

Synergy between Women Entrepreneurship and Empowerment

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Abstract

A synergy is the end result or a potential ability of an individual, an organization or groups, to be more successful or productive as a result of a merger. Discussing the synergy between the women entrepreneurship and empowerment, one needs to be specifically clear about the word "Empowerment" established through the economic independence in general and more precisely through the entrepreneurial ventures. To understand women empowerment, one needs to understand what exactly it means to be 'empowered'. According to many dictionaries the word empowerment suggests the attaining of power or authority over certain issues of large interest and when the women race, supposed to be a suppressed one for centuries, progresses into holding a prominent place in any such issue or the solutions related to it can be addressed as the "Empowerment of Women".

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Empowerment, Synergy

Introduction

"You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women" – Jawahar Lal Nehru as quoted in Sathiabama. K (2010). Once quoted by the first prime minister of independent India, this statement loses its relevance in the current day India, as the condition of a majority of Indian women is not worth mentioning. Women, almost 50% of the world population is empowered & immensely potent race, it depends upon the discretion of a gender recognized more for its emotional power. Quite difficult it is to digest that how slow moving the cultural exchange of the world is when you get to realize that there are several places across India where obnoxious customs of the ancient world co-exist with the latest technologies & thought. However, it may hardly be a surprise for anyone who has been born and brought up in India.

The situation sounds even more alarming when these incidents occur in a state that was being very much headed by a woman Chief Minister till a few months back. India, which is recognized as the fourth most dangerous country in the world for women, has a

variety of violence against women, playing a major role in child rapes; gang adult rapes, acid attacks, domestic violence, dowry deaths, public molestations, to name the few. In the very beginning of civilization, women enjoyed a respectable position in the society at par with men. They largely participated in the social circles and no religious ceremonies were considered complete without the participation of mothers, sisters or wives. Unfortunately their physical constitution became a hindrance in their various achievements, and this led to their dependence on men for food and protection. Alas, the superiority was no longer the fate of the fairer sex which was responsible for carrying forward the life on this planet but became the fate of the male race which had muscle power through which it could subjugate the former. This male dominance led away to a patriarchal society where males wrote the codes for all times and occasions, obviously giving women a subordinate position.

Much has been said and written about the need of women empowerment in general, in the Indian society, and its dependence on the women-entrepreneurship, irrespective of its variety and size, in particular. Keeping this in mind, a literature review is being given, revolving around several articles published in various journals, magazines and web sites at different times in the past.

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Literature Review

According to K.D Gangrade, the empowerment of women, based on Gandhi's vision 'Sarvodaya', should be the ultimate goal. The welfare of women largely depends upon cooperation and trusteeship in the economic sphere, equal participation in the political sphere, and mutual aid in the social sphere without regard to caste, class or gender. Thus, empowerment of the rural and underprivileged women cannot be imposed from above, it must evolve from the bottom.

In brief, empowering women socio-economically through increased awareness of their rights and duties as well as access to resources is decisive step towards greater security for them. Gandhi owes much to Kasturba and even more to his mother for his strong spiritual, social and completely humane bent of mind. His devotion to women began with his devotion to his mother and Kasturba, his wife. Particularly women as mothers became increasingly his idol for liberation of India and his own life. A mother, having brought forth a child, selflessly devotes herself to his care till he grows up and becomes independent. Even after children are grown-up her constant desire is to make herself one with them. Unless we have feelings and devotion for our motherland, many countries will be lying in a wait to crush us down. He told a co-worker, "he saw no hope for India's emancipation while her womanhood remained un-emancipated".

According to Amit K. Dwivedi and Nivedita T. Dwivedi (2011), Women regarded as the fairer sex of the society, confined to the four walls of their homes, dared to come out, broke the walls and started participating in all types of activities including entrepreneurship. In India empowering women through entrepreneurship has become an integral part of our development efforts because of three important reasons;

- i) Women development,
- ii) Economic growth and
- iii) Social stability.

Their paper revolves around a study conducted in Faizabad zone of Uttar-Pradesh. This study deals with the contribution of women-entrepreneurs in economic development of the nation passing through the

multiple sets of problems they face in their entrepreneurial ventures every day. In this study we also get to know that this enterprise is appropriate for those women entrepreneurs who are having problems running in business outside their homes due to family responsibility or their culture, therefore, they can start these ventures inside their homes.

According to Sathiabama. K (2010), the empowerment of women depends upon various factors such as political, social and economic angles of a country. Also, according to the writer, the Self Help Groups (SHGs) have paved the way for economic independence of rural women and have emerged as an important game-changers in the recent times. This article also deals with empowerment of rural women through entrepreneurship and this economic empowerment leading to development of families and communities. This statement is proved by a collective Micro Entrepreneurship in Tamilnadu.

Besides the above written, the discussion about the relationship and synergy between Entrepreneurship and Women Empowerment can be endless, therefore, below is given a list of various writers who have touched the topic in some way or the other, will be an addition to this literature review. Nivedita T. Dwivedi and Tanya Mishra (2013), Birender kumar Jha and Harender Kumar (2009) and report of Regional strategies for empowering women published by Woodrow Wilson International centre for scholars.

Synergy between Entrepreneurship and Empowerment

Today we have endless examples of women entrepreneurs excelling in different walks of life. At one point starting from 70s and 80s and continuing on till today we have 'Shahnaaz Hussain' as India's woman ambassador for 'Herbal Beauty Products', the 90s and 2000s saw the 'Vandana Luthra', 'Bharti Taneja', 'Blossom Kocchar', just to name the few, the women entrepreneurs in the field of beauty products manufacturing. SEWA is another such body which aims at mobilising women in the unorganised sector of the Indian economy. The members of SEWA, a Trade Union, formed in 1972, are self employed women who earn a living through their own business or their own labour. The motto of this union is to

make self-employed women organize themselves into sustainable organizations in order to collectively promote their development

Besides these, the dairy trades and fishery trades are two other such trades which are directly related to the empowerment of women through entrepreneurship. 'Vasundhra Dairy – Valsad registered 1973, is one good example of the women entrepreneurs in the field of dairy products. It is going great guns since its inception till today, empowering hundreds of women in one stroke. On the other hand, the women entrepreneurs in the field of 'Fishery Trade' are also strong examples of economic empowerment of women. Perhaps, this should be the end goal of a road map on women in fisheries and aqua-culture. Women also occupy a very good proportion of the work force in export-oriented processing of cuttle fish, lobsters, and fin fish varieties. Also the fisher women resolve around extension, education, awareness building, training, enhanced adoption level and techno economic empowerment.

Reminded are we of those ancient times when women, in the name of sanskaras, were tied up with the bondage of superstitions, which they had to carry till the last breath of their lives. They were mere objects for physical satisfaction and procreation. According to Hindu Shaastras, a woman was to be a moral slave of her father until married and the same to her husband when married off to him. Unfortunately, all the epigrams, aphorisms, proverbs, platitudes and truism have been a naked truth about the stature of women in India.

It does not mean that efforts have not been made to bring the dignity in the lives of women. There has been a long list of social reformists and saints in our country like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chand Vidyasagar, Govind Ranade, Jyotibha Phule and to top it all, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Dr. Ambedkar laid down the foundation of concrete and sincere efforts by codifying the common civil code for the Hindus and also made all the possible ways of advancement of women in India. Besides this, the Sharda Act is also worth mentioning as it has set the seal of authority upon the scattered pieces of social reforms which were imposed by the heads of orthodoxy.

“If you have to improve a country’s progress then make its women economically independent.” – M.K. Gandhi. Finding a relevant connection to the above said words by the father of the nation many efforts are being done by various organizations, NGOs and other groups to use women empowerment as an effective tool to bring about changes in the women’s socio-economic conditions. Perhaps, their empowerment is associated with their participation in different spheres of life, mainly Education & Economic Independence. The qualified and educated women could otherwise pull their lives in a decent manner, but the question for the less educated and completely illiterate, remained where it was paving way for the birth of “Cottage Industries”, “Laghu Udyogs”, “Cooperative Unions”, “Women NGOs” and so on.

The rising number of women entrepreneurs and their contribution to the national economy is quite visible in India, now-a-days. This number of women entrepreneurs has grown tremendously over a period of time, particularly since 1990s. The women entrepreneurs need to be given credit for their consistent usage of modern technology, more and more investments, finding a niche in the export market and finally being able to create a remarkable employment for others and setting a trend for their sister counterparts and entrepreneurs in the organized sector.

These women entrepreneurs not only are able to create new variety of jobs for themselves and the complete women sect but are also able to provide the society with different solutions to management, business problems and the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities. At the same time a fact, much hard to digest, is that these women entrepreneurs were not only able to lower down the participation rates in entrepreneurship than men, but were also able to initiate and maintain various industrial fields where men could not succeed, example being, “papad, badi, beedi, agarbati, pickles, chutney trades, etc.”. Entrepreneurship, as per the popular concept, is a business enterprise where the owner or manager by a risk and initiative taking capacity, aims at making profits.

To quote Birender Kumar Jha & Harender Kumar (2009), “Women comprise half of the human resource, they have been identified as key agents of sustainable development and women’s equality is central to a holistic approach towards establishing new patterns and process of development that are sustainable, “The contribution of women and their role in the family as well as in the economic development and social transformation are pivotal. Women constitute 90 per cent of total marginal workers of the country. Rural women, who are engaged in agriculture, form 78 per cent of all women in regular work”

Currently the economic development is one of the factors in India that changes the entire scenario of social and cultural environment within the country especially for the women. The rural women are engaged in small-scale entrepreneurship programmes with the help of Self Help Groups and play a vital role in farm and home system. They contribute substantially to the physical aspect of farming, livestock management, post harvest and allied activities. Their direct and indirect contribution to the farm and home along with livestock management operations has not only helped to save their assets but has also led to an increase in the family income. In this way, the women are not only empowering themselves technically to cope with the changing times and productively using their free time, but are also engaged in earning individual or collective income with the help of self-help groups. This not only generates income for them but also improves their decision-making capabilities that leads to their overall empowerment, which means that they get enough authority to delegate the roles, and permissions to various people working in collaboration with them to achieve a common profit making goal.

Various Benefits of Entrepreneurship for Rural Women, Leading to Empowerment

Women entrepreneurship is both about women’s position in society and about the role of entrepreneurship in the same society. Women entrepreneurs faced many obstacles specifically in marketing their product (including family responsibilities) that have to be overcome in order to give them access to the same opportunities as those

with men. Particularly the entry of rural women in micro enterprises should be encouraged and maintained. Rural women can do wonders by their effective and competent involvement in entrepreneurial activities as they have the basic indigenous knowledge, skill, potential and resources to establish and manage an enterprise. Below given are some of the qualities seen to be developed as a result of taking up an enterprise among rural women.

- Financial independence
- Better standard of living
- Confidence boosting
- Belief in one’s own self
- Involvement in social and political fields
- More participation in the rural political meetings
- More involvement in solving women related problems

These micro-entrepreneurial efforts for the women empowerment lead to their empowerment in diverse directions such as ‘social equality’, ‘property rights’, ‘political participations’, ‘family and community development’ and ‘socio-economic opportunities’ finally leading to the development of the nation. Women entrepreneur networks are major sources of knowledge about women’s entrepreneurship and they are increasingly recognized as a valuable tool for its development and promotion. This network helps to give lectures, printed material imparting first hand technical knowledge in production, processing, procurement, management and marketing among the other women. This will motivate other rural women to engage in micro entrepreneurship with the right assistance and they can strengthen their capacities besides adding to the family income and national productivity.

Quite encouraging it is for the complete ratio of women in India that the ‘Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12)’ has recognized women as not just ‘equal citizens’ but also as ‘agents of economic and social growth’. This plan also speaks about the recognition of the interventions in favour of women to provide them with basic entitlements. All women, according to this plan, should be provided with an environment

free from all forms of violence – physical, economic, social and psychological. The participation and desired representation of women at the highest policy levels and creating gender mainstreaming besides effective policy implementation is also an integral part of this plan.

To re-emphasize that the empowerment of women through entrepreneurship involves an access to resources and markets, actual ownership and active control, these are the three major factors for empowering women. Also to consider their own potential to achieve the desired goals the women should recognize their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to move forward. In our country, the women entrepreneurs might not necessarily be highly educated but should possess the basic entrepreneurial skills besides the language of market communication. Women entrepreneurship is a process where women are no longer dependent on the males but rather are their own masters providing employment opportunities to other women as well.

Relevance of the Topic

Today's women must supplement the family income using their personal potentials and skills, and if they lack somehow these competencies may be sharpened by required training. Thus, women in India, no longer need to wait for employment outside their homes. They can successfully start their own enterprises and earn a livelihood for themselves. What they need as an effective enterprise manager, is a large quantity of cooperation and encouragement in the sphere of activity at all levels of home, society and also from governmental organizations. Although the traditional image of the entrepreneur has been broken to a certain extent, it is still strong enough for some women to find it hard to be taken seriously, which may have an adverse impact on applications for funding and finding clients. Women's lack of control over resources such as land and labour also limits their eligibility for loans. All said and done, women entrepreneurship has become an important tool for women empowerment in the current-day-India. Women entrepreneurs also enhance the living standards of their family which in turn helps in development of the country. Entrepreneurs are regarded as the backbone of any

economy. Low budget trades and small scale industries like 'Beauty Parlours', 'Manufacturing of Ayurvedic beauty products', 'Aggarbattis', 'Beedi', 'Papad', 'Wadi', 'Lunch Tiffins', 'Pickles and Chutneys', 'Creche' and 'Day Boardings' for kids of working women and many more are the living and healthy examples of women entrepreneurship. These trades are not only flourishing but have a bright future for expansion and absorption of a large numbers of women employees.

Author's Perspective

The promotion of 'Gender Equality' and 'Empowerment of Women' are the goals every country is aiming at. Also these goals are being pursued in all the countries very actively and with a great sense of urgency, for a simple reason that no country is believed to get ahead if half of its citizens are left behind. While seeing our women attain empowerment with a great difficulty through entrepreneurial ventures, we get to understand our women and girls are not just the greatest 'untapped resources' but could be the most 'Powerful Force' for international development. No wonders these women-run small and medium sized entrepreneurial efforts are turning out to be the proven drivers of our GDP. In fine, women-run ventures are a tremendously reliable investment because the money invested and profits earned by them are certainly going to benefit their families and communities because they are more likely to invest in the public betterment than in their sole interests.

Conclusion

Referring to women empowerment in India through entrepreneurship, we need to remember that India as a country is still recovering from years of abuse in the time of the British Raj and it has very recently acquired liberalization through globalization and other socio-economic forces. Undoubtedly when a country will be free from the shackles of social and economic evils, its whole population is destined to benefit, women being no exception. In the words of Swami Vivekanand, "Arise away and stop not until the goal is reached". Thus our country should be catapulted into the horizon of women empowerment and revel in its glory.

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