



Analysis of Women Entrepreneurship in India

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Abstract: *Indian women had a place of pride in ancient India. Foreign invasion had resulted in women becoming domestic slaves and were subject to ill treatment. Women education has led to changes in the social hierarchy and are able to get employment in Multinational corporations and are becoming entrepreneurs. Present paper studies about the rise of women entrepreneurs, with reference to India and sketches out difficulties for women entrepreneurs. Government initiatives, soft loans and public understanding shall make women equal the men and empower them.*

Key words: *matriarchal and patriarchal, SHG, education, empowerment.*

I. Introduction

Indian population in 2014 is estimated to be 1.27 billion, with male population of 655.8 million and female population of 614.4 million. ^[1] Age wise distribution of the population indicates that nearly 65% of Indian population is below the age of 35. ^[2] In India, there are nearly 700 degree granting institutions, 35,500 affiliated colleges enrolling nearly 20 million students annually and as per reports, there seems to be equal number of male students to female students registered and enrolled. ^[3] As a result of greater accessibility to education, number of women taking up employment has increased in the past fifteen years. Increase in number of technical education and demand for software professionals have resulted in more women opting to go in for software industry in search of lucrative jobs.

II. Women entrepreneurs

Before the 20th century women were operating businesses as a way of supplementing income or in many cases they were simply trying to avoid poverty and making up for the loss of a spouse. The ventures that these women undertook were not known as entrepreneurial due to the time in history and usually had to yield to their domestic responsibilities. The term entrepreneur is used to describe individuals who have ideas for products and or services that they turn into a working business. In earlier times this term was reserved for men. Women became more involved in the business world after it was a more acceptable idea to society. This does not mean that there were no female entrepreneurs until that time.

In the 17th century, Dutch Colonists who came to what is now known as New York City, operated under a matriarchal society. In this society many women inherited money and lands and through this inheritance and became business owners. One of the most successful women from this time was Margaret Harden brook Phillips, who was a merchant, and ship owner, also involved in the trading of goods.

During the mid 18th century and on it was popular for women to own certain businesses like brothels, alehouses, taverns, and retail shops among others. Most of these businesses were not perceived with good reputations mostly because it was considered shameful for women to be in these positions. Society at the time frowned upon these women because it took away from their more gentle and frail nature. During the 18th and 19th centuries more women came out from under the oppression of society's limits and began to emerge into the public eye. Despite the frowns of society women like Rebecca Lukens in 1825, took the family business of ironworks and was able to turn it into a profit generating steel business. In the 1900's due to a more progressive way of thinking and the rise of feminism, female entrepreneurs began to be more accepted and although these women entrepreneurs serviced mostly women consumers they were making great steps.

Women gained the right to vote in 1920 and two years later Clara and Lillian Westropp started the institution of Women's Savings & Loan as a way of teaching women how to be smart with their money. As each change in society happened, female entrepreneurs were there taking great gains along the way. With the boom of the textile industry and the development of the railroad and telegraph system, women like Madame C. J. Walker took advantage of the time and was able to market her hair care products in a successful way becoming the 1st

African American female millionaire. Carrie Crawford Smith was the owner of an employment agency opened in 1918 and like Madame C. J. Walker, she sought to provide help to many women by giving them opportunities to work. During the Great Depression, some of these opportunities afforded to women took a seat and society seemed to have reversed its views, reverting back to more traditional roles. This seemed to affect women working in the business world however, it served as a push to those involved in the entrepreneurial world. More women began starting their own businesses, just looking to survive during this time of hardship. In 1938, Hattie Moseley Austin, who had begun to sell chicken and biscuits after her husband died, opened Hattie's Chicken Shack, in Saratoga Springs, NY. During WWII many women entered the workforce filling jobs that men had left behind to go off and fight. Many women of their own accord took these jobs as a patriotic duty along with others who started businesses of their own. Some of these woman included Pauline Trigere, who came to New York from Paris in 1937 and started a tailoring business that later turned into a high end fashion house. Also Estee Lauder at the time was working on the idea for her beauty products and officially launched in 1946 a year after the war ended. After the war ended many men returned home injured or not at all, still requiring women to maintain their place in the business world. The Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs were a source of encouragement to women entrepreneurs. They often would hold workshops with already established entrepreneurs, such as Elizabeth Arden giving advice.

When the 1950's came, women found themselves surrounded by message everywhere, stating what their role should be. Domesticity was the overall concern and theme that was highly stressed during this time and women were juggling, trying to combine the home and their career. Home based businesses helped to solve a good part of the problem for those women who worried about being concerned mothers. Lillian Vernon while pregnant with her first child started her own business dealing with catalogs by investing money from wedding gifts and started filling orders right at her kitchen table. Mary Crowley founded Home Decorating and Interiors, as a way of helping women to work from home, by throwing parties to sell the products right in the comfort of their own home. In an effort to avoid criticism and loose business from those who did not support women in business, Bette Nesmith who developed the product "Mistake Out", a liquid that painted over mistakes in typing, would sign her orders B. Smith so no one would know she was a female. From the 1960's to late 70's another change in came about where divorce rates were rising and many women were forced back into the role of being a sole provider. This of course pushed them back out into the working world where they were not well received and when the recession came many of these women were the first to be without work. Once again the entrepreneurial endeavors of women came to the rescue, as an effort of asserting themselves and aiding other women in being a part of the work force. Mary Kay Ash and Ruth Fertel of Ruth's Chris Steak House, were part of that movement. The 1980's and 90's were a time of reaping the hard work of all those women who worked tirelessly for their rightful place in the work force as employees and entrepreneurs. Martha Stewart and Vera Bradley were among the 25 percent women who owned businesses. The public also was becoming more receptive and encouraging to these women entrepreneurs, acknowledging the valuable contribution they were making to the economy. The National Association of Women Business Owners helped to push Congress to pass The Women's business Ownership Act in 1988, which would end discrimination in lending and also get rid of laws that required married women to acquire their husband's signature for all loans and in addition the Act also gave women owned businesses a chance to compete for government contracts. Another monumental moment for women in business was the appointment of Susan Engeleiter to head up the Small Business Administration in 1989. In the late 80's and throughout the 90's there was more of a focus on networking opportunities in the world of female entrepreneurs. There were many opportunities that came about to help those who were interested in starting up their own businesses. Support groups, organizations for educating the female entrepreneur and other opportunities like the seminars and help with financing came from many different sources, such as the Women's Business Development Center and Count Me In. Despite all these advances, the female entrepreneurs still fell behind when compared to their male counterparts. As the 90's came in the availability of computers and the increasing popularity of the internet gave a much needed boost to the women in business. This technology allowed them to be more prevalent in the business world and showcase their skills to their competitors. Even still with the added popularity of women in business, the availability of technology, the support from different organizations, today female entrepreneurs still are fighting. The economic downturn of 2008, did not serve to help them in their quest. With the continual attention given to female entrepreneurs and the educational programs afforded to those women who seek to start out with their own business ventures, there is much information and help available. Since 2000 there has been an increase in small and big ventures by women, including one of their biggest obstacles, financing.^[4]

III. Educated women and entrepreneurship

Educated women in India are sometimes forced to leave employment due to family reasons, like up bringing the children, post delivery health complications and dislocation on account of transfers. According to the International Labour Organization, India ranks in the bottom 20 of a list of 131 counties in female labour force participation. "senior level female employees in India are just 5 per cent compared to the global average of 20

per cent, In India almost 48 per cent women drop out of workforce before they reach the middle of their careers, compared to the Asia regional average of 29 per cent." ^[5] In many cases, these women use their talents and acquired skills to start their own business and become entrepreneurs. Looking for an alternative to a professional career, many are turning entrepreneurs. It highlights how 'mom entrepreneurs' and women owners of small/medium businesses are growing, with 11 per cent women falling in that bracket. These include home based businesses, boutiques and custom fit lifestyle businesses. With the digital space in India expanding, the number of such women will keep growing.

IV. Facts about women entrepreneurs

Women have the tendency to start their own business ventures immediately after their education. As per a survey conducted by Women and Entrepreneurship in India, 58% of women entrepreneurs are in the age group of 25-30. Normally, the majority of women based businesses are micro enterprises, professional services, apparels and accessories, and food and beverages. ^[6]

Women entrepreneurship has been encouraged by a few academic institutions and one such example is that of Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, the Indian partner for the Goldman Sachs 10,000 Women Entrepreneurs Program, a five-year Programme to aid the development of women entrepreneurs. Start-ups may provide a new way for more women to enter and stay in the workforce. At a time when established companies are turning cartwheels to meet their diversity targets (women being a key metric in this), the lure of the unknown and the thrill of entrepreneurship may be a bigger draw than the stability of a routine job. According to various estimates, women account for 25-35% of employees at start-ups and the number is increasing. According to venture capitalists and other risk capital investors, a growing number of women, emboldened by start-up success stories both in India and the globe, are taking the plunge.

In some parts of the country entrepreneurial women are making waves. For example, in the arid regions of Later and Osmanabad in Maharashtra, women are leading the charge at organizations such as Swayam Shikshan Prayog, which is building networks of rural businesses. Here, women are handpicked to sell products such as gas stoves and the best ones given charge of a region to manage. ^[7]

V. Role of Self Help Groups in India

In India, women are having harder lives (in rural areas in particular) and they have to discharge the onerous tasks of running households, collection of firewood for cooking, fetching drinking water and taking care of the children. In the labour market, (as rural non agricultural labor), they earn Rs. 44 per day while the male counterparts earn Rs. 67 per day. ^[8] Apart from weaker market linkages, women empowerment is taken up by development of capacity building of SHGs. A Self-Help Group is a small voluntary association of poor people preferably from the same A Self-Help Group is small voluntary associations of poor people preferably from the same women's groups perform better in all the important activities of SHGs. ^[9] The SHGs can result in better access to credit, additional family income, better nutrition to children and improvement in school attendance.

VI. Successful women entrepreneurs in India:

In the male dominated societies, women have been very successful as business managers and entrepreneurs. For example, Indra Nooyi the chairperson of Pepsi was conferred the prestigious Padma Bhushan for her business achievements. Naina Lal Kidwai, the CGM of HSBC was awarded Padma Shri for her contributions to trade and industry. There are other women entrepreneurs like Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of Biocon Limited., Chanda Kochar, is currently the MD & CEO of India's largest private bank ICICI Bank., Indu Jain, the chairperson of India's largest and most powerful media house – The Times Group. Neelam Dhawan is presently the Managing Director of Hewlett-Packard (HP), India. Motwani is the Joint Managing Director of Kinetic Motors. Mallika Srinivasan, Current position: Director, TAFE (Tractor and Farm Equipment) and Ritu Kumar is one of the big names in Indian fashion industry.

VII. Problems for Women entrepreneurs in India

1. Family ties:

Women in India are very emotionally attached to their families. They are supposed to attend to all the domestic work, to look after the children and other members of the family. They are over burden with family responsibilities like extra attention to husband, children and in laws which take away a lots of their time and energy. In such situation, it will be very difficult to concentrate and run the enterprise successfully.

2. Lack of education:

Women in India are lagging 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 counterpart partly due to early marriage, partly due to son's higher education and partly due to 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.

3. Problem of finance:

Women entrepreneurs suffer 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. They also face financial problem due to blockage of funds in raw materials, work-in-progress finished goods and non-receipt of payment from customers in time.

4. Lack of self confidence:

Women entrepreneurs because of their inherent nature, lack of self-confidence which is essentially a motivating factor in running an enterprise successfully. They have to strive hard to strike a balance between managing a family and managing an enterprise. Sometimes she has to sacrifice her entrepreneurial urge in order to strike a balance between the two.

VIII. Conclusion

Ancient Indian society had given an important position to women. Invasion of India by the Moguls, followed by British rule had altered the status of Indian women. Education of women children was made possible by SSA program and other incentives of state and central governments. But women continue to be house wives, rearing children and are subject to wide ranging physical and emotional tortures. Recent past has witnessed empowerment of rural women through formation of SHGs and NGOs, and by providing liberal bank credit. Urban educated women are not only able to take challenging careers in offices, but are also making their presence felt as entrepreneurs. The trend needs to be strengthened by government initiatives and change in social orientation towards women.

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