

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA– PROBLEMS AND REMEDIES

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Abstract

Women constitute almost one-half of the total population and form an important section of the total labour force. But their social, economic, and political status is lower than that of men in many countries, including India. The social status of women in the society depends upon the part played by them and the social attitude of the society towards them. The status of women is intimately connected with their socio-economic contribution, which depends on opportunities for participation in economic activities. In the modern society, the role and degree of integration of women in economic development is considered as the indicator of social advancement and the women's economic independence. In this paper the author discussed the problems and remedies of women entrepreneurs in India.

Keywords: entrepreneurs, women entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship, types, entrepreneur problems, entrepreneur remedies.

Introduction

Women constitute almost one-half of the total population and form an important section of the total labour force. But their social, economic, and political status is lower than that of men in many countries, including India. The social status of women in the society depends upon the part played by them and the social attitude of the society towards them. The status of women is intimately connected with their socio-economic contribution, which depends on opportunities for participation in economic activities. "The position of women and their role are predominantly important, not only because women represent one-half of the human resources and their contribution to economic growth is inevitable but to uplift their position in the society. Women must be enabling to function as equal partners and participants in development and not merely as beneficiaries of various schemes."¹

Women Entrepreneurship

The involvement and participation in the process of development is essential for the upliftment of women and to raise their status in the society. 'Wage Employment' and 'Self-employment' is the most potential source. Self-employment refers to starting a self-owned business. It is a task of converting job seekers to entrepreneurs. A number of schemes and programmes are there to promote self-employment among women. In this context, promotion of entrepreneurship among educated women is the extreme need of the time. A number of State and Central Government institutions and Non Governmental Organizations are engaged in the field of promoting entrepreneurship among women.

Till 1987, there were 1.6 million small-scale entrepreneurs in the country and women entrepreneurs constitute only 6.2 per cent of the total; and a major portion of self-employed women was confined to traditional activities such as weaving garments, handicrafts, and food processing. Their performance in the industrial sector was found not impressive.² Entrepreneurship development programmes (EDPs) organized by governmental institutions and the activities of other agencies in the grass root level has provided a great policies of the central and State Governments, conferring a wide variety of concessions, subsidies, incentives, rebates, lax relieves, financial assistance etc, are attracting more and more educated unemployed youths to start new enterprises. A number of special schemes are also designed exclusively for women. As a result of the efforts made by the Government, the work of NGOs and due to the changes going on in the socio cultural and educational background, the size and structure of women entrepreneurs in the country have been totally changed.

Types of Women Entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs can be classified in to three:

1. Natural Entrepreneurs

Natural or pure entrepreneurs possess basic entrepreneurial talent and are often good managers too. They are motivated by economic rewards (make profit or generate income) or Psychological factors such as independent employment, social status etc, on getting a chance, they will start their carrier. Majority of them will establish without much external support and assistance.

2. Created Entrepreneurs

Created or motivated entrepreneurs are prop up through incentives, training or such other schemes. Even though they are not self-starters, if some one gets them started they keep going all right. Entrepreneurship Development Programmes (EDPs) and Governmental assistances are aimed at creating new generation entrepreneurs.

3. Forced Entrepreneurs

Forced entrepreneurs are reluctant to undertake any venture. But some incidents push them to undertake the responsibility of a business. Death of parents or husband,

property, or family business inherited may force them to become entrepreneurs. They are by and large deficient in managerial proficiency.

Problems of Women Entrepreneurs

Women have lots of skills in them, but the main problem is, there is nobody to train and initiate them in craftsmanship. Skill training is the basic for any entrepreneurship. Though facilities are available, social attitudes keep these apart from women both in rural and urban areas. The problems of women entrepreneurs are as follows:

1. Inefficient arrangement for marketing and sale

For marketing their products, women entrepreneurs are often at the mercy of middlemen who pocket a large chunk of profit. The elimination of middlemen is also difficult because it involves a lot of running about. Further women entrepreneurs find it difficult to capture the market.

2. Shortage of raw materials

Women entrepreneurs find it difficult to procure raw materials and other necessary inputs. The failure of many entrepreneurial units is due to the inadequacy of raw materials.

3. Stiff competition

Due to imperfect organizational setup many units failed. They have to face severe competition from organized industries and male entrepreneurs.

4. High cost of production

Another problem which undermines the efficiency and restricts the development of women enterprise is the high cost of production. Government assistance in the form of grants and subsidies to some extent enables them to tide over this difficulty.

5. Low mobility

One of the biggest handicaps of women entrepreneurs is low mobility or traveling from one place to another.

6. Family responsibilities

Married women entrepreneurs have to make a fine balance between home and business. Their success in this regard also depends upon supporting husband and family. Despite modernization, tradition and family responsibilities slow down movement of women.

7. Social attitudes

The biggest problem of a women entrepreneur is social attitude and constraints in which she has to live and work. Despite Constitutional equality, there is discrimination against women.

8. Low ability to bear risk

Women have comparatively low ability to bear economic and other risks because they have led a protected life. Inferiority complex, unplanned growth, lack of infrastructure, late starts and the like are other problems of women entrepreneurs.

9. Shortage of finance and problem of liquidity

Women and small entrepreneurs always suffer from inadequate financial resources and working capital. They are lacking access to external funds due to absence of tangible security and credit in the market.

Remedies to solve the problems of women entrepreneurs

1. Financial cells

In various public financial institutions and banks, special cells may be opened for providing easy finance to women entrepreneurs. These cells should be manned by women officers and clerks.

2. Marketing Co-operatives

Encouragement and assistance should be provided to women entrepreneurs for setting up co-operatives. These co-operatives will provide inputs for women enterprises and sell the products at remunerative prices.

3. Supply of raw materials

Scarce and imported raw materials may be made available to women entrepreneurs on priority basis. A subsidy may also be given to the products manufactured by women entrepreneurs.

4. Education and awareness

It is necessary to change the negative social attitude towards women. Elders need to be made aware of the potential of girls and their due role in society.

5. Training facilities

Training and skills are essential for the development of entrepreneurship. Training schemes should be so designed that women can take full advantage.

Conclusion

Economic development is the result of contributions of the working population. Women constitute almost half of the population in the world; therefore, their contribution to the economy is significant. In the patriarchal traditional society, women folk were not expected to have a direct role in industrial and commercial activities. In the modern society, the role and degree of integration of women in economic development is considered as the indicator of social advancement and the women's economic independence.

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