

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP – REALITY IN INDIA

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Think women entrepreneurs are scarce in India? Think again! Although a slowly growing breed, the forecast for women-led start-ups looks quite positive.

TURNING CHALLENGES INTO OPPORTUNITIES

In the era of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization along with ongoing IT revolution, today's world is changing at a surprising pace. Political and Economic transformations appear to be taking place everywhere - as countries convert from command to demand economies, dictatorships move toward democratic system, and monarchies build new civil institutions. These changes have created economic opportunities for women who want to own and operate businesses.

Women are generally perceived as home makers with little to do with economy or commerce. But this picture is changing. In Modern India, more and more women are taking up entrepreneurial activity especially in medium and small scale enterprises.

In India, women's entry into business is a new phenomenon. It can be traced out as an extension of their kitchen activities mainly to 3Ps viz Pickles, Powder, and Pappad. But with growing education levels and awareness about business among women over the period, they have started shifting from 3Ps to engross to 3 modern E's viz Engineering, Electronics, and Energy. Women entrepreneurs manufacturing solar cookers in Gujarat, owning small foundries in Maharashtra, and manufacturing capacitors in Orissa, have proved beyond doubt that given the opportunities, they can excel over their male counterparts.

There are hidden ambitions of women entrepreneurs which are still not shown up due to various reasons. To quote a few, most of the women entrepreneurs in India are perceived to be having low levels of skills for organizing and running businesses. The transition from homemaker to sophisticated business woman is not that easy.

Nevertheless, the trend is changing. Women across India are showing an interest to be economically independent. Women are coming forth to the business arena with ideas to start small and medium enterprises. They are willing to be inspired by role models and the experience of other women in the business arena.

PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA

Women entrepreneurs face a series of problems right from the beginning till the enterprise functions successfully. Being a woman itself poses various problems to a woman entrepreneur like her responsibility towards family, traditions, customs, socio cultural values, motherhood, feeling of insecurity are some peculiar problems that the Indian women come across while they take up entrepreneurship.

Women in rural areas have to suffer still further. They face tough resistance from men. They are considered as helpers. The attitude of society towards women and constraints in which they have to live and work are not very conducive to become successful entrepreneurs without any struggle.

Besides the above mentioned basic problems the other problems faced by Indian women entrepreneurs in setting up and running enterprises are as follows:

LACK OF CONFIDENCE - Women entrepreneurs because of their inherent nature lack self-confidence which is a motivating factor in running an enterprise successfully. They need to be confident that they can balance managing their family and an enterprise.

MALE DOMINATED SOCIETY- Even though our constitution speaks of equality between sexes, male chauvinism is still the order of the day. Women are not treated equal to men. Their entry to business requires the approval of the head of the family. Entrepreneurship has traditionally been seen as a male preserve. All these put a break in the growth of women entrepreneurs.

LACK OF EDUCATION- Women in India lag far behind in the field of education. Most of the women (around sixty per cent of total women) are illiterate. Those who are educated are provided either less or inadequate education than their male counterparts partly due to early marriage, male siblings higher education, and poverty. Due to lack of proper education, women entrepreneurs remain in dark about the development of new technology, new methods of production, marketing and other governmental support which will encourage them to flourish.

PROBLEM OF FINANCE-Women entrepreneurs struggle a lot in raising and meeting the financial needs of the business. Bankers, creditors, and financial institutes are not coming forward to provide financial assistance to women borrowers on the ground of their less credit worthiness and more chances of business failure.

SOCIAL BARRIERS- The traditions and customs prevailing in Indian societies towards women sometimes stand as an obstacle for them to grow and prosper. Caste, religion dominate and hinder women entrepreneurs progress. In rural areas, they face

more social barriers as they are always seen with suspicious eyes.

LOW RISK-BEARING CAPACITY-Women in India are by nature are considered weak, shy, and mild. It is perceived that they cannot bear the amount of risk essential for running an enterprise. Lack of education, training, and financial support from outsiders also reduce their ability to bear the risk involved in an enterprise.

LIMITED MOBILITY- Mobility of women in India is highly limited and has become a problem due to traditional values and inability to drive vehicles. Moving alone and asking for a room to stay out in the night for business purposes are still looked upon with suspicious eyes. Sometimes, younger women feel uncomfortable in dealing with men who show extra interest in them than work related aspects.

RAY OF HOPE

With increasing Government, Non-Government, and other financial institutions assistance for various women entrepreneurs there has been significant growth of women entrepreneurs. Still efforts are being made to coordinate with the enterprise activities of women and providing them utmost financial, morale, psychological support by various institutions working within the economy and world-wide.

CONCLUSION

It can be said today we are in better position wherein women participation in the field of entrepreneurship is increasing at considerable rate. Efforts are being taken at the national as well as global level to enhance women involvement in the enterprise sector. Thus what is required is to continue with the trend on

educating the women, spreading awareness and consciousness among women to shine in all the fields, making them aware of their rights and strengths. Thus, with relevant education, improving economic conditions and financial opportunities more women will definitely be able to become successful entrepreneurs.

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