



PROBLEMS FACED BY WOMEN AGRIPRENEURS IN INDIA - A PROSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The focus of the Indian Government was to frame the major policies based on equity along with growth in the agriculture sector. Being an agrarian country, many efforts been made towards economic and social stabilization over the past decades, but not much progress has been achieved in the growth of the agro industrial sector. Women agripreneur lack access to adequate agricultural technology inputs, funding and commercial farming skills have put the quality under the threat. The productivity may be increasing, but better quality not been achieved. With the increase in agricultural production, there is a need to have the proportionate growth in the agro-processing industry. Explaining briefly the women agripreneurs face some very potential problems like investment, awareness, storage, selling, and risk-disaster management. In this study the researcher wanted to put a light towards the issues and grave problems faced by the women agripreneurs. This study also deals with the motivational factors which lead them to continue with the same business and wanted to provide a feasible solution to overcome the problems.

Key Words: Agriculture, Women agripreneur, problems, India et

INDRODUCTION:

Agriculture all over the world is going through a phase of transition. In this changing scenario, agriculture is taking new shape and expanding its scope beyond the limits of mere crop cultivation and animal husbandry for livelihood of rural population. Activities like diversification, value addition, precision farming, high-tech agriculture, agripreneurship, global marketing, organic farming etc. are gradually getting due attention of people involved on redefining agriculture. Women Agripreneurship is an employment strategy that can lead to economic self-sufficiency of rural people. Women Agripreneurship development through training is a key elements for the promotion of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), particularly, the first generation Women agripreneurs. These can result in improved performance of an individual which can contribute to employment generation, poverty reduction and Human Resource Development. To promote economic development in post-liberalization-reform India, central and state governments are pursuing growth and development policies that encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment (Ahluwalia 2002; Ahluwalia 2005). To improve the effectiveness of these policies, it is important to understand how regional factors influence on individual's decision to transition from employment to self-employment. Occupational transition from salaried employment to self-employment is an important issue in developed economies (Evans and Leighton 1989; Fairlie, 1999; Dunn and Holtz-Eakin, 2000). To make a real economic difference, however, a substantial number of individuals must make the transition from employment to self-employment. This report concentrates on aspects of the Women agripreneurs system as an economic tool for addressing poverty. Interviews with farmers, community partners, and other stakeholders along with a review of the system and related literature and statistics, have informed this article about the women agripreneurship initiative in its early stages. The first portion of this account will provide background, key motivators and an overview of the women agripreneurs system. Next, a summary of key points that were heard about the model in terms of perceived and actual outcomes will be shared. Finally, there is a discussion about lessons learned and what other communities may want to consider when thinking about agripreneurship as a rural economic development practice. Last ten years of Indian economy make it evident that the structure of ownership in the industrial sector, in agriculture, in the trade and commerce sectors has changed. Many women entered the world of business, of trade commerce and they have become successful entrepreneurs in various business

activities. However, the rate of participation or rate of their inclusion in the business world is very low, in spite of its increase during the last ten years. This growth rate of women's participation in economic activities is much lower than the expected rate.

Employment Trends for Women in India

The increase in the number of women in the labor market signifies an important trend regarding women's employment. This has been occurring alongside increases in labor force and workforce, especially for urban women, although rural women workers predominate in terms of participation rates and overall magnitude. The increasing share of women's participation in the labor force and its significant contribution to household income as well as GDP require some policy attention be paid to the gender dimensions of employment. The eleventh Five Year Plan document for the first time in the history of Indian planning recognizes women not only as equal citizens but as 'agents of sustained socio-economic growth and change' (GOI, 2008, p. 5). A multi-pronged approach is emphasized to address issues concerning women workers, such as provision of basic entitlements and strengthening of institutional mechanisms.

The increase in the growth of employment appears to be much higher for female workers compared to male workers. Even where the proportion of working women as reflected in the female work participation rate may be low, the absolute numbers have significantly increased, given the rate of population growth over time. The increase in work opportunities during the early years of the new millennium has been to the tune of 9.3 million jobs per annum (from 1999-2000 to 2004-05). This acceleration in employment growth from 1.25 per cent per annum (1993-94 to 1999-2000) to 2.62 per cent per annum in the period 1999-2000 to 2004-05 (GOI, 2008) has been beneficial to women's participation as well. Of the 46 million job opportunities created from 1999-2000 to 2004-05 (compared to 24 million in the earlier period, i.e., 1993-94 to 1999-2000), nearly 15 million women joined the workforce. Urban areas almost doubled their number of women workers, while in rural areas women workers increased from 9 to 12 million. Are these signs of a gradual but definite wind of change with more women entering the labour market? This positive change is noted more forcefully in the urban context where requisite educational inputs and modern thinking vis-à-vis women's work is increasingly becoming noticeable. Rural agriculture is increasingly drawing women's labour supplies, with over four-

fifths of the women in rural areas working in agriculture. This gains significance amidst the declining share of male workers (from 74 per cent in 1993-94 to 66 per cent in 2004-05). Thus it seems that women in rural areas are finding it harder to shift away from agriculture. Involvement of women in agriculture is largely as cultivators/farmers as well as agricultural laborers. However, there has been a slight decline in the share of women as agricultural laborers, while their share among cultivators has increased. In urban areas, women have achieved substantially higher growth of employment in manufacturing and have been able to increase their share, especially after 1999-2000 (from 24 per cent to over 28 per cent in 2004-05). Thus, in urban areas, the share of female workers in manufacturing has increased substantially while that of male workers has not. Even in the services sector, women have gained in terms of employment, especially in the domestic and personal services category. India's economy has undergone a substantial transformation since the country's independence in 1947. Agriculture now accounts for only one-third of the gross domestic product (GDP), down from 59 percent in 1950, and a wide range of modern industries and support services now exist. In spite of these changes, agriculture continues to dominate employment, employing two-thirds of all workers. India faced economic problems in the late 1980s and early 1990s that were exacerbated by the Persian Gulf Crisis. Starting in 1992, India began to implement trade liberalization measures.

The economy has grown-the GDP growth rate ranged between 5 and 7 percent annually over the period and considerable progress has been made in loosening government regulations, particularly restrictions on private businesses. Different sectors of economy have different experiences about the impact of the reforms. In a country like India, productive employment is central to poverty reduction strategy and to bring about economic equality in the society. But the results of unfettered operation of market forces are not always equitable, especially in India, where some groups are likely to be subjected to disadvantage as a result of globalization. Women constitute one such vulnerable group. Since globalization is introducing technological inputs, women are being marginalized in economic activities, men traditionally being offered new scopes of learning and training.

Consequently, female workers are joining the informal sector or casual labor force more than ever before. For instance, while new rice technology has given rise to higher use of female labor, the increased work-load for women is in operations that are unrecorded, and often unpaid,

since these fall within the category of home production activities. The weaker sections, especially the women, are denied the physical care they deserve. There is, thus, hardly any ability for the majority of Indian women to do valuable functioning; the "capability" to choose from alternatives is conspicuous by absence. Most women in India work and contribute to the economy in one form or another, much of their work is not documented or accounted for in official statistics. Women plow fields and harvest crops while working on farms, women weave and make handicrafts while working in household industries, women sell food and gather wood while working in the informal sector. Additionally, women are traditionally responsible for the daily household chores (e.g., cooking, fetching water, and looking after children). Although the cultural restrictions women face are changing, women are still not as free as men to participate in the formal economy. In the past, cultural restrictions were the primary impediments to female employment now however; the shortage of jobs throughout the country contributes to low female employment as well. The Indian census divides workers into two categories: "main" and "marginal" workers. Main workers include people who worked for 6 months or more during the year, while marginal workers include those who worked for a shorter period. Many of these workers are agricultural laborers. Unpaid farm and family enterprise workers are supposed to be included in either the main worker or marginal worker category, as appropriate. Women account for a small proportion of the formal Indian labor force, even though the number of female main workers has grown faster in recent years than that of their male counterparts.

Review of Literature

The literature review shows that more focus is on married working women than on unmarried working women (Karl, 2009). It is also seen that focus is more on organized sector rather than unorganized sector of working women (Shalz, 2011). Eggins (1997) advocates for more facilities to women in the workplace, suggesting that "...it is an important part of developmental strategy as well as an act of social justice" The World Bank (1991) estimates that Indian Women make up one-third of the labor force. Singhal (1995) is of the opinion that, "Participation of women in workforce is essential for economic development and population planning."

Somjee (1989) has some very strong critical comments. She has said that “in the history of women’s studies, which is not very long, a variety of approaches have been adopted in order to understand women’s problems and find solutions to them. such approaches range from how women are perceived in various cultures and historical settings, given their biological functions and what nature ‘intended’ them to do, to their decline in power and status vis-à-vis men in the complex social evolution, to a widely shared emphasis on the need to make women equal through the economic on the need to make women equal through the economic and legal route which treats them as individuals rather than those having the sole responsibility for looking after the family.”

Mitra (1997) analyses the causes and comes to some important conclusions: “Relationship between women and professions could be perceived as one of women in full-fledged professions, medicine, law, academics, etc and another in the semi-professions-like nursing, teaching, clerks etc.” Okolo (1989) studied that another obstacle is the lack of role models of executive women due to their scarce presence in top managerial positions. Likewise, this study found out that there is no gender difference in organizational hierarchies when a woman has already gained access to them. “The lack of impact in women can occur because executive and managerial women have developed survival features becoming immune to the effects of men’s hierarchies. A hierarchy composed by men solely may have an effect upon the election of a managerial board, and then its further influence is not very strong.”

Ronald J. Burke, Mustafa Koyuncu and Lisa Fiksenbaum (2010) examined the relationship of the perceived presence of organizational practices designed to support women’s career advancement and their work attitudes and satisfaction and their psychological well-being. Data were collected from 286 women in managerial and professional jobs working in a large Turkish bank, a 72 percent response rate. Five organizational experiences were considered: negative attitudes towards women, equal treatment, support, career barriers and male standards. Women reporting more supportive organizational experiences and practices were more engaged in their work, more job and career satisfied, and indicated greater levels of psychological well-being.”

Wentling (2003) showed that the twin roles of women cause tension and conflict due to her social structure which is still more dominant. In her study on working women in Delhi, she has shown that “traditional authoritarian set up of Hindu social structure continues to be the same basically and hence women face problem of role conflict change in attitudes of men and women according to the situation can help to overcome their problem.”

Sophia J. Ali (2011) “investigated the challenges facing women in career development. She found that most of the women employees were dissatisfied with career development programmers and women were discriminated against in career development opportunities. The study recommended that organizations should strive to ensure that career development programmers were set to enhance career development among-st women employees. Top management should also be committed to the career development of women, and organizations should also introduce affirmative action to urgently address career development of women.”

Women Agripreneurship: Some of the Areas of Successes: Fish/prawn farming, Cultivation of vegetables and fruits, Livestock management, Mushroom cultivation, Poultry farming and Horticulture, Floriculture, Dairy and Landscaping etc.

PROBLEMS OF WOMEN AGRIPRENEURS IN INDIA

1. Absence of Definite Agenda of Life

The educated women do not want to limit their lives in the four walls of the house (Cf. Babaria and Chheda, 2010). The educated women demand equal opportunity and greater respect from their partners as well as from society and they are struggling for equal opportunities and respect from their partners as well as from society in India. However, some women with a definite agenda acquired good positions in the business world in India.

2. Absence of Balance between Family And Career Obligations

As Indians, most of the women are very serious about family obligations but they do not equally focus on career obligations (Cf. Mathur 2011; Singh N.P. 1986). Indian women devote their lives to take care of their family members but they are not concerned with their self-development. Many women have excellent entrepreneurial abilities but they are not using their

abilities to create additional income sources for their families, which would go hand in hand with boosting their self-reliance. Sometimes they are not even aware of the concept of self-reliance. Moreover the business success depends on the support the family members, extended to women, in the business process and management (Cf. Lathwal 2011).

3. Poor Degree of Financial Freedom

In Indian families, the degree of financial freedom for women is very poor, especially in lower educated families and rural families. In these families women can't take any agripreneurial decision without the consideration of the family members as well as considering social ethics and traditions. Due to the financial dependency, a woman can't start any business or any economic activity to become independent. Therefore, this has become a vicious circle of dependency for women in India.

4. No Direct Ownership of the Property

No doubt, the right of property is given as a legal provision in India, but it raises one of the most important questions regarding the right to property for women. There are very few women having on paper the right of property because, firstly, they are not aware of this right. They only become aware when problems are created in their families due to family disputes.

5. Paradox of Entrepreneurial Skill & Finance

There is paradox of "have and haven't" skills of agripreneurship in Indian women belonging to economically poor and rich families. Women belonging to economically rich families have the capital support but they may not have good entrepreneurial skills, therefore outsourcing the activities. At the opposite side of society, many women from economically poor families have consistent entrepreneurial skills, but they have not any financial support from their families. We therefore believe that the problems of women e Agripreneurship are hanging in the trap of this paradox.

6. No Awareness about Capacities

An increasing level of education should create awareness regarding an individual's capacities. But, unfortunately, our educational system has not succeeded in creating awareness about woman's capacities and their hidden powers to handle economic activities.

7. Low Ability to Bear Risk

According to Mehta and Mehta, 2011, women in India live protected lives. A woman is taught to depend on the male members of her family from birth. She is not allowed to take any type of risk even if she is willing to take it and has ability to bear it as well. However, this is not entirely true because many great women proved that they have risk bearing capacities and attitude to take risks in entrepreneurial activities.

8. Problems of Work with Male Workers

Many women have good business skills but they do not want to work with male workers and sometimes male workers are not ready to work with women entrepreneurs. According to Shruti Lathwal, 2011, most of women entrepreneurs argued that semi-educated or uneducated class of workers cannot visualize a "female boss" in their field of work. 9. Negligence by Financial Institutions Banks and financial institutions are important financiers of entrepreneurs in developing countries because small and medium size firm operators are not borrowing from the capital market. But these banks and financial institutions are not ready to provide credit to women entrepreneurs because of their traditional mind set.

10. Lack of Self-Confidence

A strong mental outlook and an optimistic attitude amongst women create a fear of committing mistakes while doing their work (Cf. Goyal and Parkash 2011). The family members and the society are not willing to stand by women with entrepreneurial development potential. In such a situation women should develop their self-confidence to handle this type of barriers, in spite of the fact that Indian women prefer a protected life to the development of their self-confidence. They are neither mentally nor economically self-reliant.

11. Lack of Professional Education

Rao (2007) observed in his study that poverty and illiteracy are the basic reasons of the low rate of women entrepreneurs in our country. The educational level and professional skills also influence women participation in the field of enterprise. We are providing education to the women but not providing professional education. If we look in the professional schools we find that there is a very few number of women students. If we analyze rural - urban ratio of enrolled

Strategy for Promotion of Successful Enterprises in Agripreneurs

- There should be a unanimous opinion among government officials and farmers about the need and benefits of promoting self-employed youth or private agripreneurs to facilitate the farmers to enhance agricultural production and profitability.
- The Government should discontinue the practice of providing free services in those sectors where the work has been assigned to private agripreneurs .
- The technical skills and ability of the entrepreneurs should be evaluated to ensure high standards. There should be a monitoring agency to check the quality of the services and the charges collected from the farmers to avoid exploitation.

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 agripreneurship 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 agripreneurship development in India. Apart from the responsibility of the state and society, absence of a definite agenda of life, absence of balance between family and career obligations of women, poor degree of financial freedom for women, absence of direct ownership of the property to women, paradox of entrepreneurial skill & finance in economically rich and poor women, no awareness about capacities, low ability to bear risks, problems of work with male workers, negligence by financial institutions, lack of self-confidence, lack of professional education, mobility constraints and lack of interaction with successful entrepreneurs are major Problems of women agripreneurship development in India. Therefore, there is need of continuous attempt to inspire, encourage, motivate and co-operate with women agripreneurs, Awareness programmes should be conducted on a mass scale with the intention of creating awareness among women about the various areas to conduct business.

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