

ROLE OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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Abstract:

Entrepreneurship development is a buzzword which is attracting every person's concern ingeneral and women in particular. The participation of women in entrepreneurship is significant and varies from nation to nation. It is observed that Indian Women are also participating in this trend. From a petty shop to a mega business magnet we find women are finding a space for themselves. Theynot only think of profits in their business venture but also are contributing to the development of society.

Keywords: Social Catalyst, financially savvy, mentoring sessions

Introduction:

Women entrepreneurs may be defined as a woman or a group of women who initiate, organise and run a business concern. Women entrepreneurs are those women who think of a business enterprise, initiate it, organise and combine factors of production, operate the enterprise and undertake risks and handle economic uncertainty involved in running it.

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Schumpeter – “Women entrepreneurs are those women who innovate, initiate or adopt a business activity”.

Government of India – “A woman entrepreneur is defined as an enterprise owned and controlled by a woman having a minimum financial interest of 51 percent of the capital and giving at least 51 percent of the employment generated in the enterprise to women.”

In order to address unmet needs within communities that are overlooked or not granted viz., unable to access to products, services, basic essentials which are available in developed communities.

Frederick Harbison – “Any women or group of women which innovates, initiates or adopts an economic activity may be called women entrepreneurship”.

In short, women entrepreneurs are those women who think of a business enterprise, initiate it, organise and combine factors of production, operate the enterprise and undertake risks and handle economic uncertainty involved in running it.

World over 1/3rd of the entrepreneurial ventures are run by woman entrepreneurs. Due to economic progress, better access to education, urbanization, spread of liberal and democratic culture and recognition by society, there has been a spurt in woman entrepreneurship in India. Special incentives and drives have been created in India to bolster the growth of women entrepreneurs. Schemes like Startup India and Standup also make special case to promote entrepreneurial drive among women.

Gradually but steadily, world over, women entrepreneurs have emerged as successful entrepreneurs while earning many accolades for themselves.

In this dynamic world, women entrepreneurs are a significant part of the global expedition for sustained economic development and social progress. Due to the growing industrialization, urbanization, social legislation and along with the spread of higher education and awareness, the emergence of Women owned businesses are highly increasing in the economies of almost all countries.

In former days, for Women there were 3 Ks- Kitchen, Kids, Knitting, then came 3 Ps- Powder, Pap pad, Pickles and now at present there are 4 Es- Electricity, Electronics, Energy, Engineering. Indian women had undergone a long way and are becoming increasingly visible and successful in all spheres and have shifted from kitchen to higher level of professional activities.

Women entrepreneurs are fast becoming a force to reckon with in the business world and are not only involved in business for survival but to satisfy their inner urge of creativity and to prove their capabilities. Educated Women is contributing to a great extent to the social transformation and in the future, will be seen that more women venturing into areas traditionally dominated by men.

Today's women are taking more and more professional and technical degrees to cope up with market need and are flourishing as de signers, interior decorators, exporters, publishers,

garment manufacturers and still exploring new avenues of economic participation. It is perhaps for these reasons that Government Bodies, NGO's, Social Scientists, Researchers and International Agencies have started showing interest in the issues related to entrepreneurship among women in India.

Social Entrepreneurship:

In many countries across the world, women are much more involved in businesses with a social impact than in traditional companies. In several European countries, social enterprises have more women leaders than any other kind of enterprise.

Social entrepreneurship is a term that applies to entrepreneurs that create businesses and organizations focused on social change. The main goal of social entrepreneurs is not to make a profit, but rather to invest, develop and implement new solutions to solve social or environmental problems in a given community. Ashoka, an international organization that has been supporting local social enterprises since the 1980s, describes social entrepreneurs as "individuals with innovative solutions to society's most pressing social, cultural, and environmental challenges. They are ambitious and persistent — tackling major issues and offering new ideas for systems-level change".

There are many kinds of ventures that can be described as social enterprises. From microfinance institutions to bagel shops, housing projects, tech companies...it is an area as vast as entrepreneurship itself, except that here the social impact is just as important as the financial one.

Issues which are related to social problems, social stigma associated with being a resident of such communities, imbalance in availability etc, are addressed by social entrepreneurs.

Profit earning is not the main goal of social entrepreneur whereas they work towards implanting widespread improvements in the society. A Social entrepreneur needs to be financially savvy to succeed in his or her cause.

Social entrepreneurs act as a Social catalyst that alter by reforming social systems and create sustainable improvements. Though they act locally, their reaction is very effective globally. The social entrepreneurs are innovative and always think out of the box to grab the opportunities and whatever the obstacles they face in their development they see it as a challenging area and thus gives a positive response. They are resourceful, accountable and stimulate the social improvements through their contributions. Women social entrepreneurs should be innovative, have farsightedness, quick and effective decision makers, able to

mobilize and marshal, resources, strong determination and confidence, risk takers, updated scientific and technological information.

Approximately 25% of social enterprises are led by women in India and less than 9% are small and medium enterprises owned by them. Therefore there is a need for more women social entrepreneurs.

Women Social Entrepreneurs face additional barriers in founding a social enterprise such as prejudice, family pressure, discrimination etc. the women who withstand with such challenges found the outcome as empowering.

In a survey the women social entrepreneurs revealed that such challenges boosted confidence and sense of self-worth.

Woman's social status will be elevated by becoming a social entrepreneur as they gain respect within their families when compared to male counterparts.

The entrepreneurs from less privileged socioeconomic backgrounds enjoy significant empowerment.

There is once more challenge with respect to access to finance. The major challenges faced by them include accessing funds towards their ventures, types of availability of funding, hurdles of applying for those funds, prejudicial assumptions of potential lenders and investors etc.

Female Social Entrepreneurs are facing frequent questions about their personal life during meetings with potential investors.

Female Social entrepreneurs who are young and unmarried are facing obstacles in accessing financial resources from their own families. Many social women entrepreneurs reported that family members supported sons if they approach parents for funding capital, whereas girls are not encouraged as they saved money to fund for their wedding than their business.

The change in mindsets of the people can take place by helping women-led enterprises to thrive. In order to encourage them, social enterprise investors and other support organizations need to eschew prejudicial attitudes towards women entrepreneurs and provide accessible funding.

Women social entrepreneurs are requesting for loans and grants of smaller denominations with less redtapism and documentation and policy that support early-stage small scale organizations.

In India, men-led social enterprises are on average about 2 ½ times larger than female led social enterprises in the terms of revenue. The reasons for disparities may be seen as restrictions on female's mobility, domestic care responsibilities, differences in various sectors, etc.,

For a social enterprise to maximise its impact, social enterprise funders and support institutions posit scalability as it is desirable and even essential. Breadth of social need and substantial growth projections are taken as the reasons for arising the scale and they are primary requisites for investors to gain interest.

Women as social entrepreneurs

According to an OECD working paper, the 'gender gap' in social entrepreneurship is much smaller than the gender gap in 'mainstream' entrepreneurship, suggesting that social entrepreneurship can be a powerful tool to increase female entrepreneurship and participation in the labor market. Furthermore, the research found social enterprises led by women and men to be very similar in size, profitability and growth.

A major difference that was found between male and female-led social enterprises seemed to indicate that women were actually *more innovative*: "Women-led ventures seem to be more likely to open up new markets – that is, when starting up, providing a product/service which no one else at that time provided. This suggests that perhaps due their specific sensitivity towards social needs, women social entrepreneurs are notable 'lead innovators' when it comes to social innovation".

On the other hand, female-led social enterprises were also generally more participatory in terms of management, suggesting "the power of women social entrepreneurs to empower others (and in doing so, enabling colleagues to learn and develop important talents and skills)".

Motivations to start a social enterprise

The European Women's Lobby started mapping women's social entrepreneurship in Europe in 2015, with the WEstart website and database. So far, the database features information about 11 European countries, with a list of female-led social enterprises, and a report of the research conducted in those 11 countries.

A survey conducted by the WEstart project discovered that a larger percentage (26%) of female-led social enterprises were located in the Human Health and Social Work Activities and respondents reported that the social issues more relevant to their mission were "Inclusion

of socially marginalized people and groups” followed by “Diversity inclusion”. Mainly, they concerned with the integration of socially excluded people into the labor market.

The main motivation to start a social enterprise was to respond to needs in the community and make a difference. Report further states: “In the countries studied, women described personally experiencing and witnessing unmet needs in their community and looking for innovative solutions that will bring about a specific social impact. They also describe feeling a personal calling towards social issues and a desire to make the world a better place with their work”. This indicates women are usually more concerned with social goals than men, perhaps due to traditional gender roles that place women much closer to social issues both in their private and professional life.

Furthermore, many women surveyed had a personal connection with the mission and goal chosen for their enterprise: “The majority of women interviewed for the WEstart project made reference to having had a personal or first-hand experience that motivated them to start their social enterprise”.

Interestingly, very few women were interested in making a profit. “At the individual level, for 31% of women, seeking to make a profit was not a motivating factor. In relation to their household situation, the same applied with 47% of women reporting that “seeking to support myself or my family as a primary earner” was not a motivating factor. Finally, leading a social enterprise appears to be out of choice, since for the majority of women (68%) unemployment or underemployment was not a motivating factor”. Even when women considered the profitability of the enterprise to be important – mainly, women who were unemployed or in countries undergoing economic crisis – the social mission of the enterprise remained equally important.

Supporting women-led social enterprises

The problems faced by female leaders and founders of social enterprises are very similar to those faced by mainstream female entrepreneurs. There is a lack of funding opportunities that hinders women’s entrepreneurship and many female leaders have reported that it can be harder to attract investors. Furthermore, strict policies and regulations can often be an obstacle to create social businesses and keep them afloat.

It is also important to support initiatives that allow female social entrepreneurs to learn from each other and become more knowledgeable and skillful in running their social businesses. Female social entrepreneurs often suffer from a lack of visibility and it is important to foster networking events and initiatives that highlight the role of female entrepreneurs in communities across the globe.

Female social entrepreneurs are innovators that bring about social change. A friendly policy environment can encourage more women to create social businesses and foster female leadership and participation in the social economy. Likewise, educating consumers on the benefits of female-led social enterprises can encourage them to seek out their services and products, benefiting the local economy and community.

Strategies for supporting women social entrepreneurs:

- To create an awareness about entrepreneurship and its importance as job providing avenues rather than job seeking.
- To make them realize the importance of potentiality, income generation, recognition social status
- Government and society should cater to give orientation and skill training in selected trades of their choice and suitability
- Coordinating them in preparation of project reports for their proposed units and helping them to follow up the venture to start the new enterprise.
- Providing continuous awareness, consultancy and guidance, attitudinal change and career building towards enterprise formation.
- Effective training programmes on communication skills and building up self confidence.
- Skill training on scientific knowledge, new technologies and specific trades
- Training on managerial skills, quick and effective decision making techniques, financial management, marketing strategies, formulation and implementation.
- Interaction with successful entrepreneurs for sharing their experiences and providing motivation.

Conclusion:

Empowerment of women entrepreneurs is important for achieving the goals of sustainable growth and the bottlenecks hindering their development must be reduced to enable full participation in the business. Apart from training programs, mentoring sessions, Newsletters, exhibitions and trade fairs also can be a source for the development of entrepreneurship. As a result, the desired outcomes of the business are achieved quickly and more number of business opportunities with good remuneration are found. Therefore promoting entrepreneurship among Indian women is certainly a short-cut to rapid economic growth and development.

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