Rural Women Entrepreneurs in India: Challenges and Opportunities

Ms. Monika Bansal
Ms. Lakhbir Kaur

(SH. LBS Arya Mahila College Barnala)
(Malwa College, Bathinda)

Mbsingla2014@gmail.com
Lakhbirsandhu1290@gmail.com

Abstract
It is a general belief in many cultures that the role of women is to build and maintain the homely affairs like task of fetching water, cooking and rearing children. Since the turn of the century, the status of women in India has been changing due to growing industrialization, globalization, and social legislation. Last ten years of Indian economy make it evident that the structure of ownership in different sectors has changed. Many women entered the world of business, of trade commerce and they have become successful entrepreneurs in various business activities. This growth rate of women’s participation in economic activities is much lower than the expected rate. Because in India, there are still many social and cultural restrictions on women. Women entrepreneurship development is the instrument of women empowerment. It is very necessary to give keen attention over the empowerment of women in the rural areas. As in India there are around 7 lakh villages and more than of 70% population live in villages. In rural sector 56% male and 33% of the females are in labour force. About 66% of female population in the rural sector are Idle and unutilized. So rural women’s economic and social development is necessary for overall economic development of society and nation. The present paper addresses challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in rural areas and also explores the opportunities prevailing for rural women entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Women Entrepreneur, Rural Area, Economic Development
Introduction

An entrepreneur is one of the important segments of economic growth. The word “Entrepreneur” is an English word that has been loaned from French word “Entreprendre”, which means “To Undertake” and was used mainly in French to describe a “Manager or Promoter of a theatrical production.” Entrepreneur is one who exercise initiative by organizing a venture to take benefit of an opportunity and, as the decision maker, decides what, how and how much of a good and service will be produced. An entrepreneur is a person who sets up a business or businesses, taking an financial risks in the hope of profit. Women entrepreneurs have been designated as the new engines for growth and the rising stars of the economies in developing countries to bring prosperity and welfare. A woman entrepreneur is an adult who owns and runs an enterprise, especially a commercial one, often at personal financial risk. “Women who innovate, initiate or adopt business actively are called Women Entrepreneurs.” J. SCHUMPETER. Women Entrepreneurs may be defined as the women or a group of women who initiate, organize and operate a business enterprise. The Government of India has defined women entrepreneurs as an enterprise owned and controlled by women having a minimum financial interest of 51 per cent of the capital and giving at least 51 per cent of the employment generated in the enterprise to women. Entrepreneurship development among rural women helps to enhance their personal capabilities and increase decision making status in the family and society as a whole.

Challenges for Rural Women Entrepreneurs

The main 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 borrowing fund, Thought-cut completions endangered existence of small companies, Problems of availing raw-materials access to export market without intermediaries, as well as an overall psychological barrier on the part of banks, suppliers, and clients alike, are a few of these challenges. In addition to this some of the challenges faced by rural women entrepreneurs are as follows:

1. 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 inadequate education than their male counterpart partly due to poverty, early marriage, low socioeconomic status, partly due to son’s higher education. Due to lack of proper education, women entrepreneurs remain in dark about the development of new technology, new methods of production, marketing and other governmental support which will encourage them to flourish.

2. Male Dominated Society

In our constitution there are equal rights for men and women but in real sense equality does not exist in rural areas. Women are being neglected in many spheres of life. Women are not treated equal to men. As far as rural areas are concerned, people have a set attitude that women are only for household work. Their entry to business needs the approval of the head of the family. Entrepreneurship has traditionally been seen as a male preserve and male dominated. All these put a break in the growth of women entrepreneurs. Thus male entrepreneurs become hurdle in the success of women entrepreneurs.

3. Family ties

Women in our country are very emotionally 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 burdened with family responsibilities like care of children extra attention to husband, and in laws which take away a lots of their time and energy. In such conditions, it will be very difficult for women to concentrate and run the enterprise successfully.

4. Problem of finance

Women entrepreneurs have to suffer a lot in raising and meeting the financial needs of the business, bankers, creditors and financial institutes are not coming forward to provide financial assistance to women borrowers on the ground of their less credit worthiness and more chances of business failure. 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.

5. Lack of Raw Materials

Due to poor road connectivity and poor transportation, it is quite difficult to make availability of raw materials all the time in rural areas. Availability of raw materials is an essential component of entrepreneurship. Women entrepreneurs in rural areas really face a tough task in getting the required raw material and other necessary inputs for the enterprises when the prices are very high.
6. 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 too high, they have to fight hard to survive in the market against the organized sector and their male counterpart who have vast experience and capacity to adopt advanced technology in managing enterprises

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. Mobility constraints
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 women is also a major challenge.

10. Social Barriers
The traditions and customs prevalent in Indian societies towards women sometimes stand as an obstacle before them to grow and prosper. Castes and religions dominate with one another and hinder women entrepreneurs too. In rural areas, they face more social barriers as they are always seen with suspicious eyes.
11. Lack of entrepreneurial aptitude

Lack of entrepreneurial aptitude is a major concern for rural women entrepreneurs. They have no entrepreneurial bent of mind. Sometimes even after attending various training programmes on entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurs fail to tide over the risks and troubles that may come up in an organizational working.

12. Legal formalities

To fulfill the legal formalities required for running an enterprise becomes an upheaval task on the part of a women entrepreneur because of the prevalence of corrupt practices in government offices and procedural delays for various licenses, electricity, water and shed allotments. In such situations women entrepreneurs find it hard to concentrate on the smooth working of the enterprise.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

There is openhanded proof to support that if more women are motivated and are given the required encouragement and help for becoming entrepreneurs, they would contribute significantly in running viable commercial enterprises. There are several programs and schemes and plans both by centre and state government at different levels for motivation and support to rural women entrepreneurs in India. In 1999-2000, the Govt of India launched “Swarna Jayanthi Grama Swarozgar Yojana” programme for promoting poverty alleviation through self employment and the organization of poor into Self-Help Groups (SHG). Loans provided under this scheme are treated as medium-term loans. The SHGs have given a new lease of life to the women in villages for their social and economic empowerment. There is national policy for creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential. These policies provide opportunities of equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and participation in economic progress of the nation. There are different vocational training programmes for women by ministry of labour and employment, they have established regional vocational training institutes for development of entrepreneurial skills Following are the major programs for development of entrepreneurship in India:

- IRDP: Integrated Rural Development Programme: The main objectives of Integrated rural development Programme is to enhance the income generating power of family who
are below the poverty line to alleviate the poverty. They impart technical &
entrepreneurial skills & raise the income level of the poor. IRDP (Integrated Rural
Development Programme) allied programmes TRYSEM (Training Rural Youth for Self
Employment) DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas)
• JRY (Jawahar Rozgar Yojna): It is wage Employment programme implemented by
Panchayats at Village, Block & District level in the ratio. 70:15:15 etc.
• Support and Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)
• Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)
• Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), including Food Grains Component
• Assistance for Rural Employment Guarantee Schemes
• National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)
• National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)
• National Food for Work Programme (NFWP)
• National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP)

Conclusion
Women are an important human resource of the nation and every state should try to utilize them
as mediators of economic growth and development. Encouragement for women entrepreneurship
is one of the ways for that. 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 women
entrepreneurship development in India. Women need encouragement and support from the
family members, government, society, male counterparts etc., with the right assistance. The only
urgent need is to create a favorable atmosphere to increase self employment for women.
Therefore, it is necessary to provide training to rural women to enhance their entrepreneurial
skill and giving a path of success to rural women.

Bibliography:
https://www.ijsr.net/archive/v3i9/U0VQMTQ0MQ==.pdf
http://www.academicjournals.org/journal/AJBM/article-full-text-pdf/C73C7F443810


https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entrepreneurship


(http://www.ijcem.org/papers112012/ijcem_112012_02.pdf)

(http://psrcentre.org/images/extrainages/40.%201211306.pdf)