

**WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN INDIA**

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Abstract

The emergence of women entrepreneurs in India depends upon closely interlinked economic, education, social, cultural, religious, psychological and institutional variables. These variables ultimately account for influencing and moulding the attitude of women towards business and industry. With the introduction of innovative methods and scientific management under the patronage of the state, women entrepreneurs can be expected to be successful in future. The women may be mobilized and may lead to the nation towards the path of progress and prosperity. Thus, women by all means can be very effective agents of change for better homes, better society and ultimately for robust economy in the present global scenario.

Key Words: Women, Entrepreneurs, Opportunities, Challenges, India

Introduction:

Entrepreneurship: The origin of the basic word “Entrepreneurship” is from a French word Entrepreneurship where it cradled and originally meant to designate an organizer of certain musical or other entertainments. The Oxford English Dictionary (of 1897) defines the term Entrepreneur in similar way as the director or a manager of a public musical institution, one who gets-up entertainment arranged, especially musical performance. Initially in the early 16th century, it was applied to those who were engaged in military expeditions. In 17th century it was extended to cover civil engineering activities such as construction and fortification.

Entrepreneurship refers to the act of setting up a new business or reviving an existing business so as to take advantages from new opportunities. Thus, entrepreneurs shape the economy by creating new wealth and new jobs and by inventing new products and services. However, an insight study reveals that it is not about making money, having the greatest ideas, knowing the best sales pitch, applying the best marketing strategy. It is in reality an attitude to create something new and an activity which creates value in the entire social eco-system. It is the psyche makeup of a person. It is a state of mind, which develops

naturally, based on his/ her surrounding and experiences, which makes him/ her think about life and career in a given way.

Women entrepreneurship past and present:

In the advanced countries of the world, there is a phenomenal increase in the number of self employed women after the Second World War. In the Indian context, participation of women as entrepreneurs commenced from 1970s onwards. Earlier, women were associated with 3 K"s – Kitchen, Kids and Knitting. Then came 3 P"s – Powder, Papad and Pickles. In urban India, women, entrepreneurs are found in 4 E"s- Electricity, Electronics, Energy and Engineering. However, women in rural India have confined themselves to petty business and tiny cottage industries. Majorities of rural women entrepreneurs are concentrated in low-paid, low-skilled, low-technology and low-productivity jobs. They have basic indigenous knowledge, skill and potential to establish and manage enterprise.

Objectives of the Study:

An attempt is made in this paper to assess and understand.

1. Concept of rural entrepreneur and entrepreneurship.
2. Business opportunities available for women entrepreneurs.
3. To critically examine the problems faced by women entrepreneurs.

Research Methodology of the Study:

The study is based on secondary data which is collected from the published reports of RBI, NABARD, Census Surveys, SSI Reports, newspapers, journals, websites, etc.

Concept of Women entrepreneur and entrepreneurship:

Entrepreneur is a person who starts a business or an enterprise or a firm. An entrepreneur is the individual who initiates, organizes, manages and controls the affairs of a business unit. While Say¹ and Marshall² put him as an organizer and speculator of a business enterprise, whereas Schumpeter referred him as an innovator³. It means, an entrepreneur starts the enterprise, organizes it, supervises it and engineers long run plan of the enterprise. He / She is especially motivated and a talented person, who implements new ideas, visualizes opportunities for introducing new products, techniques and new source of supply of required goods to consumers. Peter Drucker also agreed that innovation is the specific tool of entrepreneurs. Here, he defines "an entrepreneur is one who always searches for change, responds to it, and exploits it as an opportunity, entrepreneurs innovative"⁴.

Entrepreneurship is the process of creating something new with value by devoting the necessary time and effort assuming the accompanying financial, psychic and social risks and receiving the resulting rewards of monetary and personal satisfaction and independence. Thus, 'entrepreneurs' represent an owner and organizer and controller of the business. Then, what is rural women entrepreneurship and who is a rural woman entrepreneur?

Government of India (1984) has defined woman entrepreneur as "an enterprise owned and controlled by a women having a minimum financial interest of 51 percent of the capital and giving at least 51 percent of employment generated in the enterprise to women". This definition does not suit to rural women entrepreneurs in India. Any rural woman or a group of rural women which innovates, imitates or adapts an economic activity may be referred as a rural woman entrepreneur. Secondly, rural woman entrepreneur could be defined as an adult rural woman who creates, owns, and runs an enterprise in rural area.'

More important is the nature, degree and extent of innovations and involvement that the entrepreneur introduces, establishes, organizes and controls on continuous basis, Rural woman entrepreneur can be described as a dynamic agent of rural economy change, who may be instrumental in transforming rural physical, natural and human resources into production possibilities. Therefore, further it can be stated that rural women entrepreneur and entrepreneurship is not born but can be made as it is neither art nor science but practice. In another words, it can be said that rural women entrepreneur means one who organizes, owns, manage and assumes the risks of business at rural level. The rural women, who innovate, imitate or adopt an economic and commercial activity in rural India can be called rural entrepreneur or entrepreneurship.

It can be said that woman entrepreneur is the one who creates something new, organizes production and undertakes risks and handles economic uncertainties, to adjust her personal needs, family life, social life and economic independence.

Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs:

1. Integrated rural development programme: - The main objectives of integrated rural development Programme is to increase the income generating power of family who are below the poverty line to alleviate the poverty. They impart technical & entrepreneurial skills & raise the income level of the poor. Some of the major employment & anti poverty programme are-
 - a. IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Programme):- and its allied programme

- i. TRYSEM (Training Rural Youth for Self Employment)
 - ii. DWCRA (Development of women and Children in Rural Areas.)
 - b. JRY (Jawahar Rozgar Yojna):- It is wage Employment programme. Implemented by Panchayats at Village, Block & District level in the ratio. 70:15:15 etc.
2. Regional Rural Development Centres.
 3. Technology for Bank.
 4. Fund for Rural Innovation.
 5. Social Rural entrepreneurship.
 6. Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India.

Challenges faced by Women Entrepreneurs:

Rural women entrepreneur's performance is not as much progressive as desired due to various challenges faced by them such as:

Personal challenges: In developing countries like India women work long hours daily, carrying out family chores such as cleaning, cooking, bringing up children along with concentrating on their income generating activities. Such family responsibilities prevent them from becoming successful entrepreneurs.
Ex: Choice between family and career

Social challenges: The biggest problem of a woman entrepreneur is the social attitude and the constraints in which she has to live and work. Despite constitutional equality, there is discrimination against women. In a tradition-bound society, women suffer from male reservations about a woman's role and capacity. In rural areas, women face resistance not only from males but also from elderly females who have accepted inequality.

Financial challenges: As regards finance, women in developing nations have little access to finance due to the fact that they are concentrated in poor rural communities with few opportunities to borrow money. The Times of India, March 18, 2004 reports that compared to states like Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, the states of Haryana, Punjab and Chandigarh have not done well in distributing loans to female entrepreneurs. Such lack of access to credit is still worsened by a lack of information on where credit can be sought and requirements for loans. According to a 1995 report by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), despite evidence that women's loan repayment rates are higher than men's, women still face more difficulties in obtaining credit often due to the discriminatory attitudes of banks and informal lending groups.

Women and small entrepreneurs always suffer from inadequate financial resources and working capital. They lack access to external funds due to absence of tangible security and credit in the market. Women do not generally have property in their names.

Marketing challenges: Inefficient Arrangements for Marketing and Sale for marketing their products, women entrepreneurs are often at the mercy of the middlemen who pocket large chunks of profit.

Lack of mobility challenges: One of the biggest handicaps for women entrepreneurs is mobility or travelling from place to place. Women on their own find it difficult to get accommodation in smaller towns

Educational challenges: In India literacy among women is very low. As regards illiteracy among women, available statistics reveal that two-third of the world's 876 million illiterates are women In India of the 59.5 per cent of total population that is illiterate, women comprise 48.3 per cent (Estimated in 2003). Due to lack of education, majority of women are unaware of technological developments, marketing knowledge, etc. Lack of information and experience creates further problems in the setting up and running of business enterprises.

Shortage of Raw Materials: Women entrepreneurs find it difficult to procure raw materials and other necessary inputs. The failure of many women cooperatives in 1971 such as those engaged in basket-making was mainly due to the inadequate availability of forest-raw materials. The prices of many raw materials are quite high.

Low Ability to Bear Risk: Women have comparatively a low ability to bear economic and other risks because they have led a protected life.

Low Need for achievement: Need for achievement, independence and autonomy are the prerequisites for success in entrepreneurship. But women are proud to bask in the glory of their parents, husbands, sons, etc.

Other challenges: In addition to the above problems, inadequate infrastructure, shortage of power and technical know-how and other economic and social constraints have retarded the growth of women entrepreneurship in not only in India but also in Andhra Pradesh. Accounting challenges and Lack of Law knowledge challenges

Suggestions:

- Most of the women entrepreneurs are of the opinion that because of lack of training, they are not able to survive in the market. Hence, the government should conduct frequent training programmes with regard to new production techniques, sales techniques, etc, This training should be made compulsory for women entrepreneurs.
- Finance is the first major problem for women entrepreneurs. Hence, the government can provide interest free loans to encourage women entrepreneurs. To attract more women entrepreneurs, the subsidy for loans should be increased. Making provisions of micro credit system & enterprise credit system to the women entrepreneurs at local level.
- Women entrepreneurs should be encouraged to start their entrepreneurs as joint stock companies rather than as a sole trade and partnership concerns to avail the advantages of large scale operation.
- Parents of unmarried potential women entrepreneurs should be encouraged in spending money on setting up business rather than giving preference to their marriage.
- Marketing to product is one of the main problems for women entrepreneurs. Here, women co-operative societies can be started to procure the products from women entrepreneurs. They will help them in selling their products at a reasonable price.
- Improper location and inadequate infrastructure facilities are the hurdles in the way of development of women entrepreneurship. Hence, separate industrial estates may be set up exclusively for women entrepreneurs to reduce the initial investment and to create a special environment.
- Better educational facilities and schemes should be extended to women folk & from Govt. Part.
- Training Programme on management skill should be provided to women community.
- Making provisions of marketing & sales assistance from Govt. part.
- A women entrepreneur's guidance cell set up to handle the various problems of women entrepreneurs all over the state.
- Training entrepreneurial attitudes should be given at the High School level through well designed course.

Conclusion:

It is evident from the study that women are ready to face the challenges associated with setting up of business. Society is very much receptive to the concept of women entrepreneur, so is the family. Women are not into business for survival but to satisfy their inner urge of creativity and to prove their

capabilities. Women education is contributing to a great extent to the social transformation. The future will see more women venturing into areas traditionally dominated by men.

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