

RURAL WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP: PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract:

Rural women's economic and social development is essential for overall economic development of society and nation. Rural women are now progressively run their own business yet their entrepreneurial potential, managerial ability and socio-economic contribution continue largely neglected. Women entrepreneurship development is the instrument of women empowerment. Empowerment through entrepreneurship leads to self-fulfillment and makes women alert about their status, existence and their position in the society. In present era, women are becoming socially empowered, and economically empowered through business ownership. Women entrepreneurship is gaining importance in India in the wake of globalization and economic liberalization. The institutional and policy framework for developing entrepreneurial skills, providing vocational education and training has amplified the horizon for economic development of women. Women entrepreneurs tend to be highly motivated, self-disciplined & self-directed. On the other hand, empowerment of rural women is also very important. Economic empowerment of rural women will lead to the development of our country and it is very necessary to give keen attention over the empowerment of women in the rural areas for the real development of our country in all spheres. Women's entrepreneurship is important for women's status in society, and economic development of women will lead to development of family, community and country. It opens up new avenues for creating employment opportunities for women and men. The article tries to understand rural women entrepreneurship and attempts to grapple with the few challenges faced by the women in India to empower women who are as human beings as men are.

Key words: *Rural women entrepreneur, entrepreneurship, problems of rural women entrepreneurs.*

Introduction:

India is a country of villages as the mainstream of its population lives in villages and widespread faraway areas. The stimulating aspect is that every region of the country though connected with the metropolises now; however, still possesses its own eccentric traditional ethos. Also most of the rural communities are still empty of modern facilities like education,

electricity, proper drinking water, health care, sufficient transportation, etc. But the lack of education in many of the rural belts of India is proving fatal and acting as the breeding ground for social vices, evils and paving the way to anti-social/national activities. Women emerged as a distinct interest group in the 20th century predominantly because the bourgeoisie democratic revolutions of 17th and 18th century that barred women from their concept of equality. This difference was based on gender. Since then women as a collective had waged scuffle for recognition of their rights as a human being. Women's perform multifaceted role in the society i.e. as a mother, wife, daughter and service provider to the society. In spite of the fact that the women's contribution to the country's development is equal to that of man, still they experience a number of limitations that restrain them from comprehending their potential for expansion. It was against this contextual that the governments all over the world sensed the need to prioritize the interests of women and their participation at every stage of the development process. UN stated that 'Gender Equality and Women Empowerment' as one of the Millennium Development Goals to be attained by the year 2015. The word Women's empowerment implies the ability of the women take all the important decisions autonomously related to her throughout her life span that will safeguard her success in all aspects of life. A woman is a person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically self-governing. In fact often women in India are underprivileged of their fundamental right to dignity also leave alone the question of gender equality. The present paper explores the questions central to women's development in India that is fundamentally patriarchal in nature.

Objectives:

- To understand the concept of rural women entrepreneurship.
- To emphasis on the critical issues of women entrepreneurs of rural India.
- To ascertain the problems faced by rural women entrepreneur.
- To discuss women potentials with respect to socio-economic background.

Methodology

The prepared paper is a descriptive study in nature. The secondary data and information have been analyzed for preparing the paper extensively. The secondary information have been collected from different scholars and researchers published books, articles published in different journals, periodicals, conference paper, working paper and websites.

Concept of Rural Entrepreneurship

Rural entrepreneurship implies entrepreneurship mounting in rural areas. Rural entrepreneurship means rural Industrialization. Industrialization can't initiate or sustain

without entrepreneurship whether rural or urban. Industries coming under the purview of **Khadi and Village industries commission** are preserved as rural industries. Rural industrialization means boosting location of large and small scale units away from urban areas or planned shifting of units from urban areas to rural areas. Rural entrepreneurship can stop the increasing migration towards cities as it provides wide range of employment opportunities to the village people. Migration from rural areas should not only get checked but overpopulated towns and cities should also get decongested. If it is so, ways can always be found out. One is by forcibly stopping villagers from settling in the slums of towns and cities, making use of all powers to clear the slums so the villagers are forced to go back.

Concept of Rural Women Entrepreneurs:

Rural woman constitutes the family that leads to society and Nation. Overall development of women is essential for the development of society and nation. The rise of women entrepreneurs and their role to the national economy is quite noticeable in India. Women entrepreneurship has been documented during the last decade as an important untapped source of economic growth. According to of statistics women in India 2010, proportion of female main workers to total population in percentage is 16.65 in rural areas and 9.42 in urban areas this shows overall less contribution of women in work but more percentage of women workers in rural areas. Women in entrepreneurship has been largely abandoned both in society in general and in the social sciences. Not only have women lower participation rates in entrepreneurship than men but they also generally choose to start and manage firms in different industries than men tend to do. Entrepreneurship development among rural women helps to enhance their personal competences and increase decision making status in the family and society as a whole.

The basic principles of entrepreneur which applied the rural development are:

- ❖ Optimum utilization of local resources in an entrepreneurial venture by rural population – Better distributions of the farm produce results in the rural prosperity.
- ❖ Entrepreneurial occupation rural population to reduce discrimination and providing alternative occupations as against the rural migration.
- ❖ To activate such system to provide basic '6 m'- manpower, money , material, machinery, management and market to the rural population.

Types of Rural Entrepreneurship

- ❖ **Individual Entrepreneurship-** It is basically called proprietary i.e. single ownership of the enterprise.

- ❖ **Group Entrepreneurship** - It mainly covers partnership, private limited company and public limited company.
- ❖ **Cluster Formation** - It covers NGOs, VOs, CBOs, SHGs and even networking of these groups. These also cover formal and non-formal association of a group of individuals on the basis of caste, occupation, income, etc.
- ❖ **Cooperatives** - It is an autonomous association of persons combined voluntarily for a common objective. An entrepreneur has to agree on a particular type of entrepreneurship based on the various options available.

Challenges of Rural Women Entrepreneurs:

There is a saying in English, „Problems come in bunch not in single“, this saying is very true to the rural women entrepreneurs as they face innumerable problems. These problems may be social, economic or entrepreneurial one. The focal challenges that women face in business are educational and work background, Balancing their time share between work and family, Problems of raising start-up capital, Difficulty in scrounging fund, endangered existence of small companies. In addition to this some of the challenges faced by rural entrepreneurs are as follows.

- ❖ **Family bonds:** Women in our country are very passionately attached to their families. They are being very less practical. They are supposed to do all the household work, to look after the children and other members of the family. They are over loaded with family responsibilities like caring of children, extra attention to spouse, and in laws which take away a plenty of their time and energy. In such conditions, it will be very demanding for women to concentrate and run the enterprise effectively.
- ❖ **Lack of education:** Even in 21st century, rural women in India are lagging far behind in the field of education. Most of the rural women are illiterate. Women in rural areas who are educated are provided either less or insufficient education than their male complement partly due to poverty, early marriage, low socioeconomic status, partly due to son's higher education. Lack of education is one of the main hindrances for rural women who want to start an enterprise. Due to lack of proper education, women entrepreneurs remain in dark about the development of new technology, new approaches of production, marketing and other governmental aid which will encourage them to flourish.
- ❖ **Shortage of Raw Materials:** Due to meagre road connectivity and poor transportation, it is quite difficult to make accessibility of raw materials all the time in rural regions.

Availability of raw materials is an important component of entrepreneurship. Women entrepreneurs in rural areas really face a hard-hitting task in getting the required raw material and other essential inputs for the enterprises when the prices are very high.

- ❖ **Male Dominated Society:** In our constitution there are equal rights for men and women but in actual equality does not exist in rural areas. Women are being deprived in many spheres of life. Women are not treated equal to men. As far as rural areas are concerned, people have an established attitude that women are only for household work. Their entry to business needs the support of the head of the family. Entrepreneurship has traditionally been seen as a male preserve and male dominated. All these put a breakdown in the growth of women entrepreneurs. Thus male entrepreneurs become hurdle in the success of women entrepreneurs.
- ❖ **Problem of finance assistance:** Women entrepreneurs have to suffer a lot in raising and meeting the financial requirements of the business. Bankers, creditors and financial institutes are not coming forward to provide financial support to women borrowers on the ground of their less credit worthiness and more chances of business letdown. 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.
- ❖ **Tough competitions:** In the age of technology, women entrepreneurs face a lot of problems and challenges. Usually women entrepreneurs do not employ high technology in the process of production. In a market where the competition is unexpected, they have to fight hard to stay alive in the market against the organized sector and their male counterpart who have vast experience and capacity to adopt advanced technology in dealing enterprises.
- ❖ **High cost of production:** Several factors including inefficient management contribute to the high cost of production which stands as a stumbling block before women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs face technology obsolescence due to non-adoption or slow adoption to changing technology which is a major factor of high cost of production.
- ❖ **Low risk-bearing ability:** In our country, generally women are delicate and emotional by nature. An entrepreneur must have risk bearing capacity for being successful entrepreneur. But women, sometimes fail to bear the amount risk which is essential for running an enterprise. Lack of proper education, training and financial support from outsides also reduce their ability to bear the risk involved in an enterprises.

- ❖ **Limited Mobility:** In our country, mainly in rural area, women mobility is very limited and has become a problem due to traditional values and inability to drive vehicles. Moving alone and asking for a room to stay out in the night for business purposes are still looked upon with suspicious eyes. Sometimes, younger women feel uncomfortable in dealing with men who show extra interest in them than work related aspects. Thus security of rural women entrepreneurs is a major challenge.
- ❖ **Social Obstructions:** The traditions and customs predominant in Indian societies towards women sometimes stand as a hindrance before them to develop and prosper. Castes and religions rule with one another and hinder women entrepreneurs too. In rural areas, they face more social obstacles as they are always seen with distrustful eyes.
- ❖ **Lack of entrepreneurial skill:** Lack of entrepreneurial skill is a major apprehension for rural women entrepreneurs. They have no entrepreneurial bent of cognizance. Sometimes even after attending several training programs on entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurs fail to surge over the risks and troubles that may come up in an organizational working.
- ❖ **Limited managerial ability:** Management has become an expertise job which only competent managers perform. Due to lack of proper education women entrepreneurs are not efficient in managerial functions like planning, organizing, controlling, coordinating, staffing, directing, motivating etc. of an enterprise. Therefore, less and limited managerial ability of women has become a problem for them to run the enterprise effectively.
- ❖ **Legal procedures:** To fulfill the legal formalities required for running an enterprise becomes a turmoil task on the part of a women entrepreneur because of the pervasiveness of corrupt practices in government offices and procedural delays for various licenses, electricity, and water and shed allotments. In such circumstances women entrepreneurs find it tough to concentrate on the smooth functioning of the enterprise.
- ❖ **Exploitation by intermediary's:** Women are physically very delicate, since women cannot run around for marketing, distribution and money collection; they have to depend on middle men for the above activities. Middle men incline to exploit them in the guise of helping. They add their own profit margin which results in less sales and lesser profit.

- ❖ **Lack of inspiration and motivation:** Motivation plays a significant role for running an enterprise. Women entrepreneurs because of their inherent nature, sometimes feel less confident, which is essentially a motivating factor in running an enterprise successfully. They have to make every single effort to strike a balance between handling a family and managing an enterprise.

Conclusion:

Present scenario is very fast moving with technology development, modernization, industrialization, urbanization, education and development. In such circumstances, employment opportunity increased extremely for rural women. No suspicion, Entrepreneurship among rural women advances the wealth of the nation in general and of the family in particular. Women need reassurance and support from the family members, government, society, male counterparts etc., with the right backing from varied groups stated above, they can join the main stream of national economy and thereby contribute to the economic development. But unfortunately it is seen that the traditional mind set of the society and negligence of the state and respective authorities are important obstacles in the rural women entrepreneurship development in India. Apart from the responsibility of the state and society, absence of a definite agenda of life, absence of balance between family and career obligations of women, poor degree of financial freedom for women, absence of direct ownership of the property to women, paradox of entrepreneurial skill & finance in economically rich and poor women, no awareness about capacities, low ability to bear risks, problems of work with male workers, negligence by financial institutions, lack of self-confidence, lack of professional education, mobility constraints and lack of interface with successful entrepreneurs are major problems of women entrepreneurship development in India. Therefore, there is need of continuous attempt to inspire, encourage, motivate and co-operate with rural women entrepreneurs, awareness programs should be conducted on a mass scale with the intention of creating awareness among women about the various areas to conduct business.

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