

“Journey from Kitchen to Fulfilling Ambition” A Study on Rural Women Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

A rural women entrepreneur plays a catalytic role in activating the factors of production leading to an overall economic development in any country. There is no bar or distinction on the basis of caste, creed, religion or sex to anyone becoming an entrepreneur. Women entrepreneur is a person endowed with the qualities of judgement, perseverance and knowledge of the world as well as business. Women entrepreneur is an important change agent in every society. She plays a major role in the creation of new business and hence is a major contributor to economic development. Despite of these facts about contribution of women entrepreneur towards economic development they have to face certain problems in society.

Keeping the above facts in view, the following study on rural women entrepreneurs will help to unfold the factors influencing rural women entrepreneurs, various schemes by government and banks to uplift them and the problems faced by them.

Keywords: Rural Women Entrepreneurs, Empowering Factors, Government Schemes, Challenges

Paper Type: Descriptive

Introduction

Women associated with 3Ks-Kitchen, Kids, Knitting- have progressed into a new era of 3Ps- Powder, Pappad, Pickle & now aim to be active in 4Es-Electricity, Electronics, Energy & Engineering.

- Masood Rana Zehra, 2011

Rural economy has been playing a major role towards the overall economic and social growth of India. The fundamental role of rural entrepreneurship is to provide employment opportunities to people in rural India. Industries in Rural areas are mostly micro or tiny in structure and quick yielding. India has been developing fast but not equitably or inclusively. The biggest issue is empowerment of women. Women in India make up 7.5% of the world's total population. Wherein education is key for women empowerment. But in India where nearly 70% of population lives in rural areas, access to educational opportunities is limited keeping the rural Indian women behind. Thus SHG's, other big urban entrepreneurs, government, Banks should give their fair contribution towards educating and developing women entrepreneurs. Majorly women entrepreneurs enter entrepreneurship due to economic factors which pushed them to be independent and support the other members of the family.

Rural Indian Women - The so called 'illiterate homemakers' have proved themselves in many sectors and have started working in equality with men and many of them are self employed. Even though they lack in educational qualification, they do have major qualities required for becoming an entrepreneur viz. confidence, innovativeness, multitasking, creativity, Risk taking etc. These qualities are inculcated in women simply by managing their household chores like multitasking-they manage all the family members who are having different likings and preferences all at a time, innovativeness and creativity-they prepare daily different varieties of lip smacking dishes etc.

Methodology

The paper is researched through empirical method which includes newspaper articles, journals, websites and reference books.

Objectives

1. To evaluate the factors responsible for encouraging rural women to become entrepreneurs
2. To study the various policies, programmes implemented by the government and other financial institutions to uplift rural women entrepreneurship
3. To study challenges faced by rural women entrepreneurs.

Factors Empowering Rural Women

Education is the key which opens the door to life, develops humanity and promotes national development. Education can be an effective tool for women's empowerment. It enables rural women to acquire new knowledge and technology required for improving and developing their tasks in all fields. Empowering women with economically productive work will enhance their contribution to agricultural development. Micro-credit programmes shall extend small loans to women for self-employment projects that generate small income allowing them to care for themselves and their families. A combination of services and resources should be offered in addition to credit for self-employment. The transfer of technology approach, which mainly includes mass media are also not paying due attention towards dissemination, of adequate and timely agricultural and marketing information to the farm rural women. Therefore there is outmost need to provide adequate coverage to the programmes related to women and they must get exposure to mass media for improving their communication and meditation skills to strengthen their capacity to contact and mediate with external world. Training is an important component of HRD which enhances knowledge, skill and attitude. For building technical competency among rural women, need based skill-oriented training programmes to reinforce their role in entrepreneurship need special attention. The training programmes should initially be organized on their felt-needs and then be switched over to unfelt but essential needs. In order to cater the technological needs of rural women, women specific technologies should be developed. Also there is a need to strengthen linkage between various research and extension organizations engaged in transfer of technology. Economic independence and education and competence, willingness, confidence, self motivation, encouragement from family and society contribute to empowerment of rural women.

KEY MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS	
PULL FACTORS	PUSH FACTORS
Autonomy and independence	Dissatisfaction in the labour market
Personal satisfaction and achievement	Need for greater income redundancy
Dream of being an entrepreneur	Unemployment
Gap in the market	Last resort
Looking for a challenge	
Rejecting stereotypical feminine identities	

FACTORS INFLUENCING ENTREPRENEURSHIP	
Factors	Percentage
<i>Technological Factors</i>	
Guidance from private agencies	40
Guidance from extension personnel	08
Guidance from SHG	75
Guidance from NGO	65
<i>Personal Factors</i>	
Own Interest	90
Self-confidence	95
Eagerness to evaluate enterprise	43
Risk taking ability	20
Achievement motivation	18
Anticipation of future possibilities	18
Experience	60
Educational qualification	20
<i>Economic Factors</i>	
Initial investment	55
Possession of ancestral property	05
Demand for the products	80
Resource recycling	05
<i>Physical Factors</i>	
Availability of inputs	63
Good transport facilities	93
Own vehicle	03
Good roads	05
<i>Market Factors</i>	
Good market potential	80
Response prices	83
Nearness to the market	03

Schemes to uplift Rural Women Entrepreneurs

Indian Government and nationalized banks have been unveiling a slew of attractive lending schemes for women entrepreneurs in a bid to promote entrepreneurship among the women folks. Some of these schemes introduced by government and Banks include:

Trade Related Entrepreneurship Assistance and Development (TREAD) Scheme for Women- Government of India launched this during the 9th plan period. The scheme envisages economic empowerment of such women through trade related training, information and counseling extension activities related to trades, products, services etc. Government grant up to 30% of the total project cost as appraised by lending institutions which would finance the remaining 70% as loan Assistance to applicant women. Training organizations conducting training programmes for empowerment of women beneficiaries identified under the scheme would be provided a grant upto maximum limit of Rs. 1.00 lakh per programme.

The scheme Mahila Coir Yojana envisages distribution of motorized/motorized traditional ratts for spinning coir yarn to trained women artisans. Under this scheme Government provides subsidy to the extent of 75% of the cost of the motorized ratt (upto a maximum of Rs. 7,500/-) or a motorized traditional ratt (upto a maximum of Rs. 2,925/-) as one time subsidy, but the other 25% is to be raised by the beneficiary through voluntary organizations or financial institutions or own sources.

The Support to Training and employment Programme for women (STEP) Scheme envisages providing of financial assistance to the NGOs for imparting training to the poor & needy women for their skill up-gradation. It is being funded by the Govt. of India. Its Funding Pattern is 90% of the project cost is given by government and 10% is borne by implementing agency.

Bharatiya Mahila Bank (BMB) started its operations three years ago, and today, it has 45 branches across various parts of India. The bank provides a range of financial assistance programs for women and some of them are BMB Annapurna, BMB Parvarish, and BMB Shringaar, all providing collateral free loan of upto Rs. 1 Crore, covered under CGTMSE.

Mahila Udayam Nidhi is a subsidy scheme which was launched by the Puducherry (Pondicherry) Government. Its aim is to help women entrepreneurs who wish to set up an SSI unit in Puducherry's service sector. If a project is worth Rs. 10 lakhs then 25% is offered as seed capital, 10% is funded as Promoter Contribution and 65% is funded as a term loan.

There are many other schemes as well like svayamsiddha scheme, The Dena Shakti scheme provided by Dena Bank, Udyogini Scheme by Punjab and Sind Bank, Annapurna Scheme and Stree Shakti by State Bank of Mysore, Scheme for Beauty parlours/boutiques and Scheme for self-employed women by Oriental Bank of Commerce, Akshaya Mahila Arthik Sahay Yojna (AMASY) by Bank of Baroda, PNB Mahila Udyam Nidhi Scheme, PNB Scheme for financing crèches, PNB Mahila Sashaktikaran Abhiyan, PNB Kalyani Card Scheme by Punjab National Bank.

There is even a Women Entrepreneurs Park located in Uttarakhand's Sitarganj district. It is spreaded over 200 acres of land. It is first of its kind in the country as it is exclusively for women and even specific percentage of jobs are reserved for women in units located in the industrial park.

Problems faced by Rural Women Entrepreneurs

The problems and hindrances experienced by women entrepreneurs have resulted in restricting the expansion of business. The major problems faced by the women entrepreneurs are as follows,

Lack of Confidence: Lack of self-confidence, will power, strong mental outlook and optimistic attitude amongst women creates a fear from committing mistakes while doing their piece of work.

Difficulty in Obtaining Finance: Unlike big public firms, tiny firms cannot have access to primary and secondary markets. The rural women entrepreneurs do not have an access to external funds as they are not able to provide any tangible security. And thus due to this lack of access to funds their ideas cannot turn into reality

Family Responsibilities: Having primary responsibility for children, home and older dependent family members, few women can devote all their time and energies to their business. The financial institutions discourage women entrepreneurs on the belief that they can at any time leave their business and become housewives again.

Isolated from Business Networks: Today, the business is transforming in different aspect, and maintaining the networks is playing a vital role in the success of business. Apart from formal networks, the informal networks maintenance demonstrates the success of business. It is necessary to attend the informal meeting s. but the women entrepreneurs are considered as isolated from these kinds of business networks, which dwindle the margin of women entrepreneurs.

Societal Problems: The society is doubtful about the abilities of the women entrepreneurs and thus stops women from entering in the field of entrepreneurship. They are not allowed to take any type of risk even if she is willing to take it and has the ability to bear it.

Cultural Problems: Women especially in India are known for culture. Most of the people feel that woman coming out of home for work is not their culture. This limits the women mobility in starting a business.

Inadequate Information and Data: The women entrepreneurs in sub-urban and rural areas are semi literates and they don't have access to information in their own business and also the businesses which are booming. This will curtail the profit margin.

Poor knowledge of latest technological changes: The literacy rate of women in India is found at low level compared to male population. Many women in developing nations lack the education needed to spur successful entrepreneurship. They are not that much of aware of the new technologies and often unable to do research and gain the necessary training.

Lack of Interactions: Successful entrepreneurs play as role model for the women in society who have the ability to become entrepreneurs. But there is no sufficient provision for such type of interaction to inculcate knowledge and provide experience of successful women entrepreneurs.

Marketing Problem: Women face a serious problem while marketing their products. The cost of advertisement is too heavy for their stringent recourses. They are untrained when it comes to salesmanship and marketing techniques.

Lack of Special Training: First generation women entrepreneurs will be in need of special training as they lack previous exposure to business. There is no proper and technical training to start a new venture. All women are given the same training trough Entrepreneurial Development Programmes.

Psychological factors: Always women feel that she is 'women' and less efficient than man and hesitates to take risks. As she has to play a dual role if she is employed or engaged in work. She has to strive hard to balance her family life with care and hence feels better to be a housewife.

Problem of Middlemen: Women entrepreneurs have to face the problems of middlemen more, as they generally depend, more on them. Their margin of profit will be more and hence cause for higher selling price, which affects consumer's attraction towards women's products.

Low Mobility: 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. A single woman asking for a room is still looked upon with suspicion.

Stiff Competition: Many of the women enterprises have imperfect organizational setup. They have to face stiff competition from organized industries and male entrepreneurs.

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 rural India.

Conclusion

From the above study it is clear that women entrepreneurs play a major role in economic growth of the nation. Irrespective of the fact that women have a major contribution towards development of the country still the male dominant society feels women cannot take this dual responsibility. Thus Women are the largest untapped reservoir of talent in the world (Hillary Clinton). But Women are the bravest creatures I know. They face adversity head on, fiercely protect the people they love, keep fighting past exhaustion and personal pain until all danger is passed. Then and only then do they allow themselves to collapse. So women must be encouraged and motivated to come out of their kitchen and fulfill their ambitions. Though there are many roadblocks still they are moving ahead slowly and steadily. Rural women entrepreneurs are gaining recognition but still there is a long way to go. There are many initiatives being taken by the government to smoothen the way of women entrepreneurs and motivate them to take entrepreneurship. Many more government schemes should be introduced as well as various subsidies, incentives, tax benefits should be provided to encourage rural women entrepreneurs. Training centers can be set up in rural areas for improvising their managerial skills, communication skills etc. which would develop confidence in them to keep going and provide more employment opportunities to other rural people. According to me entrepreneurial characteristics should be inculcated in girls since childhood and that is only possible by giving them education. There are still many villages where women illiteracy rate has not come down. Each family should understand that little girls with dreams become women with vision and educate every girl child in their respective families.

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