

**Introduction:**

Women entrepreneurs may be defined as the women or a group of women who set up and operate her own enterprise. In other words women entrepreneurs are self employed individuals who establish their enterprise and involve themselves for economic activities. Earlier women were confined in the four walls of houses and their activities were mainly related to household work, without any socio-economic independence. Today women are marching ahead in almost every field and generating employment not only for themselves but also for others.

Kamal Singh, a woman entrepreneur from Rajasthan, has defined woman entrepreneur 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." -

The Government of India has defined a woman entrepreneurship as "an enterprise owned and controlled by a woman having a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and giving at least 51% of the employment generated in the enterprise to women". Women are engaged in business due to many factors which encourage them to have their own dignity and self esteem in the society. Self dependence, career consciousness and self respect etc are the key factors which motivate women entrepreneurs to choose a profession as a challenge.

These are generally said as pull factors. But sometimes women join the business enterprise due to family circumstances and take up the responsibility of business. These are called as push factors. Thus pull and push factors encourage women to set up a new business or take up the existing one and stand on their legs. Women entrepreneurs are playing a key role in the economic development of any developing country. They have been recognised as an important source of economic growth. Women entrepreneurs are creating new jobs not only for themselves but also for others. They contribute to the economic well being of the family and communities, women empowerment and reduction of poverty and thus the role of women entrepreneurs in economic development is inevitable. Their role is also being

recognised by governments and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), across the globe, through the promotion of various schemes, incentives and plans.

### **Characteristics of Woman Entrepreneur:**

A woman entrepreneur has to perform all the activities involved in establishing an enterprise. These include idea generation and screening, determination of objectives, project preparation, product analysis etc. The following are the important characteristics of women entrepreneur:

- 1) **Employment to women:** A woman entrepreneur provides at least 51% of the employment generated in her enterprise to women. Thus she plays a key role in the economic development of a country by generating employment opportunities for the women in the society.
- 2) **Risk Taker:** Woman entrepreneur assumes the risk of the business. Risk means uncertainty. It is the condition of not knowing the outcome of a decision or activity. She takes calculated risk and faces uncertainty confidently and assumes risk.
- 3) **Good Organiser:** Women entrepreneurs have remarkable skills in organising work and people. They make objective selection of individuals in conformity with their skill in solving specific problem. They bring together various factors of production, minimise losses and reduce the cost of production. A woman entrepreneur formulates business plans and ensures their execution. She combines various factors of production and then produces a product for market.
- 4) **Foresight:** Women entrepreneurs have a good foresight to know about future business environment. In other words, they well visualize the likely changes to take place in market, consumer attitude and taste, technological developments etc. and take necessary and timely actions accordingly.
- 5) **Decision Maker:** A woman entrepreneur has to take various decisions in performing activities of her enterprise. Therefore she must be innovative in decision making process. The true entrepreneurship requires creative decision making, rational approach, problem

solving ability and ability to take quick and correct decision. The profitability and productivity of an enterprise directly depends upon the decision making capacity of an entrepreneur.

6) **Self-Confident:** A woman entrepreneur should be self confident. She must have faith in herself and in her abilities. She should have ability to tackle the problems independently with confidence. Only a self confident entrepreneur can trust others and can delegate authority to others. She should have the confidence to implement the change with her relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

7) **Visionary:** Vision is the ability to see the end result of goals while striving to achieve them. Every entrepreneur has a vision for growth and development. A woman entrepreneur incubates new ideas, starts her enterprise with these ideas and provides added value to society based on her independent initiative. With persistence and determination, she develops strategies to change the vision into reality.

8) **Hard Work:** Women entrepreneurs work very hard to succeed. Most of women entrepreneurs work hard in the beginning and thus same becomes their habit for the lifetime because they believe that hard work is the key to success.

9) **Optimistic:** Women entrepreneurs are optimistic in their approach. They do not get disturbed by the present problems faced by them. They become optimistic for future that the situations will become favourable to business in future.

10) **Creative:** An entrepreneur must have the qualities of creative thinker. A woman entrepreneur must be reasonably intelligent and should have creative thinking so that she must be able to solve various problems and handle the critical situations in order to deal with them.

11) **Interpersonal Skills:** A woman entrepreneur is a person who comes across with different persons. She has to deal with many types of persons. She is the person who gets the things done through with the help of others. So a successful woman entrepreneur possesses the interpersonal skills of dealing with people.

12) **Leadership and Team Spirit:** A woman entrepreneur must have the ability to build successful teams and thus working in teams. She should be good at building and managing successful teams. Leadership quality is the most important characteristic of a woman entrepreneur. It is the process of influencing and supporting others to work enthusiastically towards achieving objectives.

Problems faced by Women Entrepreneurs: Women entrepreneurs faced many problems in their efforts to develop the enterprise they have established. Basically, women entrepreneurs encounter two types of problems: general problems of entrepreneurs and problems specific to women entrepreneurs. The main problems faced by women entrepreneurs may be analyzed as follows:

1) **Problems of Finance:** Finance is regarded as the 'life-blood' for any organization whether it is big or small. Obtaining bankers' support, managing the working capital, deficiency of credit resources are the problems which still remain in the domain of males. Studies have shown that even educated modern women entrepreneurs in advanced and developing economies experienced difficulties in obtaining loans. Banks discourage women borrowers believing that they will leave their business and become housewives again. Although the procedure of obtaining the loan has been simplified to a great extent but for women it still remain a challenge. Thus, women entrepreneur fall due to the shortage of finance.

2) **Scarcity of Raw material:** women entrepreneurs find it difficult to obtain raw materials and other necessary inputs. The failure of many co-operatives in 1971, such as those engaged in business basket making was mainly due to the insufficient availability of forest-based raw material. High prices of raw materials and getting raw material at the minimum of discount are the major problems which are faced by entrepreneurs.

3) **Competition:** Many of the women enterprise has unorganized set up. They have to face severe competition from well settled industries. So this type of cut- throat competition, results in the liquidation of women enterprise.

4) **Lack of Education:** In India literacy percentage among women is very low. Due to lack of proper education majority of women are not aware about the latest technological developments, marketing knowledge, innovative schemes, alternative markets etc. Lack of information and experience creates problems in setting up and running of business enterprises.

5) **Low Risk-bearing Ability:** Women have as compare to men, low ability to bear economic and other risks because they have led a protected life. Many times they face bias attitude in the selection of entrepreneurial training. All these dim their capacity to bear risk involved in carrying an enterprise. Risk-bearing is an essential requisite of a successful entrepreneur.

6) **Family Responsibilities:** in India, it is mainly a duty of women to look after the kids and other members of the family. Her commitment in family leaves little energy and time for business. In case of married women, she has to maintain a balance between her business and family. Their success in this regard also depends upon supporting husband and family. Without the support and approval of husband, the female entrepreneur cannot succeed. Accordingly, the educational level and family background of husband positively influence women entry into business.

7) **Male-dominated Society:** The constitution if India speaks of quality between male and female. But in reality, women are looked upon as weak section of society in all respects. Womens are not treated equal to men. Thus, in turn, serves as a barrier to women entry into business.

8) **Absence of Entrepreneurial Aptitude:** as per study, involvement of women in the small scale sector as owners stands at mere 7 percent. Many women take the training by attending the Entrepreneurship Development Programmes without an entrepreneurial bent of mind.

9) **Inefficient Arrangements for Marketing and Sale:** For marketing the products women entrepreneurs have to be dependent upon middlemen who add heavy profit of margin and that is the main reason for higher selling prices of their product. Although the middlemen

exploit the women entrepreneur, elimination of middlemen is difficult, because it involves a lot of running about. Further, women entrepreneur find it difficult to capture the market and make their products popular. In order to make company successful and profitable, the entrepreneur must be able to sell his product and services. To attain this purpose access of market is essential as access to finance. Women entrepreneurs, by and large continue to face the problem of marketing of their products. So it is one of the main problems for women entrepreneurs. In addition to the above problems, inadequate infrastructure, shortage of power and technical know-how, lack of training, credit facilities and other economic and social barriers have restricted the growth of Women Entrepreneurship in India.

### **Suggestions for growth of Women Entrepreneurs:**

The role of women entrepreneur in economic development is inevitable. Their role is also being recognized and steps are being taken to promote women entrepreneurship. But women entrepreneurship must be molded properly with entrepreneurial traits and skills to meet the changes in trends & challenges of global markets and also be competent enough to sustain and strive for excellence in the entrepreneurial arena.

Women entrepreneur need to be given confidence, independence and mobility to come out of their paradoxes. The following are the suggestions for the growth of women entrepreneurship:

1) **Change in Social Attitudes:** Needless to say mere creation of jobs for women is not sufficient to promote women entrepreneurship rather it requires the change in the attitudes. Societal change is a gradual and slow process. Unless attitudes are changed, credit allocation to women or subsidies will not bring much change.

Instead of focusing on incentives and exemptions to women entrepreneurs, government should start the programs which actually change social outlook of the women entrepreneurs.

2) **Training and Development Facilities:** Training and development is necessary for the growth of women entrepreneurship. Training facilities help the women entrepreneurs to

improve their professional skills and undertake the projects which are profitable for the business enterprise. Women entrepreneurship must be moulded properly with entrepreneurial traits and skills to meet the challenges of global markets.

3) **Easy Financing:** The commercial banks and other financial institutions should create special cell for providing easy finance to women entrepreneurs. They should be provided finance at concessional rates of interest and at easy repayment basis.

4) **Proper Supply of Raw Material:** Women entrepreneurs should be ensured of proper supply of scarce raw material on priority basis. They should provide the raw material at subsidised cost so that they can make the products cost competitive and reasonable.

5) **Self Recognition and Decision Making Authority:** Women entrepreneurs have to play dual roles as a family organiser as well as manager of the women enterprise. Therefore, they must be empowered to take all major decisions of the family and enterprise. The family members of the women entrepreneurs should provide emotional support, help, sharing of domestic activities etc for the effective functioning of their enterprise. Appropriate encouragement and need based assistance should be provided by the family members.

6) **Identification of Projects:** One of the biggest problems of women is the lack of entrepreneurial aptitude. Government should assist women to acquire entrepreneurial aptitude by providing technology and information which helps aspiring women to identify projects. Government and NGOs should encourage to conduct exhibitions and seminars and organise skill development programs for entrepreneurs to offer incubator facilities where an entrepreneur can manufacture a product without investing on infrastructure. They should also promote SMEs of women to help the aspiring women to identify their projects.

7) **Setting up marketing cooperatives:** Most of the women entrepreneurs face problems in marketing their products or services. Due to lack of mobility and heavy competition in the market they have to depend on middlemen. Middlemen take a huge amount of money to market their products. Thus, proper encouragement and assistance should be provided to women entrepreneurs for setting up marketing cooperatives. These cooperatives shall

help in getting the inputs at reasonable rate and they are also helpful in selling their products at profitable prices. Hence, middlemen can be avoided and women entrepreneurs can derive the benefits of enterprise.

**Role of Women Entrepreneur Associations:** At national and international level, few associations have set up keeping in view the growth of women entrepreneurs. Basic objectives to set these associations are to create congenial environment for developing women entrepreneurship in rural and urban areas. The objectives to form these associations are followings.

- 1) To organize entrepreneurial development for women.
- 2) To develop self confidence and hope among women entrepreneurs.
- 3) To organize seminars and conferences on entrepreneurship with the help of other national and international organizations.
- 4) To perform other activities to improve the operational efficiency of women entrepreneurs.
- 5) To secure wider dispersal of entrepreneurship among women.
- 6) To secure various concessions, subsidies and assistance for women entrepreneurs.
- 7) To solve and present the problems of women entrepreneurs before the concerned authorities for consideration and redressal.

Government of India has also initiated various training and development cum generation programmes for the women entrepreneurs during Five- Year Plans. Government of India also added a prestigious chapter 'Integration of Women in Development' in the Seventh Five- year plan. The major suggestion of this chapter given below:

- ♣ It was suggested that efforts should be made to enhance their efficiency and productivity through latest technologies, equipments and practice.
- ♣ It was suggested to involve the women in decision-making process.

- ♣ It is also one of the important suggestions to impart training facilities for women that will instill confidence and skills.
- ♣ It was suggested to ensure women participation in all major development programs of the country.
- ♣ It was suggested in the chapter to provide the required assistance for marketing the products made by women entrepreneurs.

In Eight Five-Year Plan, Government of India also proposes special programmes to increase employment and income generating activities for women in rural areas. Some plans were introduced for exclusively for women's. These were:

- ♣ To develop entrepreneurial qualities among women Prime Minister Rojgar Yojna and Entrepreneurial development programmes were introduced.
  - ♣ KVIC took special measure to generate employment opportunities for women in remote area.
  - ♣ To train women farmers 'women in Agriculture' scheme was introduced.
  - ♣ For full financial support and to help women in primary sector industries like dairy farming, poultry, animal husbandry, horticulture etc, several women co-operative schemes were launched.
7. Summary: Women entrepreneurs may be defined as the women or a group of women who set up and operate her own enterprise.

Self dependence, career consciousness and self respect etc are the key factors which motivate women entrepreneurs to choose a profession as a challenge. Women entrepreneurs are playing a key role in the economic development of any developing country.

They have been recognised as an important source of economic growth. Women entrepreneurs are creating new jobs not only for themselves but also for others. They contribute to the economic well being of the family and communities, women

empowerment and reduction of poverty and thus the role of women entrepreneurs in economic development is inevitable.

Women entrepreneurs faced many problems in their efforts to develop the enterprise they have established like problems of finance, shortage of raw materials, marketing problems, lack of entrepreneurial skills, family responsibilities etc. But government and non-governmental organizations are coming forward for the growth of women entrepreneurship in India and around the globe.

