



“Her Path To Prosperity: Women’s Empowerment through Entrepreneurship”

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Abstract:

Entrepreneurs are regarded as backbone of an economy. Nowadays, women entrepreneurship has become an important tool for women empowerment. The aim of the study is to elucidate the history of entrepreneurship in India, its development stages, distinction between the traits of male and female entrepreneurs and recent trends in women entrepreneurship in India. It also discusses about eminent entrepreneurs of India, in the present era. With the advent of globalisation, women, too, have been provided with myriad opportunities. India, for long, has been patriarchal and women leaders have often found it difficult to put up their thoughts open in public and have not discussed anything progressive due to lack of confidence, encouragement and from the fear of being back lashed. However, the constitutional amendments and provisions related to working conditions for women, Post-Independence, have encouraged women to bring their ideas forth and turn figment of imagination into reality. So many women entrepreneurs like Indra Nooyi, Chanda Kochhar, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Indu Jain and others, with their relentless zeal, incessant quench for success and willingness to walk the extra mile, became the role models for Indian women. However, Despite the efforts made by government of India, currently, women constitute only 14 per cent of the total entrepreneurs. There are still some constraints persistent in our economy, which prevent women to enter the entrepreneurial world.

Keywords:- Entrepreneurs, Women Entrepreneurship, Female Labour Force Participation, Constraints.

Introduction:

Entrepreneurs are visionaries who identify opportunities, act on them and start new businesses (Chang, 1998). Entrepreneurs are opportunists who must be always aware of the ever – changing environment around them. A plethora of opportunities are now being tapped by women entrepreneurs. A large number of women are entering into entrepreneurship in some form or the other (Thomas & Mittal, 2021). The drive to pursue entrepreneurship is due to the immense passion and certain compulsions. Women’s skills, knowledge, talents, abilities and desire to do something for themselves and their children or family are some of the reasons for women to become entrepreneurs. According to World Bank, investing more in women enterprises rather in men reduces the inequalities and poverty and thereafter, ensures economic development of a nation. In fact, Ivanka Trump, Daughter and adviser to US president believes that “Technology is a great driver of entrepreneurship as it emboldens women to start own ventures, reduces barriers to new businesses, and creates flexibility for modern working family.”

However, the situation of women is no longer as same as it used to be -

- Earlier, there were 3 Ks – Kitchen, Kids, Knitting.
- Then came 3 Ps – Powder, Pappad, Pickles.
- At present, there are 4 Es – Electricity, Electronics, Energy, Engineering.

Meaning of Empowerment: Empowerment is a process of positive change that improves women’s fallback position and bargaining power with a patriarchal structure and identify different casual pathways of change; material, cognitive, perceptual, and relational.

Vanessa & Yee (1987) explains it through gender lens, as her, women empowerment means-

- having control, or gaining further control
- having a say and being listened to;
- being able to define and create from a women’s perspective, being able to influence social choices and decisions affecting the whole society (not just areas of society accepted as women’s place)
- being recognised and respected as equal citizens and human beings with a contribution to make.

Dwivedi & Mishra (2013): in her piece of work “Women empowerment through women entrepreneurship” describes that empowerment means to bestow power. Empowerment of women through entrepreneurship involves access to

resources and markets, actual ownership and active control and further recommend the entrepreneurship a better tool for women empowerment. In short, empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building, leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control, and transformative action. In addition, empowerment is a process that is both individual and collective. Sometimes, it involves people and groups that most often begin to develop their awareness and the ability to organise, to take action and bring about change.

Who are women entrepreneurs?

Women entrepreneurs may be defined as woman or group of women who initiate, organise and run a business enterprise. The Government of India has defined women entrepreneurs, based on women participation in equity and employment of a business enterprise. Accordingly, Government of India defines women entrepreneur as “an enterprise owned and controlled by a woman having a minimum financial interest of 51 percent of the capital and giving it at least 51 percent of the employment generated in the enterprise to women.”

Kamal Singh, who is a woman entrepreneur from Rajasthan, has defined woman entrepreneur as “a confident, innovative and creative woman capable of achieving self economic independence individually or in collaboration, generates employment opportunities for others through initiating, establishing and running the enterprise by keeping pace with her personal, family and social life.” In nutshell, woman entrepreneurs perform following three entrepreneurial functions :-

- Risk-bearing
- Organisation
- Innovations

Objectives: The present study has been undertaken keeping in mind the following objectives –

1. To illustrate the development of women entrepreneurs in India during different phases.
2. To study the distinctive traits of male and female entrepreneurs.
3. To examine the recent trends in women entrepreneurship in India.
4. To identify the factors of hindrance for women entrepreneurship.
5. To suggest measures to promote women entrepreneurship in India.

Methodology: The study has been conducted to know how transformation has occurred in the women roles in the entrepreneurship world. The data and information have been collected from credible and authentic secondary sources like newspapers, magazines, business journals, research papers, textbooks and websites. Moreover, the present study considers the development of women entrepreneurs in three phases.

Male and female entrepreneurs: A comparative study: There are successful and ground breaking record of male and female entrepreneurs all over the world. Research has found that there are some characteristics, that are found in both men and women entrepreneurs (Shmailan, 2016). There are some distinct differences that do exist between the two. So, here is a look at the distinct features found in male and female entrepreneurs-

Basis of Difference	Male Entrepreneurs	Female entrepreneurs
1.General Characteristics	Businesses focused on economy and cost, decision making easy and indulged mainly in business of manufacturing and construction.	Business focused on making social contribution and quality, difficulty in decision making and indulged mainly in business of retail and service orientation.
2.Risk tolerance	Less concerned about hazards in business ownership, willing to fail in business.	More concerned about hazards in business ownership, require social support to start a business, less willing to fail in business.
3.Capital	Need more capital for start up, have a track record for financing thus, acquire easy access to capital.	Need less capital, lack of track record for financing, thus, banks are less willing to give them capital.
4.Objects	Males tend to achieve economy or cost efficiency, and have huge prospects for business.	Females seek to make some sort of social contribution and focus on quality of product.
5.Psychology	Extremely focused over targets, strong initiative, very aggressive, own boss.	Autonomous, more positive, good common sense, think critically, possess a sense of accomplishment.
6.Management	Logical thinkers, oriented leaders, more aggressive when it comes to expansion.	Intuitive thinkers, communicative and expressive behaviour, under the needs of their employees, cautious and conservative about expansion.

7.Networking	Large network, well – built contacts with renowned organisations thus, more access to network.	Small network, limited to family and my friends, not visible in business community, thus, less access to network.
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Development of women entrepreneurship since Independence:

The analysis of women entrepreneurship development in India and different steps taken since Independence has been briefly done with context to three phases – First phase (1947-83) , Second phase (1983-90) , Third phase (from 1991 onwards).

First phase (1947-83):- Several remarkable steps have been taken after independence to improve the conditions of women ,in general, which includes constitutional provisions, working conditions , vocational training and ensuring equal pay etc. A significant step was taken with the declaration of the ‘Decade of Women(1975-85)’ by the U.N. This resulted in a series of steps to improve the status and conditions of women at all levels, including executive and entrepreneurial levels. Between 1971 and 1985, SIDO (Small industrial development organization) through its small industrial service institute, has organised about 8100 programmes in women entrepreneurship.

Second phase (1983-90) :- This phase may be treated as a turning pint in the entrepreneurship development since after this year it became a national movement. Two apex institutions NIESBUD in New Delhi and EDII, Ahmedabad were established in the year , 1983. These two institutions began planning a variety of programmes for entrepreneurship including women entrepreneurship. In 1985-86, out of a total of 1140 EDPs, women received about 10%. In 1989-90, IDBI also started two new programmes called Mahila Udhayam Nidhi (MUN), under which seed capital assistance were given to women entrepreneurs and the other called Vikas Nidhi, under which NGOs dealing with women entrepreneurs were given assistance.

In addition, the seventh Plan (1985-90) had stated that women section have to be given special recognition and provided with requisite facilities for bringing them into the main stream of economic growth. In this regard, the plan emphasised the following tasks –

1. To treat women as specific target groups in all development programmes.
2. To properly diversify vocational training facilities for women to suit to their varied needs and skills.
3. To encourage appropriate technologies, equipment and practice for reducing their drudgery and increasing their productivity.
4. To provide industrial estates at the state level.
5. To increase women’s participation in decision making.

Third phase (from 1991 onwards):- The year 1991 marks an important landmark in Indian history. As a part of New Economic Policy (NEP), the government also announced a special Industrial policy for small scale and tiny industries. Industrial Policy Revolution, 1991 has highlighted the n eccentric to provide special training programmes to develop entrepreneurship in women. The entrepreneurship training was made more institutionalised by making a part of curriculum in universities and other higher educational institutions. Thus, since Independence, a number of institutions were set up to render assistance to women entrepreneurs in the form of training, financial assistance and market assistance. Moreover, this phase marks a paradigm shift from ‘**Development to Empowerment**’ and benefits to women in the core sector of education, health and employment. Outlay of budget from women rose from Rs.4 crore to Rs.2000 crores in the eighth year plan.

Female Labour Force Participation: Usually, economic growth goes hand in hand with emancipation of women. But, data available with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) shows otherwise for India. Doubtlessly, the access to education for Indian women has increased in the past few decades, but the picture is not as rosy as is portrayed. They, still have increasingly stayed away from employment. So, here’s a glimpse of data showing declining trend in women work participation-

Table – 1

Year	Percentage
1990	34.8
1995	35.4
2000	33.9
2005	36.9
2010	28.6
2013	27.0
2016	23.7

Source: ILO via World Bank, Ministry of Labour and Employment

Table 1 shows the figures of female labour force participation ever since 1990 in India. From

the above figures, it is evident that the Female Labour Force Participation (FLFP) has been

declining gradually. In 1990, FLFP was 34.8 per cent and it kept on increasing till 1995, at the rate of 35.4 per cent. However, from 1995 onwards, it dipped in to the extent of 33.9 per cent in 2000 and again, it surged up to the 36.9 per cent in 2005. However, there was an utter decline in FLFP in 2010 and it was recorded at 28.6 per cent only, the lowest ever rate. It further went down in 2013 and 2016 to the extent of 27.0 per cent and 23.7 per cent respectively.

Recent trends in women entrepreneurship in India

According to **Sixth Economic Census**, released by ministry of statistics and programme implementation, presents a worrisome picture of the status of women entrepreneurs in the country. And under written are some of the facts related to it-

- The survey shows that women constitute only 13.76 per cent of the total entrepreneurs, that is, 8.05 million out of the 58.5 million entrepreneurs.
- Another revelation is that, out of these entrepreneurs, 2.76million women (34.3 per cent of the total entrepreneurs) work in agricultural sector, whereas 5.29 million females (65.7 per cent of the total female entrepreneurs) work in non agricultural sectors.
- Among the non-agricultural activities owned by women entrepreneurs, manufacturing, and retail trade are dominant ones with corresponding percentages being 29.8 per cent and 17.8 per cent respectively.
- Among the states, the largest share in number of establishments under women entrepreneurship is of Tamil Nadu (13.51 per cent), followed by Kerala (10.56 per cent), and West Bengal (8.25 per cent).
- Out of the total establishments under women entrepreneurs, percentage share of various social and religious group: OBC-40.60 per cent, SC-12.18 per cent, ST-6.97 per cent and Others-40.25 per cent.

In short, it can be said that only 14 per cent approximately women are entrepreneurs and Tamil Nadu is the state, contributing the most towards woman entrepreneurship. And the above facts also show that women are keen to work more in non-agricultural sector.

Ten successful female entrepreneurs in India

The male dominated world had always been reluctant to acknowledge the fact that women are as good as men, on parameters of hard work, intelligent quotient(IQ) , and leadership traits. Of late, women have, beyond doubt, proved their potential in all spheres of life including the most intricate and cumbersome world of entrepreneurship. Their relentless zeal, incessant quench for success and willingness to walk the extra mile have broken all myths about inborn limitations,

that were supposed to be major roadblocks on their success expressways.

Let's have a look on 10 such Indian women entrepreneurs, who can easily be termed as role models for every Indian female:-

1. Indu Jain, chairperson of India's largest media group, Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd.
2. Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Chairman and Managing Director of Biocon Ltd.
3. Indra Nooyi, CFO and President of PepsiCo.
4. Vandana Luthra, Founder of VLCC, topmost beauty brand marking its presence in 11 countries across Asia.
5. Naina Lal Kidwai, Head and Group general manager HSBC group India.
6. Chanda Kochhar, MD and CEO of India's largest private bank, ICICI Bank.
7. Ekta Kapoor, Founder of Bala ji Telefilms.
8. Neelam Dhawan, currently MD, Hewlett Packard, India.
9. Priya Paul, currently chairperson of Park Hotels.
10. Simone Tata, currently chairperson of Trent Ltd., a subsidiary of Tata Group.

Constraints faced by Women entrepreneurs in India:

There is not even an iota of doubt that every possible effort is being made for the development of women as entrepreneurs. However, there are certain constraints which inhibit the way of women to make their dream come true and such constraints are explained below –

Finance is regarded as 'life – blood' of any enterprise, be it big or small. However, women entrepreneurs suffer from **shortage of finance** on two counts. First, lack of collateral, second, low credit worthiness of women from the perspective of banks and other financial institutions make women handicap in the world of work.

Most of the women enterprises are plagued by the **scarcity of raw material** and other necessary inputs. Added to this are the high prices of raw material, on the one hand and getting raw material at the minimum of discount, on the other hand. The failure of many women cooperatives in 1971 engaged in basket making is an example, how the scarcity of raw material sounds the death – knell of enterprises run by women (Gupta and Srinivasan 2009). Another major constraint in women entrepreneurship in India is, **lack of interaction** with successful entrepreneurs. Successful entrepreneurs become the role model in the society for women with the ability of entrepreneurial activities. But, there is no enough provision for such interaction to inculcate knowledge and make them aware of the experience of successful women entrepreneurs.

Unlike men, women mobility in India is highly **limited** due to various reasons. A single woman asking for room is still looked upon

suspicion. Cumbersome procedure involved in commencing an enterprise coupled with official's humiliating attitude towards women compels them to give up the idea of starting an enterprise. Women, in India, lead a protective life. Before marriage, their fathers are supposed to take decisions for them. And after marriage, they are expected to follow the footsteps of their husbands. They are less educated and economically not self – dependent. All these, reduce their **ability to bear risk**, involved in running an enterprise. Risk-bearing is an essential requisite of a successful entrepreneur. It would not be uncommon to say that many women have skills for doing business, but they hesitate to work with male workers and sometimes, even male workers are not ready to work with women entrepreneurs. Most of the women entrepreneurs are of the opinion that, semi-educated or uneducated class of workers cannot visualise and accept a “**female boss**” in their work field. Another enormous road block in the way of women entrepreneurship in India is, **gender inequality**. Gender inequality may be defined as discrimination against women based on their sex. Women are traditionally considered by society as weaker gender. She is accorded a subordinate position to men. She is exploited, degraded, violated and discriminated both in our homes and in outside world. Often, the number of opportunities offered to women are far less than those offered to men.

In India, around three-fifths (60 per cent) of women are still illiterate. **Illiteracy** is the root cause of socio-economic problems. Due to lack of education and that too, qualitative education, women are not aware of business, technology and market knowledge. Also, lack of education causes low achievement, motivation among women. Thus, lack of education creates one-type or other problems for women in the setting up and running of business enterprises. In addition to that, we proud Indians of 21st century rejoice in celebrations, when a boy is born and if it is a girl, a muted and no celebration is the norm. Hence, more importance is given to male child as compared to a female child. This mindset results in malnutrition, lack of schooling, training among women. As a result, this impedes the progress or growth of women entrepreneurship.

Suggestions to promote women entrepreneurship in India

After studying, in detail, the constraints which impeded the development of female entrepreneurs, here are some suggestions, which could really help in enhancing the entrepreneurship in women-

1. Providing role models and guidance to women, to show the economic, social and lifestyle benefits of business ownership could greatly enhance entrepreneurship rates.
2. More training and education programmes geared to women could help build confidence

and reduce the fears that starting a business is a high-risk endeavour.

3. Banks and other financial institutions should design specific credit lines to women who want to start their businesses. Special schemes should be implemented whereby women can get bank loans at decent conditions.
4. Training, advice or consultancy, targeted solely at women entrepreneurs should be encouraged.
5. Most of the women entrepreneurs start their business under sole proprietorship or small scale. Government of India should aid such entrepreneurs to start large-scale business.
6. The family members of the women entrepreneurs should be sensitised on the issues to provide support, help, sharing of domestic activities, adjustment etc. for the effective functioning of their firms.
7. The scenario of gender equality should be created in India. Equal number of opportunities should be given to both men and women.
8. Training programmes for product/business development, marketing skills and methods should be facilitated to women along with sensitization on life skills, technical skills, managerial skills etc. for effective participation in their business ventures.

At last, women, too, must have an intention to fulfil their dreams. They have to turn their imagination into a real idea and they should toil hard, in order to, achieve the best they deserve.

Conclusion:

‘When you empower a man, you empower an individual; when you empower a woman, you empower a nation.’ In a study by **Moore and Buttner (1997)**, the most important reason women become entrepreneurs is that they want to feel self – fulfilled. Women care about their clients and feel some sort of societal responsibility as well. However, In India, still women constitute only 14 per cent (approximately) out of total entrepreneurs, who are engaged in entrepreneurship. And that is all because of the constraints they face. They are not enjoying freedoms, equalities, privileges, at par with their male counterparts. Since implementation of five – year planning in India, several policies and approaches were made to reduce gender gap and encourage women entrepreneurship. As a result, a shift from “welfare” to “development” to “empowerment” have taken place to change the position and status of women. But still, the Female Labour Force Participation rate has enormously dipped in, setting the alarm bells ringing among the concerned authorities. So, taking a suitable action and making new policies as well as appropriate reforms in existing policies is the need of the hour.

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