The successful women entrepreneurs are highly energetic, independent, self-confident, competitive and goal oriented. They are usually generalists rather than specialists and are more flexible than rigid. These characteristics of women entrepreneurs refute the common opinion that women are strongly dependent and passive.

- **Technical Knowledge:**

Technological change is the prime mover in the process of economic growth. Inventions and innovations have led the process of development in the world. In developing countries the search for and application of new technology should be the prime goal of good entrepreneurs. Their success depends largely upon their ability to devise and use new and better ways of producing and marketing goods and services.

- **Willingness to Change:**

A good entrepreneur is one who is interested in changing the pattern of production to suit the available resources, market conditions, and quality of output. He should be able to take initiative and to adapt to changing conditions. He should have the capacity to explore new demand which occurs with the growth of industry and rise in per capita income.

- **Changing the Pattern of Production:**

An entrepreneur should have a keen desire to initiate and accept change. He is expected to discover new combinations involving new products, new methods of production, development of new market and utilization of new source of productive factors and a new form of organization.

- **Ability to Select, Train and Develop Persons**

He must be able to select, train and develop persons who can properly manage and control the labour force. He should have the capacity to pick and choose the right person and to wisely delegate authority

4. PROBLEMS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

The growth in women entrepreneurship is being haunted by a number of difficulties and problems. In a traditional society, women have been trained to listen, obey and leave decisions to men in the family. Family environment is not generally helpful; women entrepreneurs have to take time off from their household duties. It is also difficult to find men prepared to work under women. The women entrepreneurs, like male entrepreneurs suffer from a number of problems at the pre-investment stage, investment stage and post-investment stage. The problems faced by the women entrepreneurs are:

- **Financial Constraints:**

Women entrepreneurs lack access to external funds due to their inability to provide tangible security. Banks have also taken a negative attitude while providing finance to women entrepreneurs. The result is, women entrepreneurs are forced to rely on their own savings and loans from family and friends.

- **Over-Dependence on Intermediaries:**

Women entrepreneurs are most often dependent on intermediaries who pocket a major part of the profits. The margin of profit is more which causes women to fix higher selling price, which affects consumer's attraction towards women's products.

- **Scarcity of Raw Materials:**

Shortage of raw materials and other necessary inputs have sounded the death knell of many enterprises run by women. On the one hand the prices of raw materials are very high and on the other they are unable to get these raw materials at the minimum of discounts

- **Intense Competition:**

Women entrepreneurs face stiff competition for their products from organized industries and male entrepreneurs. Moreover, they do not have the organizational setup to pump in a lot of money for advertisements.

- **High Cost of Production:**

High cost of production has restricted the development of women enterprises. Government has setup many programmes to assist women entrepreneurs by providing them with subsidies and tax concessions. But the concessions are available only at the initial stage of setting up an enterprise. When it comes to expansion of productive capacity and installation of new machinery, the help is negligible, dissuading many women entrepreneurs from venturing into new areas.

- **Family Ties:**

Indian women give more emphasis to family ties and relationships. Married women have to make a fine balance between business and home. The success of the business depends on the support of the family members extended to women entrepreneur in business and management. The interest of the family members is a determinant factor in the realization of women entrepreneurs.

- **Lack of Female Role Models:**

Women are also at a disadvantage as there are a few role models in this field. A woman can learn a lot of things from their role models.

- **Low-Level Management Skills:**

The women entrepreneurs have to depend on office staff and intermediaries, to get things done, especially, in the marketing and sales side of business. There is more probability for business fallacies like the intermediaries taking major parts 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 conditions. Even, they often depend on males of the family in this area.

- **The Male-Female Competition:**

It is another factor, which is a hurdle to women entrepreneurs in the business management process. Women entrepreneurs are good in keeping their service prompt and delivery in time but due to lack of organizational skills women have to face a number of constraints. 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.

- **Knowledge of Alternative Sources of Supply:**

Knowledge of alternative sources of raw materials available and high negotiation skills are the basic requirement to run a business. Getting the raw materials from different sources 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.

- **Knowledge of Latest Technologies Changes:**

Knowledge of latest technological changes, know-how and education level of the person are significant factors that affect business. The literacy rate of women in India is found to be low when compared to male population. Many women in developing nations lack the educations needed to successful entrepreneurship. They are ignorant of new technologies or unskilled in their use and often unable to do research and gain the necessary training.

- **Achievement Motivation:**

Achievement motivation of the womenfolk is found to be less compared to male members. The low level of education and confidence leads to low level achievement and advancement motivation among womenfolk to engage in business operations and running a business concern.

- **Balancing Home and Work roles:**

Having the major responsibility for managing home and family tasks as well as working full time, places a double burden on women entrepreneurs. Because it takes an abundance of time to do both jobs, Women face exhaustion and stress as they try to balance these responsibilities. This is especially true for women operating home based business

- **Lack of Recognition:**

Women are major actors in the global economy. Women's roles as the farmers, traders and informal sector industrials are major and often overlooked.

- **Low Income:**

Almost all low income women are economically active. Most are micro entrepreneurs and self employed in the informal sectors. The major economic roles of low income women entrepreneurs and producers are often undervalued and ignored. If financial systems are to reach low income women entrepreneurs and producers, the delivery systems need to respond to the common characteristics of low income women and their business.

- **Negative Self-Perceptions:**

Women view themselves as having personnel characteristics that negatively affect their business activities. There is some indication that rural, native and immigrant women be more affected by their perceived personal deficiencies in the population as a whole.

- **Social Barriers:**

Social barriers of Indian society have suspicious eyes on women due to caste systems and religious background. Indian women have to play various roles as expected by our Indian family system. If they spend long hours in business, then it is difficult to meet the expectations of family members.

5. SUGGESTIONS FOR PROMOTING WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- Education is a must to inculcate the spirit of equality in women.
- Women must be encouraged to actively participate in debates/seminars/conferences and should be informed that there is no shortcut to success; particularly the entrepreneurial path requires sacrifice, diligence and devotion.
- Inclusion of entrepreneurship development as a compulsory subject in the school curriculum itself. Guidance and counseling cells in Universities and Colleges also need to be established for educating women about the benefits of an entrepreneurial career.
- Training centre's should provide training to prospective women entrepreneurs free of cost and entrepreneurial development programmes should be much more practical-oriented.
- Inculcation of self-confidence among women so that they can run a business.
- Potential women entrepreneurs should be exposed to different types of emerging opportunities.
- More attractive schemes encouraging existing ones should be launched for women entrepreneurs and these schemes should be properly advertised
- Finance should be made available to women entrepreneurs at concessional rates of interest.

- Sales outlets should be created for products manufactured by women entrepreneurs like regulated markets for agricultural goods.
- Permission should be granted to women entrepreneurs to run their enterprises from home especially the non-polluting enterprises.
- Parents should be advised to prefer spending money on setting up of a business instead of heavy spending on the marriage of their daughters.
- Women must be motivated to do something productive instead of wasting their time in kitty parties and other social gatherings through organized women wings.
- Women should prefer setting up home-based business.
- Full co-operation of family members and less burden of household work will prove to be immensely useful.
- Legislations aimed at safeguarding women against discriminatory practices should be properly implemented.
- Government should promote more competent agencies to improve the credit delivery system to enable women entrepreneurs to avail the required capital.
- Different strategies must be introduced to inculcate marketing skills in women entrepreneurs and enable them to sell their products easily in the market.
- Co-operative societies should be established to assist women entrepreneurs to sell their products.
- An effort should be made to provide raw materials to women entrepreneurs on priority basis at low rates.
- Programmes should be started to make them aware of the new technologies so that they can avail maximum benefits from them.

6. CONCLUSION

Now a day's women are gentle, think independently and imaginative. In addition to these they have creative ability, easy adoptability and ability to cope with setbacks. Women participation in the field of entrepreneurship is increasing at a considerable rate, efforts are being taken at the economy as well as global level to enhance women's involvement in the enterprise sector. Independence brought promise of equality of opportunity in all sphere to the women and law guaranteeing for their equal rights of participation in political process and equal opportunity and rights in education and employment were enacted. But unfortunately the sponsored development activities have benefited only a small section of women. It is hoped that the suggestions forded in the article will help the entrepreneurs in particular and policy planners in general to look in to this problems and develop better schemes , developmental programmes and opportunities to the women to enter in to more entrepreneurial ventures.

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