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Women Entrepreneurship: An Opening to Bravery

Abstract ::

Entrepreneurship introduces a vital element of vigor into an economic system. The process of globalization and liberalization has introduced two sets of changes - the first is the apparent introduction of dynamism into the system through process of globalization, while new opportunities have opened up in the domestic market due to international products serving well to the domestic market. Women constitute not only half of the world's population but also sway the growth of the remaining half. They produce half of the world's food supply and account for 60% of the working force but comprise only 10% of the world's economy and surprisingly own less than 1 % of the real estate. They have little access to productive resources and negligible control over family income. This discrimination is the result of gender bias, which forms an inherent part of the global society.

Women are almost one half of the world's population having enormous potential but being underutilized or unutilized for the economic development of the nation. There is need to support and rationalize the role of women in the development of various sectors by harnessing their power towards nation building and to attain accelerated economic growth. Majority of women do not undertake entrepreneurial ventures. The paper tries to analyze the features, the role and the leadership qualities of women entrepreneurs in India. The paper examines the opportunities available to the women entrepreneurs which can be made use of, for their social and economic empowerment. It also examines challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in India. The paper is concluded with a series of suggestions that can be made in to practice in order to strengthen the entrepreneurship abilities among women. This paper has special relevance in this age of wide gender inequality and subsequent socio-economic problems which come in the way of women.

Introduction ::

Entrepreneurship introduces a vital element of vigor into an economic system. The process of globalization and liberalization has introduced two sets of changes - the first is the apparent introduction of dynamism into the system through process of globalization, while new opportunities have opened up in the domestic market due to international products serving well to the domestic market. Women constitute not only half of the world's population but also sway the growth of the remaining half. They produce half of the world's food supply and account for 60% of the working force but comprise only 10% of the world's economy and surprisingly own less than 1 % of the real estate. They have little access to productive resources and negligible control over family income. This discrimination is the result of gender bias, which forms an inherent part of the global society.

The general observation is that there are fewer female entrepreneurs than male entrepreneurs. This reflects the trends also prevailing in other spheres of economic activities where males greatly outnumber females. Entrepreneurship is a Herculean task, which is fraught with struggle, entailing both risk and efforts. While women have to go through same stages of setting up an enterprise as do men, and face similar challenges, irrespective of gender based social impediments like social stigma, unfavorable infrastructure, support systems, etc. which block their entry and reduce their pace of growth. Removing these impediments in the existing set up of micro enterprise development has assumed a critical significance for the economic development of women. The need today is to help women overcome these blockades and draw maximum participation from them to set up micro enterprises, which will help them, achieve self reliance and place them at par with their male counterparts.

Meaning::

The word entrepreneur is derived from the French verb *entreprenre*, which means "to undertake". This refers to those who undertook the risk of new enterprises. In economics and commerce, an entrepreneur is the economic leader who possess the ability to recognize opportunities for the successful introduction of new techniques, new commodities and new sources of supply, and to assemble necessary plant and equipment, management and labour force, and organize them into a running concern. Whatever the political and economical set up of a country, entrepreneurship is essential for economic growth.

According to Peter Drucker, "Entrepreneur is one who always searches for change, responds to it and exploits it as an opportunity. Innovation is a specific tool of entrepreneurs, the means by which they exploit change as an opportunity for different business or services."

The concept of Women Entrepreneurs:

In common parlance Women Entrepreneurs are the women or a group of women who initiate, organize and operate a business enterprise. The government of India notes women entrepreneurs as "an enterprise owned and controlled by women saving a minimum financial interest of 51 per cent of the capital and giving at least 51 per cent of the employment generated in the enterprise to women". According to Kamal Singh "A woman entrepreneur can be defined 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"

Women Entrepreneurship in India::

Women are almost one half of the world's population having enormous potential but being underutilized or unutilized for the economic development of the nation. There is need to support and rationalize the role of women in the development of various sectors by harnessing their power towards nation building and to attain accelerated economic growth. Majority of women do not undertake entrepreneurial ventures. Entrepreneurship is a key to economic development of a country. History is full of instances of individual entrepreneurs whose creativity had led to the industrialization of many nations.

The position of women and their status in any society is an index of its civilization. Women are to be considered as equal partners in the process of development. But, because of centuries of exploitation and subjugation, Indian women have remained at the receiving end. Women in India have been the neglected lot. They have not been actively involved in the mainstream of development even though they represent equal proportion of the population and labour force. Primarily women are the means of survival of their families, but are generally unrecognized and undervalued, being placed at the bottom of the pile.

During the last two decades, Indian women have entered the field of entrepreneurship in greatly increasing numbers. With the emergence and growth of their businesses, they have contributed to the global economy and to their surrounding communities. The routes women have followed to take leadership roles in business are varied. Yet, most women entrepreneurs have overcome or worked to avoid obstacles and challenges in creating their businesses. The presence of women in the workplace driving small and entrepreneurial organizations creates a tremendous impact on employment and business environments.

Women as an independent target group, account for 495.74 million and represent 48.3% of the country's population, as per the 2001 census. No country can achieve its potential without adequately investing in and developing the capabilities of women. In the interest of long-term development it is necessary to facilitate their empowerment. In many developing countries, including India, women have much less access to education, jobs, income and power than men. Even after six decades of planned development Indian women have not achieved expected success in the mainstream of life. Our country will be unable to have a competitive edge over others until and unless the status and role of women is improved.

The role of women entrepreneurs in India has been realized since long. The role of women entrepreneur was not up to the mark because of the lack of government support at every stage. The

Govt. of India has rightly realized that there is a need to develop strategy and launch different schemes for the upliftment of women entrepreneurs. After the enactment of the first industrial policy of 1956, there was no such proposal for the encouragement of women entrepreneurs. It was during the Sixth Five Year Plan that a new chapter was created for the integration of women in the development stream. The new industrial policies of 1980 and 1990 have considerably emphasized the need of Entrepreneurial Development Programmes (EDPs) in urban as well as rural areas for the upliftment of the status of women in the economic and social sector.

The women now occupy much larger though far from equitable percentage of middle management better than the previous years. A study carried out by Coke India Ltd. reveals that women are key-decision makers behind the purchase of new products. The study further emphatically points out that the women also bring elegance, composure and sensitivity to the work place. From the 7th plan till 10th Five Year Plan the Govt. of India has eagerly stated that women entrepreneurs have to be accorded special gratitude and should be provided and equipped with all fundamentals and crucial incentive for bringing them into the mainstream of economic growth. They should be given different foray in social strata and should be made aware of the numerous agencies and sponsor programmes of the Development Banks, District Industrial Centre (DIC) and other Financial Institutions especially meant for women entrepreneurship development.

Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs in India::

At present, there are few organizations, which are contributing to the upliftment of women entrepreneurial development in the country. All India Manufacturers Organization (AIMO), set up on December 30, 1987, is one of them. The main objective of this organization is to promote, motivate and provide assistance to potential women entrepreneurs to set up industries. This organization has been doing services in the development of women entrepreneurship and thereby opening galore vistas for generation of women employment in particular. In India small scale industrial units are owned both by men and women. Table reveals that among the small scale industrial units owned by women entrepreneurs in India, Kerala tops the list with 1.39 lakh units, followed by Tamil Nadu with 1.30 lakh units. Tamil Nadu ranks second in the total number of small-scale units owned by women entrepreneurs in India. Lakshadweep has the lowest number of small-scale units owned by women entrepreneurs (67 units).

State-wise distribution of small scale industrial units owned by women Entrepreneurs

S.No.	State/Union Territory	No.of SSI	Units (%) Total	S.No.	State/Union Territory	No.of SSI	Units (%) Total
1	Kerala	139225	13.09	18	Haryana	9620	0.90
2	Tamil Nadu	129808	12.20	19	Uttaranchal	8804	0.83
3	Karnataka	103169	9.70	20	Jharkhand	7865	0.74
4	Maharashtra	100670	9.46	21	Jammu and Kashmir	5742	0.54
5	Andhra Pradesh	77166	7.25	22	Himachal Pradesh	3722	0.35
6	Uttar Pradesh	72667	6.83	23	Mizoram	3700	0.35
7	West Bengal	69625	6.55	24	Meghalaya	3580	0.34
8	Madhya Pradesh	68823	6.47	25	Chandigarh	2243	0.21
9	Gujarat	53703	5.05	26	Pondichery	1065	0.10
10	Bihar	49443	4.65	27	Tripura	863	0.08
11	Orissa	38233	3.59	28	Goa	810	0.08
12	Rajasthan	36371	3.42	29	Diu-Daman,Dadra-N'haveli	213	0.02

13	Punjab	29068	2.73	30	Nagaland	179	0.02
14	Delhi	14383	1.35	31	Arunachal Pradesh	150	0.01
15	Assam	11757	1.11	32	Andaman and Nico.	110	0.01
16	Manipur	10745	1.01	33	Sikkim	98	0.01
17	Chhattisgarh	10034	0.94	34	Lakshadweep	67	0.01
					All India	1063721	100

There is yet another significant organization i.e. Federation of Women Entrepreneur (FIWE), 1966, which particularly aims at development of women entrepreneurship. FIWE was part of the Federation of Small, Modern Enterprise (FISME). But now FIWA is a separate organization, which was started in 1996. Now that FIWE is a separate organization, its primary goal is to cultivate the economic empowerment of women by helping them to become successful entrepreneurs. Another objective of FIWE is to bring women business persons together to voice their needs and demands in such a way that government enacts policies favorable to their interests. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the appreciable role and the efforts of the all India

Manufacturers Organization, Ph.D. Chamber of Commerce, FICCI and CII for development of women entrepreneurs in India. They have put forward a charter of demand to the government of India which is briefly presented as follows:

- To establish a separate cell in each district for guidance and to provide useful information to women who want to set up new enterprises.
- Women should be given a proper place on advisory body.
- An Entrepreneurship Development Institute for women should also be established to develop managerial and marketing skills and to enlighten them on how to run an enterprise professionally and successfully.
- Women entrepreneurs should be motivated.
- Women University should be opened up for training of women in every diversified field of business.
- Training programmes should be organized to train women entrepreneurs in various fields like purchasing, legal requirements, production plan, project reports, investment decision, inventory control, working capital requirements etc.
- With the onset of education and awareness, women entrepreneurs have shifted from extended kitchen activities, i.e. 3Ps viz. Papad, Pickles and Powder to the higher level of activities, i.e. 3Es viz. Engineering, Electronics and Energy. Women entrepreneurs manufacturing solar cookers in Gujarat or owning small foundries in Maharashtra or manufacturing capacitors in Orissa have proved beyond doubt that given the opportunities, they can outclass their male counterparts.

Let us divide the available opportunities for women entrepreneurs in 3 geographical areas:

1. **Urban areas:** Recreation centers for old people, Centers for baby sitting, Computer maintenance, Plant library, Culture centers, Trading of sarees and dress materials, Beauty parlors, Travel and Tourism, Wooden toys, stuffed soft toys, Mini laundry, Health club, Catering services, etc.
2. **Semi urban areas:** Garments, Nursery classes, Training and coaching classes of different types, Culture centers for children, Community kitchens, Production of liquid soap, detergents, etc., Manufacturing leather goods, Trading of office stationary, Trading of instant and readymade food products, etc.
3. **Rural areas:** Processed food and vegetables in form of baby foods, Cold drinks, Canned products, Manufacturing ayurvedic medicines, Ice creams, Convenience food etc.

Challenges faced by Women Entrepreneurs in India:

One of the major obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs has been that they are not taken sincerely. Even though women have achieved trustworthiness as capable entrepreneurs in areas such as retail, personal services and business services, perceptions that women entrepreneurs are less successful, credit worthy & innovative continues to be a barrier.

1. Lack of Visibility as Strategic Leaders: Changing the perceptions about the likely success of women entrepreneurs depends on increasing women's visibility in leadership positions within the greater business community. In an assessment of women's presence as CEOs or Directors of large business enterprises, it has been anticipated that the exodus of women to entrepreneurial growth firms might be because women believe that have greater representation in strategic leadership positions in privately-held or family-owned firms as they provide better opportunities for leadership than available to women in publicly-traded companies.

2. Differential Information and Assistance Needs: Another significant need of many women entrepreneurs is obtaining the appropriate assistance and information needed to take the business to the next level of growth. In a study conducted to gather information needs of women entrepreneurs, those who were just starting their ventures, requested assistance and training in implementing the business idea, identifying initial sources of financing, and advertising/promotion. The entrepreneurs, who were already established, had a somewhat different set of needs including financing for expansion and increasing sales. Another conducted study had identified ten most desired needs of fast growth entrepreneurs:

- (a) using cash flow to make operational decisions
- (b) financing growth
- (c) increasing the value of the business
- (d) compensation for self and associates
- (e) hiring, training and motivating for growth
- (f) succeeding in a rapidly changing world
- (g) successful selling
- (h) sales force management
- (i) management success
- (j) problems and pitfalls of growth.

Unfortunately, this difference in information and assistance needs can be found across cultures as well.

3. Family Influences on Women Entrepreneurs: The overlapping of the family and the firm is not significant for women business owners. Unfortunately, little research has been conducted on the dynamics of family-owned firms headed by women. As the boundaries between the firm and the family tend to be indistinct, women operating family businesses face a unique set of issues related to personal identity, role conflict, loyalties, family relationships, and attitudes towards authority. Additionally, family businesses owned by women are at a disadvantage financially and are forced to rely on internal resources of funding rather than outside sources. The critical role of family in business also emerges in cross-cultural studies which show a women relying heavily on the family for start-up capital. Besides this, there are several other challenges being faced by Women Entrepreneurs:

1. Lack of confidence:
2. Over dependence on intermediaries
3. Social attitude
4. Limited mobility
5. Psycho-Social barriers
 - Poor self image of woman
 - Inadequate motivation
 - Discriminating treatment
 - Faulty socialization
 - Role conflict
 - Cultural Values
 - Lack of courage & self-confidence
 - Inadequate encouragement
 - Lack of social acceptance
 - Unjust social, economic & cultural system
 - Lack of freedom of expression
 - Afraid of failures & criticism

- Susceptible to negative attitudes
- Non-persistent attitudes
- Low dignity of labour
- Lacking in leadership qualities.

Suggestion and Conclusion::

The globalization has really become an undeniable reality. It is high time that the government and planners must formulate such type of policies through which women entrepreneurship get success. They have achieved recognition and are making valuable contribution to the national economy. But still the development of entrepreneurship among women depends very much on organizations, education, stimulation and motivation approach, focusing on the individuals and the groups. The post-liberalization and globalization India has very distinctly born testimony to the fact that women entrepreneurship is rapidly developing in small, medium and large scale business. The Indian Corporate Business World is now talking of gender neutrality. The fact that women have started occupying a significant major berth in India's workforce as middle and top-level management is rightly proved by a recent study. Those women technocrats and management graduates are getting their due in terms of pay package and other fringe benefits at par with men. The trend is now set and thus the need of the hour is to set roll this trend through concrete and programmatic plans, policies and schemes for women entrepreneurship development in all spheres of business.

Following are some of the areas where immediate attention is to be given in order to develop women entrepreneurial skills and thus women entrepreneurs.

- Develop gender sensitivity namely participation of women in Micro Enterprise Development.
- Examine the processes of Gender inequality and their dis-functionality affecting the participation of women in micro enterprises.
- Understand the processes of promoting MED through active participation of women.
- Acquire skills of identification of potential women entrepreneurs and learn designing and conducting enterprise development motivation training for them.
- Be able to explore various learning mechanisms to set up Micro-Enterprises and update the methods of managing activities, develop tools and instruments for effective monitoring and evaluation of promoted entrepreneurs.

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