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**LESSONS FROM SUCCESSFUL WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS- A PANACEA FOR OTHER
WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA**

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ABSTRACT

Women's Development is directly related with national development. Empowerment of women has emerged as an important issue in recent times. The economic empowerment of women is being regarded these days as a Sine-quo-non of progress for a country, hence the issue of economic development of women is of paramount important to political thinkers, social scientists and reformers. However, in the long run, it would be necessary to increase efficiency and expand productive capacity and thereby reduce cost to make their ultimate survival possible, other than these, women entrepreneurs so face the problems of labour, human resources, infrastructure, legal formalities, overload of work, lack of family support, mistrust etc Right efforts on from all areas are required in the development of women entrepreneurs and their greater participation in the entrepreneurial activities. Successful women entrepreneurs continuously face the problems in marketing their products. It is one of the core problems as this area is mainly dominated by males and even women with adequate experience fail to make a dent. Obtaining the support of bankers, managing the working capital, lack of credit resources are the problems which still remain in the males domain. Women also face the conflict of performing of home role as they are not available to spend enough time with their families.

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INTRODUCTION

"Any woman who understands the problems of running a home will be nearer to understanding the problems of running a country."

- Margaret Thatcher

Women Entrepreneurs may be defined as the women or a group of women who initiate, organize and operate a business enterprise. Government of India has defined women entrepreneurs as an enterprise owned and controlled by a women having a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and giving at least 51% of employment generated in the enterprise to women. Like a male entrepreneurs a women entrepreneur has many functions. They should explore the prospects of starting new enterprise; undertake risks, introduction of new innovations, coordination administration and control of business and providing effective leadership in all aspects of business.

Push-Pull factors and Women in business

Women in business are a recent phenomenon in India. By and large they had confide themselves to petty business and tiny

cottage industries. Women entrepreneurs engaged in business due to push and pull factors. Which encourage women to have an independent occupation and stands on their on legs. A sense towards independent decision-making on their life and career is the motivational factor behind this urge. Saddled with household chores and domestic responsibilities women want to get independence Under the influence of these factors the women entrepreneurs choose a profession as a challenge and as an urge to do something new. Such situation is described as pull factors. While in push factors women engaged in business activities due to family compulsion and the responsibility is thrust upon them.

Problems of Women Entrepreneurs in India

There are umpteen problems faced by women at various stages beginning from their initial commencement of enterprise, in running their enterprise. Their various problems are as follows:

Patriarchal Society: Entrepreneurship has been traditionally seen a male preserve and idea of women taking up entrepreneurial activities considered as a distant dream. Any deviation from the norm is frowned and if possible,

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immediately curbed. Women also have to face role conflict as soon as they initiate any entrepreneurial activity. It is an uphill task for women to face such conflicts and cope with the twin role.

Absence of Entrepreneurial Aptitude: Many women take the training by attending the Entrepreneurship Development Programmes without entrepreneurial bent of mind. As per a study, involvement of women in small scale sector as owners stands at mere 7 percent. Women who are imparted training by various institutes must be verified on account of aptitude through the tests, interviews etc.

Quality of EDPs: All women entrepreneurs are given the same training through EDPs. Second-generation women entrepreneurs don't need such training as they already have the previous exposure to business.

Marketing Problems: Women entrepreneurs continuously face the problems in marketing their products. It is one of the core problems as this area is mainly dominated by males and even women with adequate experience fail to make a dent. For marketing the products women entrepreneurs have to be at the mercy of middlemen who pocket the chunk of profit. Although the middlemen exploit the women entrepreneurs, the elimination of middlemen is difficult, because it involves a lot of running about. Women entrepreneurs also find it difficult to capture the market and make their products popular.

Financial Problems: Obtaining the support of bankers, managing the working capital, lack of credit resources are the problems which still remain in the males domain. Women are yet to make significant mark in quantitative terms. Marketing and financial problems are such obstacles where even training doesn't significantly help the women. Some problems are structural in nature and beyond the control of entrepreneurs.

Family Conflicts: Women also face the conflict of performing of home role as they are not available to spend enough time with their families. They spend long hours in business and as a result, they find it difficult to meet the demands of their family members and society as well. Their inability to attend to domestic work, time for education of children, personal hobbies, and entertainment adds to their conflicts.

Credit Facilities: Though women constitute about 50 per cent of population, the percentage of small scale enterprise where women own 51 percent of share capital is less than 5 percent. Women are often denied credit by bankers on the ground of lack of collateral security. Therefore, women's access to risk capital is limited. The complicated procedure of bank loans, the inordinate delay in obtaining the loans and running about involved do deter many women from venturing out. At the same time, a good deal of self-employment programme has been promoted by the govt. and commercial banks.

Shortage of raw-materials: Women entrepreneurs encounter the problems of shortage of raw-materials. The failure of many women co-operations in 1971 such as these engaged in basket making were mainly because of the inadequate availability of forest-based raw materials.

Heavy Competition: Many of the women enterprises have imperfect organizational set up. But they have to face severe competition from organized industries.

High cost of production: High cost of production undermines the efficiency and stands in the way of development and expansion of women's enterprises, government assistance in the form of grant and subsidies to some extent enables them to tide over the difficult situations. However, in the long run, it would be necessary to increase efficiency and expand productive capacity and thereby reduce cost to make their ultimate survival possible, other than these, women entrepreneurs so face the problems of labour, human resources, infrastructure, legal formalities, overload of work, lack of family support, mistrust etc.

The greatest deterrent to women entrepreneurs is that they are women. A kind of patriarchal - male dominant social order is the building block to them in their way towards business success. Male members think it a big risk financing the ventures run by women. The financial institutions are skeptical about the entrepreneurial abilities of women. The bankers consider women loonies as higher risk than men loonies. The bankers put unrealistic and unreasonable securities to get loan to women entrepreneurs. According to a report by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (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 discriminatory attitudes of banks and informal lending groups (UNIDO, 1995b). Entrepreneurs usually require financial assistance of some kind to launch their ventures - be it a formal bank loan or money from a savings account. Women in developing nations have little access to funds, due to the fact that they are concentrated in poor rural communities with few opportunities to borrow money (Starcher, 1996; UNIDO, 1995a). The women entrepreneurs are suffering from inadequate financial resources and working capital. The women entrepreneurs lack access to external funds due to their inability to provide tangible security. Very few women have the tangible property in hand.

Women's family obligations also bar them from becoming successful entrepreneurs in both developed and developing nations. "Having primary responsibility for children, home and older dependent family members, few women can devote all their time and energies to their business" (Starcher, 1996, p. 8). The financial institutions discourage women entrepreneurs on the belief that they can at any time leave their business and become housewives again. The result is that they are forced to rely on their own savings, and loan from relatives and family friends. Indian women give more emphasis to family ties and relationships. Married women have to make a fine balance between business and home. More over the business success is depends on the support the family members extended to women in the business process and management. The interest of the family members is a determinant factor in the realization of women folk business aspirations. Another argument is that women entrepreneurs have low-level management skills. They have to depend on office staffs and intermediaries, to get things done, especially, the marketing and sales side of business. Here there is more probability for business fallacies like the intermediaries take major part of the surplus or profit. Marketing means mobility and confidence in dealing with the external world, both of which women have been discouraged from developing by social conditioning. Even when they are otherwise in control of an enterprise, they often depend on males of the family in this area.

The male - female competition is another factor, which develop hurdles to women entrepreneurs in the business management process. Despite the fact that women entrepreneurs are good in keeping their service prompt and delivery in time, due to lack of organizational skills compared to male entrepreneurs women have to face constraints from competition. The confidence to travel across day and night and even different regions and states are less found in women compared to male entrepreneurs. This shows the low level freedom of expression and freedom of mobility of the women entrepreneurs. Knowledge of alternative source of raw materials availability and high negotiation skills are the basic requirement to run a business. Getting the raw materials from different source with discount prices is the factor that determines the profit margin. Lack of knowledge of availability of the raw materials and low-level negotiation and bargaining skills are the factors, which affect women entrepreneur's business adventures.

Knowledge of latest technological changes, know how, and education level of the person are significant factor that affect business. 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 ignorant of new technologies or unskilled in their use, and often unable to do research and gain the necessary training (UNIDO, 1995b, p.1). Although great advances are being made in technology, many women's illiteracy, structural difficulties, and lack of access to technical training prevent the technology from being beneficial or even available to females ("Women Entrepreneurs in Poorest Countries," 2001). According to *The Economist*, this lack of knowledge and the continuing treatment of women as second-class citizens keeps them in a pervasive cycle of poverty ("The Female Poverty Trap," 2001). The studies indicates that uneducated women do not have the knowledge of measurement and basic accounting.

Low-level risk taking attitude is another factor affecting women folk decision to get into business. Low-level education provides low-level self-confidence and self-reliance to the women folk to engage in business, which is continuous risk taking and strategic decision making profession. Investing money, maintaining the operations and ploughing back money for surplus generation requires high risk taking attitude, courage and confidence. Though the risk tolerance ability of the women folk in day-to-day life is high compared to male members, while in business it is found opposite to that. Achievement motivation of the women folk found less compared to male members. The low level of education and confidence leads to low level achievement and advancement motivation among women folk to engage in business operations and running a business concern. Finally high production cost of some business operations adversely affects the development of women entrepreneurs. The installation of new machineries during expansion of the productive capacity and like similar factors dissuades the women entrepreneurs from venturing into new areas.

How to Develop Women Entrepreneurs

Right efforts on from all areas are required in the development of women entrepreneurs and their greater participation in the entrepreneurial activities. Following efforts can be taken into

account for effective development of women entrepreneurs. Consider women as specific target group for all developmental programmes. Better educational facilities and schemes should be extended to women folk from government part. Adequate training programme on management skills to be provided to women community. Encourage woman's participation in decision-making. Vocational training to be extended to women community that enables them to understand the production process and production management. Skill development to be done in woman's polytechnics and industrial training institutes. Skills are put to work in training-cum-production workshops. Training on professional competence and leadership skill to be extended to women entrepreneurs. Training and counselling on a large scale of existing women entrepreneurs to remove psychological causes like lack of self-confidence and fear of success. Counselling through the aid of committed NGOs, psychologists, managerial experts and technical personnel should be provided to existing and emerging women entrepreneurs. Continuous monitoring and improvement of training programmes.

Activities in which women are trained should focus on their marketability and profitability. Making provision of marketing and sales assistance from government part. To encourage more passive women entrepreneurs the Women training programme should be organised that taught to recognize her own psychological needs and express them. State finance corporations and financing institutions should permit by statute to extend purely trade related finance to women entrepreneurs. Women's development corporations have to gain access to open-ended financing. The financial institutions should provide more working capital assistance both for small scale venture and large scale ventures. Making provision of micro credit system and enterprise credit system to the women entrepreneurs at local level. Repeated gender sensitisation programmes should be held to train financiers to treat women with dignity and respect as persons in their own right. Infrastructure, in the form of industrial plots and sheds, to set up industries is to be provided by state run agencies.

Industrial estates could also provide marketing outlets for the display and sale of products made by women. A Women Entrepreneur's Guidance Cell set up to handle the various problems of women entrepreneurs all over the state. District Industries Centers and Single Window Agencies should make use of assisting women in their trade and business guidance. Programmes for encouraging entrepreneurship among women are to be extended at local level. Training in entrepreneurial attitudes should start at the high school level through well-designed courses, which build confidence through behavioral games. More governmental schemes to motivate women entrepreneurs to engage in small scale and large-scale business ventures. Involvement of Non Governmental Organisations in women entrepreneurial training programmes and counselling.

Conclusion

Independence brought promise of equality of opportunity in all sphere to the Indian women and laws guaranteeing for their equal rights of participation in political process and equal opportunities and rights in education and employment were enacted. But unfortunately, the government sponsored development activities have benefited only a small section of

women. The large majority of them are still unaffected by change and development activities have benefited only a small section of women i.e. the urban middle class women. The large majority of them are still unaffected by change and development. The reasons are well sighted in the discussion part of this article. It is hoped that the suggestions forwarded in the article will help the entrepreneurs in particular and policy-planners in general to look into this problem and develop better schemes, developmental programmes and opportunities to the women folk to enter into more entrepreneurial ventures.

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