

Women Entrepreneurship: issues and Policies in India

Dr. Anil Mishra

Professor, VNS Business School, Bhopal M.P

ABSTRACT

The prevalence of a dominant ideology that confines girls and women to definite roles and obligations, leads to their devaluation and discrimination in a range of areas. Empirical evidence shows that women contribute significantly to the running of family businesses mostly in the form of unpaid effort and skills. The value of this effort is underestimated both by the families that take it for granted and in academic studies. On the other hand, many of the enterprises defined as being run by women (that is, enterprises in which women hold the controlling share) are in fact run in their names by men who control operations and decision making. Programmes meant to reach women entrepreneurs can succeed only if they take note of this paradox as well as of the familial and social conditioning that reduces the confidence, independence and mobility of women. In Indian society for years, women have been kept out of decision-making process'~(Women are prevented from achieving and holding positions of authority: (they are usually not encouraged by the family or society, to do work which requires skill, mobility and decision making. A number of women found a socially acceptable solution in teaching, nursing, typing, office work and social work areas, where generally accepted traits of women could be realized. Despite contributing even greater number to the work force, women continue to occupy lower status positions.

Key Words: Feminine Identity, Women entrepreneur

WOMEN AS AN ENTREPRENEUR

Becoming an entrepreneur did arouse a little dilemma in many women who have the potentialities for becoming one. However, to earn quick money was the basic reason for women to start entrepreneurship. They had a deep-seated need for a sense of independence along with a desire to do something meaningful with their time and to have their own identity instead of remaining closeted behind their husband's nameplate. Women with high education view at entrepreneurship as a challenge, while for women with no education background find entrepreneur merely a means for earning money. These women needed little "pull" and "push" for venturing ahead as their circumstances forced them. On other hand, women, coming from good financial background need "pull" and "push" as at times they themselves were not aware of their own inner strengths and resources and wanted their husbands/family members to decide the ways it should be utilized. Also the women of the upper crust society were hesitating to put forth the idea of taking up a non- traditional role.

It is also found that compared to men, women were less concerned with making money and often choose business proprietorship as a result of career dissatisfaction. Secondly, women find entrepreneurship as a tool of meeting their career needs and childcare role. However, there are drastic differences in the way the men and women owned enterprise views their activities . Most women business owners in Indian organization were either housewives or fresh graduates with no previous experience of running a business. These women business owners were in traditionally women oriented business like garments, beauty care, and fashion designing, which either do

not require any formalized training or are developed from a hobby or an interest into a business. The classic example will be of herbal queen Lady Shehnaz Hussain who started her herbal-based treatment from a relatively small scale. Infact, she started literally from her kitchen domain to a chain of beauty parlors spread out across the nation and world. Shehnaz started her business as a hobby on a relatively small budget and made an herbal empire to be inherited by her family.

BARRIERS FACED BY WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

The problems and constraints experienced by women entrepreneurs have resulted in restricting and inhibited the expansion of women entrepreneurship. The major barriers encountered by women entrepreneurs are:

LACK OF CONFIDENCE

As women are accepting a subordinate status, as a result they lack confidence of their own capabilities. Even at home, family members do not have much faith in women possessing the abilities of decision-making.

LACK OF WORKING CAPITAL

To be women and to do something on their own becomes quite difficult for them because of lack of access to funds as women do not possess any tangible security and credit in the market. Before marriage she has to depend on father and after marriage she has to follow the footsteps of the husband. As such, women do not enjoy the right over the property of any form and they have limited access over external sources of funds. Even getting loans from either a bank or financial institution becomes exceedingly difficult.

SOCIO-CULTURAL BARRIERS

Woman has to perform multiple roles be it familial or social irrespective of her career as working woman or an entrepreneur. In our society, more importance is being given to male child as compared to female child. This mindset results in lack of schooling and necessary training for women. As a result this impediments the progress of women and handicap them in the world of work.

MARKET-ORIENTED RISKS –

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.

FEMININE IDENTITY:

The failure of women entrepreneur is observed as a conflict between marriage and profession. They are supposed to manage two separate fronts; marriage and profession. Women entrepreneurs have the high degree of conflict between the behavior they expect of themselves as 'women' and as 'entrepreneur' ~ (Feminine identity refers to a women's perception that she is feminine according to her personal definition of femininity. Because of this gender identity there is still an under-presentation of women as an entrepreneur. This feminine identity influences their achievement behavior which has deep roots in the socialization process Most of them hold lower and middle management positions and number of women is extremely small in top management positions Even the most competent and achievement motivated women, when faced with a conflict between their feminine image and expressing their competencies, or developing their abilities and interests, adjust their behaviors to their internalized sex- role stereotypes.

ANDROGYNY

The concept of 'androgyny' has been gaining increasing popularity among women entrepreneurs, to meet the complex demands of profession and family. Women entrepreneurs combine role of a women and a entrepreneur, to maintain a balance between their profession and family and become more successful. Women entrepreneurs perceived by their subordinates as being 'androgynous' are considered to be better handlers of conflict situations than their masculine and feminine peers. In

this paper it is suggested to impart training to women entrepreneurs to develop androgynous sex- role orientation. This may go a long way in dispelling the existing gender biases, and in disposing women entrepreneurs favorably towards their jobs without any inhibitions. In this way we would have more women entering into managerial professions in years ahead, occupying top positions.

FEAR OF SUCCESS:

Fear of success regarded as a major problem facing women entrepreneurs in the Indian organizational setting. Women disguise their abilities and withdraw from the mainstream of the thought, activism and achievement in our society because they wanted to feel or appear more feminine. Evidence suggests that women who seek independence and intellectual mastery pay a high personal price for their defiance of prescribed sex-role, a prize in anxiety. Women avoid success because of the negative consequences like social disapproval, rejection and feeling of being unfeminine that result from success. Even the most competent and achievement motivated women, when faced with a conflict between their feminine image and expressing their competencies or developing their abilities, interests, adjust their behaviors to their internalized sex-role stereo types.

SEX-ROLE ORIENTATION:

The sex-role orientation process largely governs female achievement behaviour. The process of sex-role orientation, describes the ways in which biological gender and associated cultural differences are incorporated into an individual's self-perceptions and behavior. In other words, it is the process by which the culture transforms male and female into masculine and feminine adults. As sex is biologically determined and gender is socially determined, society's cultural beliefs and values transform the identity of women.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY:

Feminine identity or notion of self, roles and obligations, are worked out fairly early in a women's life. No stage is without change and questioning. Feminine identity continues to be open to modification depending on her situation in the life cycle. In India marriage continues to be universally regarded as essential for a girl. Control of her sexuality and its "safe transference" into the hands of husband is primary importance. The familiar structure creates a major threat for the identity of women. A large percentage of data available locates the family and marriage as a major cause of stress, mental illness and loss of identity of women. Indian describes girl as "Paraya-Dhan" or another's wealth. It not only establishes the very notion of "belonging" but also the girl is wealth (Dhan), which belongs ultimately elsewhere (paraya). This describes women as a wealth and property, which involves ownership and control. After marriage if the husband refuses to allow his wife to continue her studies / jobs, she can not continue, it is only to establish the idea that he has total power over her, she can have no will of her own. Women are seen as men's property once they marry, women usually give up their own name and their children must bear the family name of the husband. Men are seen as naturally superior to women and have the major decision making power in Indian community. In many cases career commitments of girls come in the way of their marriage or married life. After marriage Men generates its own tension, and conflicts in loyalties and commitments.

FEMININE SEX-ROLE STEREOTYPES IN MANAGEMENT PROFESSION

The women, who are working at the middle or lower level of management, are usually more concerned with their career development and may not be able to pay enough attention towards their husbands, children, and other family members. So women's pursuit of their career is often in conflict with their family demands. Such women do not get social approval of their success. Feminine sex-role type of women develops high fear of success because they think, if they are more involved in their profession, they would not be able to pay enough attention to the needs of their family. They may have a high degree of conflict between the behavior they expect of them selves as 'women' & as 'entrepreneurs'. They try to carry out traditional duties and responsibilities at home along with duties of job. Such women have strong commitments to their families. They disguise their abilities & withdraw from competitive situations in order to be more feminine. They adhere to the traditional gender-roles prescribed by the society to get social approval & acceptance. Girls generally develop such fear, if they violate the traditional gender roles, they will be criticized, and subject to social rejection & isolation. When women entrepreneurs adhere to the usual gender stereotypes, they face problems in their functioning, because often behavior specific to sex-roles limits the development of effective management style in a particular situation.

DISCRIMINATION IN RECRUITMENT:

Feminine identity has deep roots in resource allocation and educational system also. Discrimination in Recruitment and career, affects the self-esteem and self-fulfillment of woman. This variety of discrimination is wide spread in India. Article 16 of the Indian constitution protects women against discrimination in terms of employment by the state. But this is applicable only incase, when the employer is state. Some companies have hidden agenda not to select women executives, because it is assumed that women can never be the good officers and women can never hold positions of power, prestige or authority. It is considered better not to employ them if the job requires greater mobility. Greater mobility is provided to the boy in Indian society and women's physical mobility is confined by marriage.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF WOMEN AT WORKPLACE:

"At every stage in lifecycle, the female body is both the object of desire and control". Sexual harassment at workplace is the issue, confronting majority of working women, whether at lower levels or higher levels of management. It is considered that women are physically, emotionally and sexually vulnerable. Molestation by co-workers, bad remarks, and display of derogatory pictures, cartoons is reported at the work places to embarrass women. Work done by women is not admired. Their sadist bosses are treating women abominably. In such cases only way left to them is to complain on grounds of sexual harassment, as there is no legal way to take action to challenge people's attitude and behavior towards women.

SUGGESTIONS:

The Biological differences between man & women create psychological differences; these should not be allowed to destroy social cohesion. This may create obstacles in the men and women working relationships. One way of dealing with these psychological differences, for both men & women is, to appreciate & cultivate feminine and masculine traits respectively. They should work together with understanding. There are many ways in which we can challenge women's problems.

Several courses of action are possible in order to alleviate their sufferings. "Androgyny" a successful managerial approach

'Androgyny' is the most favored flexible approach to meet the complex demands of profession and family, as it combines both masculine and feminine qualities. The concept of androgyny has been gaining increasing popularity. Androgyny is a term that denotes the integration of femininity and masculinity within a single individual. The term is a combination of two Greek words, i.e. 'andr' (man) & 'gyne' (woman). The concept of androgyny implies that it is possible for an individual to be compassionate and assertive, expressive and instrumental, depending upon the situational appropriateness of these various modalities. And it further implies that an individual may even blend these complementary modalities in a single act.

Women entrepreneurs are required to manage two separate fronts: family and profession. In Indian society, usually, household work, child rearing, maintenance of family etc, rest primarily with the female partners, which require qualities like patience, sensitivity and nurturance, are considered basically as feminine qualities. In the professional sphere, she has to work on equal terms and even sometimes more to prove her self. Some times she is required to be tough, task oriented, and more assertive, which in turn are considered as stereotypically male traits. While dealing with the subordinates, some times situation warrants women to be tough, dominant, and assertive and task oriented, while at other times, situations required them to be tolerant, sensitive, gentle participative and nurturing. So to maintain a perfect balance between home and profession, women managers are required to carry both the feminine as well as masculine qualities. They should not restrict their self-image and behavior to any particular sex-role.

"Participation is empowering". Women empowerment means gaining autonomy & control over one's life, it includes social, economical and political empowerment. To a great extent, empowerment of women could be possible through a higher rate of work participation among them. Special protection for employment must be made legally available to women. For women empowerment reservation should be given in state and private sector. Entry into power structures alone can bring about a change in the status of women in India.

Ethical business practices should be opt for special strategies like flexi time for women to enable them to look after their children, this flexibility should not be manipulatively used by the unethical organizations.

Effective enforcement of legislation can eliminate all the gender discrimination references. An appropriate complaint mechanism can be created through the establishment of complaint committee or social awareness cell in each government and private organization, for redressal of such cases. Training can be imparted on gender-sensitization through induction and refresher courses, in order to make women more aware. Sexual harassment of women can be checked, if women themselves become assertive and decisive, they should not sacrifice their honors for petty benefits or fear.

Women entrepreneurs should be imparted training to recognize their sex role identity and organization should also help them in developing an androgynous sex role

orientation. If we make efforts in this direction more women will be entering in to managerial professions and occupy top positions. It is the responsibility of the organization to provide adequate training for appropriate career planning of women entrepreneurs, where they can rise to the needs of the job fully and excel through competence. On the other hand, to reduce the conflict between family and profession, flexi-time arrangement, crèche facility, re-entry policies, longer maternity and paternity leave etc. could be arranged by the organization.

CONCLUSION:

In metropolitan cities like Delhi, the social values, patterns, & attitudes are rapidly changing and roles are becoming less narrowly restricted to a particular sex. Society has started accepting women as professionals. In due course of time women managers have also started adjusting themselves to the demands of job as well as family responsibility so the fear of social disapproval and rejection is more applicable to women living in traditional society. Reservation in education and financial concession for female students are extensively available. Financial support for female entrepreneurship is also now available under different schemes. With the emergence of new set of organizational values & and new workforce comprising more and more women, whose needs require different management skills and with the growing need to reduce work related stress, it is becoming necessary that traditional and ineffective ways of conducting the management process, must be replaced. Traditionally, cultural norms have been categorized into organization (male) and family (female) norms. The traditional theory of psychological well-being, that prescribes masculinity for men & femininity for women, were being put to question, more & more studies began reporting that rather than only stereotypic sex appropriate traits, it was the presence of both desirable masculine & feminine characteristics (androgyny) with in an individual's sex role repertory, which seemed to make for social competence & superior adaptability. It might take a little longer for the women to break out their age-old shackles, but they are certain to do so in the not too distant future. If organizations impart training to women entrepreneurs to recognize their sex-role identity and help them in developing an androgynous orientation, we would have more women entering in to managerial profession, occupying top positions. The entry of a substantial proportion of women in to managerial roles may itself change the perception of their roles in an androgynous direction.

REFERENCES

1. Budhapriya, Sand Khandelwal, P (1995). "Sex Role Stereotypes and Women Managers: A Reality", Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol 31, No.1, July. pp 72-90
2. Budhapriya, Sanghamitra (1999). "Fear of Success among Women Managers: An Empirical Investigation." Vikalpa, Vol 24, No.4, Oct-Dee pp 17-26.
3. Chakravarti, M (1995). "Towards Gender Equality", Yozna, Vol 39, No.6, April, pp 29-31.
4. Goel, Aruna (2004). "Violence and Protective Measures for Women Development and Empowerment." Deep and Deep Publication Pvt. Ltd, pp 22, 170-189.

5.Gill, Rajesh (1998). "Women in Local Governments", Man and Development Journal, Vol 20, No 2, June.

6.Kaur, Kuldip (1997). "Community Education to Challenge Women's Oppression", Vol 19, No.4, Dec, pp 119-123.

7.Karlekar Malvika (1998). "Domestic Violence and Feminist Identity Formation", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol 33, No. 27, pp. 1741-1749.

8.Sakina A. Hasan (1997). "Status of Women In India: Retrospect and Prospect", Men and Development Journal, Vol 19, No 3, Sep, pp 48-51.

9.Shekhar, R.C. "The Battle of the Sexes: A mindset for Gender balance", Ethical Choices in Business. Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 240-244.