

Women Entrepreneurs: Journey Towards Success

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“Entrepreneurship indicates an independence of spirit. It is the realization of this independence that women in India have begun to express over the last two or three decades. Also, this is the main reason why the percentage of women among the total number of entrepreneurs in India has been progressively growing” quoted by Shahnaz Husain, CEO of Shahnaz Herbals Inc in a conversation with ibscdc.org. With passing times, the role of Indian women has been explicitly acknowledged with a market shift in the approach from mere ‘women welfare’ to more towards ‘women development and empowerment’. It has been observed that women in India are taking up entrepreneurial activity at an increasing rate, especially in medium and small scale enterprises. Their substantive contribution to economic growth of our country is impossible to ignore. It is in this milieu that the authors have offered to present their research findings on women entrepreneurship in the form of an interesting book titled ‘Women Entrepreneurs: Journey towards Success’. This book has been written for anyone who is interested in understanding the opportunities and challenges faced by budding women entrepreneurs in Indian context.

There have been several studies on women entrepreneurship in Indian context, but most of all have just given the bird’s eye view about the positioning of Indian women entrepreneurs. What sets this book distinct from others is its extent of coverage i.e. inclusion of 284 units operationalised by women entrepreneurs in Delhi. Based on an in-depth analysis of these units, the authors have attempted to explain the factors responsible for entrepreneurial motivation among women as well as hindrances faced by them in setting up their ventures. The book begins with an alluring preface that absolutely justifies the need to read and understand the significance of ‘mainstreaming the journey of Indian women entrepreneurs’. In main, the purpose of authors behind this empirical book is to reveal the various motivating and de-motivating internal and external factors in context of women entrepreneurs engaged in micro enterprises in NCT of Delhi and then suggest the ways to eliminate hurdles proving hindrance in the development of women entrepreneurship in Indian Context.

As the title suggests, the journey of Indian women from beginning till the successful leading of a venture has been unfolded well in the seven chapters. In chapter one, the authors have identified some key constructs in relation to functioning of women entrepreneurs. They have opined that the entrepreneurs’ work typically operates at low levels of organization and scale. They even lack formal space for operations and frequently have to protect themselves from harassment by local authorities. In addition, their work is often not constituted as a separate legal entity, independent from the household. Most of the times, their entrepreneurial activities tend to get locked into traditional roles. Very aptly, the chapter addresses the present situation of women entrepreneurs who are dealing with various paradoxical situations exist in our society. Setting up an enterprise is not an easy task for women entrepreneurs in our society and at the same time, running it successfully is more challenging.

Pursuing further, chapter two entails a comprehensive literature review on women entrepreneurs. Around 40 leading studies have been cited to make readers understand the current positioning of women entrepreneurs in Indian business market. Chapter three revolves around conceptual framework and methodology. By adopting the ‘Melting Middle’ perspective and the continuum of female entrepreneurship development, the authors have first classified the women entrepreneurs into six groups and then effectively deduced that women entrepreneurs are more inclined towards service sector preferably beauty parlors, retail shop business, tailoring boutique, day care centers, play school, fitness center, and interior decoration centers. Chapter four sketches out the demographic profile of chosen women entrepreneurs pertaining to age, education, type of family, caste, religion, marital status, nature of work, and industry to which enterprise belongs.

The heart of the book lies in chapter five and six, where authors have brought out some interesting findings on the basis of thorough empirical analysis. In summing up challenges and issues faced by women entrepreneurs, authors have indicated that women choices of business are restricted to those that do not require a large capital investment and require less personal involvement. Major business related tribulations are related to competition, inadequate publicity, lack of marketing talent and main social problems are linked to long working hours, lack of self-competence, absence of family support, and lack of economic freedom. In continuation with deliberation on various issues and aspects of women entrepreneurship in India, the authors have explained that women entrepreneurs are facing a never ending dilemma. They are expected to fill 'dual roles', one is to supplement the family income in an effort to improve standard of living and other is to manage the family. Interestingly, prime compelling reason for starting own venture is not to earn bread and necessities but to raise the standard of living or to gain a higher status. The study has proved to be an eye opener in bringing out some grounded facts related to women entrepreneurs operating in urban cities like Delhi.

Very prompt suggestions have been made by authors while concluding the book in chapter seven. The authors have recommended that it is high time to look for genetic reengineering to seek the appropriate genetic mutation for competitively facing these entrepreneurial challenges by women entrepreneurs in urban economy. The authors have further suggested that separate women's organizations must be formed at district level to help women entrepreneurs in fulfilling their requirements for financial assistance, marketing and sales promotion, technical know-how, etc. Counseling in entrepreneurship through women oriented NGOs, cheap micro-financing, and financial support for new business projects endorsed by established women entrepreneurs can also promote budding entrepreneurs. Resurrection of entrepreneurship is the call of the time and it can definitely be achieved through educating the women strata of population, spreading awareness and consciousness amongst women to outperform in business arena, enabling them to recognize their strengths and important contribution they make in betterment of society as well as the entire economy. The book finally ends with a rich bibliography of around 200 references.

At the beginning of this book review, I have mentioned that the authors have set themselves the daunting task of explaining the true picture of women entrepreneurship in Indian context. At this point, it can be said that the authors have succeeded in depicting a less theoretical more technical approach. As I stated, the book in question is an outcome of survey based research of a wide range of women entrepreneurs. The amount of research work carried out for writing this book is praiseworthy. Collecting detailed information on such a large sample is not a cakewalk and this has made the book really valuable. The meticulous adherence to details from selecting the sample till analysis of the data clearly makes this book stand out among others. It certainly fills the void in current literature regarding women entrepreneurship in India. Indeed, it is an informational resource for academicians as well as researchers. The book is a must for professionals and practitioners in professing on theory and practice of women empowerment in India. Notions presented by authors are highly thought provoking and will definitely inspire forthcoming researchers to establish the righteous approach to women entrepreneurship and related variables.

Reviewed by:

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