

The Role of Women Entrepreneurs as a Change Agent in the Society: A Case Study

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Abstract: *A society that does not have an optimistic, positive empowering image of the future is endangered. When society is skewed & power, it begins an entropic spiral to isolation – social entrepreneurs can use that skills to rebalance society. Society entrepreneurs are change agents that improve society by developing effective and equitable new models often less hierarchical yet more cooperative and complex than existing ones. Researchers and practitioners have defined society entrepreneurship in various ways but a common demonstrator is a venture that adds value to a community mission through innovative, risk-taking, business-like practices. Society entrepreneurship combines innovation with importance of community needs and their work overlaps with social justice and environmental presentation movements. Women in Ancient India were in charge of the home affairs and were accorded very high status almost equal to that of man in religious duties. Gradually due to the varying social-political situation, women were relegated to the background and were subjected to exploitation. Two main causes for the decline of women power are: a) Lack of proper education. 2) Lack of financial independence. In Modern India more and more women are coming out of universities, IIT's and IIM's; there are women doctors, women engineers, women scientists and women social workers etc. In order to a woman to blossom forth as an Entrepreneur in our society, there are 4 Conditions: 1) There must be a read interest in chalking out one's path as an Entrepreneur. 2) There*

must be suitable guidance from experienced and concerned persons. 3) Financial and Moral support from the Institutions and Social Organizations. 4) Various governmental bodies to act as facilitators. At the background of all there is the individual who is specially educated and adequately informed about the field chosen.

Keywords: Environment, Entrepreneurship, Community, Women Workers, Social Organization.

1.0 Introduction:

Women owned businesses are highly increasing in the economies of almost all the countries. The hidden entrepreneurial potentials of women have gradually been changing with the growing sensitivity to the role and economic status in the society. Skill, knowledge and adaptability in business are the main reasons for women to emerge into business-ventures. “Women Entrepreneur” is a person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. A strong desire to do something positive is an in built quality of entrepreneurial women, who is capable of contributing values in both family and the social life. With the advent of media, women are aware of their own traits, rights and also the work situations. The glass ceilings are shattered and women are found indulged in every line of business from pepped to power cables. The challenges and opportunities provided to the women of digital era are growing

rapidly that the job-seekers are turning into job-creators. They are flourishing as designers, interior decorators, exporters, publishers, garment manufacturers and still exploring new avenues of economic participation. In India, although women constitute the majority of the total population, the entrepreneurial world is still a male dominated one. Women in advanced nations are recognized and are more prominent in the business world. [Ref 1] Independence bought promise of equality of opportunity in all spheres 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 benefitted only a small section of women. The large majority of them are still unaffected by change and development activities have benefitted only a small percentage of women is the Urban Middle Class Women.

2.0 The Causes of Poor Performance: The major constraints which Indian Women Entrepreneurs are facing:-

- (a) Lack of Confidence.
- (b) Socio-Cultural Barriers.
- (c) Market-Oriented Risks.
- (d) Motivational Factors.
- (e) Knowledge in Business-Administration.
- (f) Awareness about the Financial Assistance.
- (g) Exposure to Training Programmes.
- (h) Identifying the Available Resources.

Some factors are explained further:- Women's family and personal obligations are sometimes a great barrier for succeeding in business career. Only a few women are able to manage both home and business

effectively, devoting enough time to perform all their responsibilities in priority. Stiff competition in the market and lack of mobility of women make the dependence of women entrepreneurs on middleman indispensable. Many business women find it difficult to capture the market and make their products popular. They are not fully aware of the changing market conditions and hence can effectively utilize the services of Media and Internet. Self motivation can be realized through a mindset for a successful business attitude to take up risk and behavior towards the business society by shouldering the social responsibilities. Other factors are:-

(i) Family Support.

(ii) Government Policies. (iii) Financial Assistance from Public and Private Institutions. (iv) A suitable Environment for women to establish Business Units.

3.0 Opportunities Galore: Highly educated, technically sound and potentially qualified women should be encouraged for managing their own business rather than dependant on wage employment outlets. A desirable environment is necessary for every woman to inculcate entrepreneurial values and involve greatly in business dealings. The vastly opening up of opportunities for women are:-

1. Eco-friendly Technology.

2. Bio-Technology.

3. IT Enabled Enterprises.

4. Event Management.

5. Tourism Industry.

6. Telecom Sector.

7. Plastic Industries.

8. Floriculture.

9. Sericulture.

10. Herbal and Health Care.

11. Food Processing.

12. Education Sector.

4.0 International Efforts: The Global Philanthropy Forum (GPF) aims to build a community of donors and social investors committed to international causes and to inform, enable and enhance the strategic nature of their giving and social-investing. By continually refreshing a lasting learn community, the GPF seeks to increase the number of philanthropists who will be strategic in the pursuit of international causes. Women as individuals are not only capable of advancing human security, environmental stewardship and improved quality of life but they have the will to deliver the results. [Ref 2 & 3]

5.0 60-Second Guides [Business Planning]:

- (a) Develop a Business Idea.
- (b) Find a Mentor.
- (c) Find a Business Coach.
- (d) Write a Business Plan.
- (e) Start-Up.
- (f) Develop a Pricing Strategy.

60-Seconds Guide [Finance]:-

- (a) Collect Payment.
- (b) Establish a Line of Credit.
- (c) Finance your Start-Up.
- (d) Get a Loan.
- (e) Manage Cash Flow.
- (f) Profit Planning.
- (g) Trim Fuel Costs. [Ref 4&5]

6.0 Case Studies:

6.1 PR Entrepreneur (Kim Hass/President of Hass Media LLC): Originally from Philadelphia, Kim combined her love of languages and cultures with communications to start her own business, while living in Milwaukee in 2003. Clients relied on Maa's multi-lingual capabilities to reach an increasingly diverse

population. Her work included the Wisconsin Department of Tourism's first Hispanic marketing campaign; Public Relations, community outreach translation and educational initiatives for several multibillion dollar Wisconsin Department of Transport (WISDOT), highway construction projects and an award winning WISDOT educational initiative called "Careers in Motion" which introduces elementary and middle school students to the wonders of "Science, Engineering and Transportation." Along with maintaining her presence in Wisconsin, she currently provides Spanish Media Training for the Toy Industry Association. She will soon begin production on a Latin American Travel Series. Kim is also pursuing projects in Latin America, Africa and Asia. [Ref 6]

6.2 The Shining Stars: Some of the well known Women Entrepreneurs are Ekta Kapoor (Creative Director, Balaji Telefilms), Kiran Majumdar Shaw (CEO, Bio-Con.), Shahnaz Hussain, Vimlaban M. Iawale (Ex-President, Lijjat Pappad) and Nooyi etc. [Ref 7]

6.2.1 Arun Lall, CEO of SNARTAK IT Solutions: She is only 30 years old. She attributes her success to "Relationship Skills." Her 1-Crore ERP firm was started 3 years back with a mere Rs. 12K. She contacted people from her own MBA network and the various social networking websites like Linked In. With her range of contacts, today Lall has an office in New Zealand and another at Oslo, besides being hosted at New Delhi. She is working 15 hours a day traversing 3 time-zones. [Ref 8]

6.2.2 Priya Lakhmi (28 Years): She quit as a barrister to start "Masala-Masala" (Masala an Indian Sauce Company) and was voted "Daily Mail Enterprising Young

Britain.” Her products are sold by Wait rose, Harrods and Harvey Nichols. “She set up the MM Project for every pot.” “Itachis sold; a homeless person in India is given a meal.”

6.2.3 Olly Donnelly (29): An oxford Geography graduate with stints at Accenture and the World Bank Donnelly founded “Shivia Micro Finance” last year, a charity helping the poor in Nepal and India. She is also Managing Director of Leadership Media Advisory and Director of “Do Development” which advises on Corporate Social Responsibility.

6.2.4 Emily Cremmins (22): Her latest creation “A Solar Powered Fridge” is helping thousands of Africans. She won 2007 British Female Innovator of the year and now studies Management and sustainability at Leeds University, where she was its Enterprise Scholar’08

6.2.5 Ruth Amos (19): Amos turned her GCSE Course Work, “Stair Steady” – a device to help people climb stairs - into a business in 2007. She won the 2006 “Young Engineer for Britain” award and is taking 3 years out before university to build-up her company.

6.2.6 Katy Taylor (28): She has first class degree in Geological Science from Cambridge and a Master’s in Engineering from Dartmouth College in USA. She started out as an Army Officer, joined McKinsey, the consulting and now heads planning, performance and improvement at the Metropolitan Police.

7.0 Definition of Women Entrepreneurs: 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

Enterprises as an enterprise owned and controlled by a women having a minimum financial interest of 51 percent of the capital and giving at least 51 percent of employment generated in the enterprise to women.

7.1 Like a male entrepreneur, a women entrepreneur has many functions:-

- (a) Exploring-Starting new Enterprise.
- (b) Undertaking Risks.
- (c) Introduction of Innovations.
- (d) Coordination.
- (e) Administration and Control.
- (f) Providing Effective Leadership.

7.2 How to Develop Women Entrepreneurship:-

1. Encouraging Women’s participation in Decision-Making.
2. Vocational Training to be extended to Women Community that enables them to understand the production process and production management.
3. Skill Development in Women’s Polytechnics and ITI’s.
4. Making provision of Micro-Credit System and enterprise credit system to Women Entrepreneurs at Local Level.
5. Gender Sensitization Programmes.
6. A Women Entrepreneurship Cell (WEC) should be set up to handle the various problems of Women Entrepreneurship in all states.

8.0 Seeding Innovation: How do we help a community or a sector create new solutions through innovations? How can we help social ventures innovate according to their own strategy? IDEO’s Sally Madsen discusses innovation approaches that work. [Ref 9] In the “Ripple effect Project” seeding innovation means supporting motivated organizations to experiment,

learn, literate and scale new strategies and offerings in the water sectors. Ripple effect is collaboration between IDEO, Acumen Fund and prominent water organizations in India and Kenya, funded by the Gates Foundation. This project focuses on the often-overlooked areas of “Water Transport and Storage” in increasing accessibility to safe water, reduces the time and effort to collect water and reduce contamination. The water organizations include Social Enterprises and Non-profits in diverse areas of India and Kenya. Some pure and sell water, others focus on household water treatment, some favor technological solutions, others focus on awareness – building and community activism. The “Ripple Effect” collaboration includes:- (a) Funding. (b) Business Support. (c) Sharing IDEO’s “Human-Centered Design” Innovation Process, which can be applied to designing new products, services, businesses and systems?

8.1 HCD (Human Centered Design Toolkit): For years, organizations have used HCD to arrive at innovative business solutions. [Ref 10] In collaboration with the Gates Foundation and non-profit groups IDE, ICRW and Heifer International, IDEO has specially adapted this process for NGO’s and social enterprises that work with impoverished communities around the world. The toolkit is divided into 5 Sections. These are:- 1. Intro Guide. 2. Hear Guide. 3. Field Guide (Aspiration Cards). 4. Create Guide. 5. Deliver Guide.

8.2 US-Saudi Women’s Forum on Social Entrepreneurship: US-Saudi Women’s Forum on Social Entrepreneurship aims to enrich the lives of women and their communities through the application of business and leadership skills to social needs

while generating societal and economic value. [Ref 11]

8.3 Wave of the Future: There is a way to combine the very best of the not-for-profit, philanthropic world with the very best of the for-profit, enterprising world. This hybrid is the wave of the future for both profit and non-profit companies. [Ref 12]

8.4 The Most Creative Business People: Stella McCartney is the fashion designer and Beatle Progeny, working with PPR. “I am in the fashion business but I feel when I design I am in the business of trying to figure out what people want and why they want it. [Ref 13]

8.5 Suzanna Arundhati Roy: Suzanna Arundhati Roy (1961) is an Indian Writer and activist who won the Booker Prize in 1997, for her novel “The God of Small Things” and in 2002 the Lannan Cultural Freedom Prize. She is also a writer of two screen-plays and a number of collections of essays. Roy is a well known activist for social and economic justice. [Ref 14]

9.0 Conclusions:

1. Empowering Women Entrepreneurs is essential for achieving the goals of sustainable development.
2. The bottlenecks hindering the growth must be eradicated.
3. Full participation of women as entrepreneurs in all kinds of suitable businesses should be encouraged.
4. Proper training programmes should be initiated.
5. Mentoring, News Letters, Trade Fairs / Exhibitions can be a useful source of entrepreneurial-development.

6. Promoting Women-Entrepreneurship is certainly a sure path to rapid economic growth and development.

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