

ROLE OF TRADE IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN RURAL AREAS OF WEST GODAVARI DISTRICT (A case study of six successful women entrepreneurs in Duggirala and Ammapalem Villages of West Godavari District.)

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Abstract

Women in general and rural women in particular are economically dependent group of the society. Rural women are less educated and are from economically poor sections. They are primarily employed in agriculture sector as daily wage earners. Agriculture and allied activities in rural areas provide seasonal employment. Income is unstable and low. Therefore the better alternative is small trade. Rural women are slowly shifting to small trade especially those people nearer to semi urban areas.

Thus they are not liberated. They are not free to do many things. Slowly the mind set of people is changing. The potentialities in women are slowly diverted from kitchen to trade sector. This is a significant step in the process of women empowerment of rural and less educated women. All respondents selected for study are successful entrepreneurs. They are able to prove that they too can do something special in trade. They are able to manage workers and face challenges of market.

Key terms: *Entrepreneurs, Factors of production, Market forces, Per-capita Income, Empowerment, Technical skills*

Introduction

India is a fast developing agricultural economy. Rural Indians depend completely on agriculture and allied activities for their livelihood. But agriculture reached optimum state in providing employment to four factors of production. The alternative to rural sector is to develop trade and small industries.

Rural women primarily employed in agriculture sector as daily wage earners. Agriculture and allied activities in rural areas provide seasonal employment. Income is unstable and low. Therefore the better alternative is small trade. Rural women are slowly shifting to small trade especially those people nearer to semi urban areas.

Women constitute the half of the population and contribute half of the wealth to the nation, but women get no opportunity to prove her talents and to achieve wonders. This is the state of women in the world. Per-capita income can be improved when women also become part of income generation.

Specific features of women in rural areas

- Poverty
- Illiteracy
- Ignorance
- Man dominated society
- Dependence on agriculture

- Less opportunities
- No technical skills
- Social evils

Very peculiar feature of Indian economy and also Indian society are –

In a family of more than 5 members only one person is the income earner and all others depend on him. Role of women in income earning is almost nil. Irrespective of her education and technical talents, she remains as a house wife.

Even today 90% of women are confined to house and others are engaged in seasonal agricultural work.

Women in rural areas are only for house work and man is the earning member of the family. There is no payment for her assistance in agriculture or allied activities. Example if animal rearing is a secondary activity, woman takes care of its work along with household work but income goes to the husband. Therefore women may not get involved completely in income generation.

Influence of changing socio economic conditions:

From past two to three decades there was a drastic change in the socio-economic conditions in rural areas of India. This change brought a change in the attitude of the people.

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- Women are willing to take any occupation to support families.
- Less opportunities in agriculture and allied activities motivated women to shift to trade.
- Health and education are given priority.
- People are going for comforts and naturally need more income.

All these changes resulted into a need for more money. Now family members are looking towards the alternative sources of income. The immediate solution is the housewife. Thus rural women are given opportunities and encouragement but at an insignificant level.

Women in general and rural women in particular are economically dependent group of the society. Thus they are not liberated. They are not free to do many things. Freedom depends on economic conditions. A person who is economically independent can a free person. Reason for all problems of women is economic dependence. If they become economically independent they can be empowered and can be liberated from all social clutches.

Rural women are neither educated nor trained in job skills. They can either go for agriculture work or the small business, which do not require special skills or more capital. Thus the rural women took a long step to the retail trade in unorganized small sector. The potentialities in women are slowly diverted from kitchen to trade sector. This is a significant step in the process of women empowerment of rural and less educated women.

Small Trade sector:

Small trade sector is the retail trade sector usually deals with basic needs and perishable goods. This is more unorganized small units of retail trade. This sector fills the gaps in the market.

Objectives of the study:

- To make a study of the status of women entrepreneurs
- To analyze factors influencing the performance of women traders
- To make a study of the problems and achievements of women traders.
- To recommend some practical suggestions.

Methodology

For the study data and information is collected from both primary and secondary sources.

Primary data is collected from the respondents through direct personal interview

Secondary data is collected from books and journals.

Sample

To conduct the study 6 successful women entrepreneurs were selected from Duggirala and Ammapalem of West Godavari District and through questions and discussions information was collected.

With regard to the business, it was collected from customers and observation.

Sample includes;

One women entrepreneur from each category of the following were selected.

- Cool Drinks and soda supplier
- Tailors
- Vegetable & Fruit Vendor
- Fast food and sweets supplier to retailers
- RO water plant
- Dairy

Limitations of the study

- There is no recorded evidence
- Everything is oral presentation
- Respondents are not aware of the terms such as empowerment, trade etc
- They were unable to give information on financial support, purchases and income.
- They were reluctant to talk about profits.

Profile of the respondents

Table - 1 : Age and education

S.No	Age in years	Total	Education
1	20 – 30	1	10 passed
2	30- 40	4	Can read and write
3	40 -50	1	10th passed

All respondents are between the age group on 28 to 45 years

Only two passed 10th

All can read and write

All the respondents were agriculture labourers before starting business

Table - 2 : Nature of business

S.No	Name of the respondent	Business
1	Mrs.G.Kanaka Durga	Soda and cool drinks
2	Mrs.B.Satyavahi	Milk dairy
3	Mrs.P.Subbalakshmi	Sweets & snacks
4	Mrs. Rajyalakshmi	Vegetables and fruits seller
5	Mrs.P Swarupa Rani	Tailor
6	Mrs.Karuna	Water plant RO

Milk Dairy

Mrs. B. Satyavathi is running a mini dairy in Duggirla from 8 years. She started with one buffalo and now she is managing 6 animals with 5 small ones. She sells around 24 litres per day. She employed on person to help her.

Problems;

- No institutional finance
- Depend only on her earnings and borrowed from local money lenders
- Less price is paid in local milk collection centres. It is around Rs 48 to 52 per liter milk. But in the market it is Rs 60 for one liter milk.
- Animal feed is expensive in the markets. What is supplied by milk collection centres is not good quality.

Soda and cool drinks

Mrs. Kanaka Durga started Soda bottle filling business four years back. She inherited this from her father. She maintains one second hand moped and supplies soda bottles to all the shops. In the beginning all in the village (Ammapalem) discouraged her saying it is man's business. Now all are appreciating her. She also started sale of cool-drinks.

Problems:

- No financial support
- No vehicle to market the products except old moped

Water Plant

Mrs. Karuna continued the business when her husband got a job in Eluru and left the business. She is able to make the plant a profitable unit. When she took over the charge it was in losses and all discouraged her. But with her marketing skills she is able to make it a profitable business.

Problems;

She expressed that actually she don't have a specific problem. There is demand for mineral water in the village and she is unable to meet the demand. If some cheap financial assistance is given she like to expand the unit. She employed two boys and a woman to help her.

Tailor

Mrs. Swarupa Rani started tailoring 6 years back with one machine and now she extended with four suing machines and four helpers. She is specialised in blouses making and also dresses.

Problems

- If financial support is given she wish to start better and advanced machines for making dresses.

- If marketing facilities are improved she would like to start readymade dresses.
- Difficult to get skilled staff.

Vegetable vendor

Mrs. Rajyalakshmi wife of a small farmer of one acre whose income was not stable.

She bought a second hand moped and started collecting vegetables from small farmers and supplying to retailers. She started business three years back. She also sells a few seasonally available fruits.

Problems

- Not able to get better price
- If financial facility is given she like to buy a small auto riksha and make a mobile vegetable shop so that she can directly supply to the customers.

Sweets and snacks

Mrs. Subbalakshmi prepares some sweets and eatables at home and supply to the local shops.

She is supplying from past 9 years as she was unable to go for farm work due to her knee problem.

Reasons to shift to business are

- Seasonal employment in agriculture and allied activities.
- Interest in business
- More income
- Encouragement from husband
- Opportunity to start business

Findings of the study

- The striking change in the study is that the women in small trade empowered financially after shifting from agriculture as daily wage earners to small trade. Average income increased from Rs40,000 to more than Rs.1,50,000 per annum for the selected sample of women traders.
- All the respondents said that they do business only to support the family financially.
- All the respondents were agricultural labour and shifted to trade to improve income.
- All members expressed that they have support from the other family members and specially from husband/ children.
- Four members expressed that if they are given additional financial help they can improve business and two members said there is no need of the additional finance.
- All the members are the members of DWCRA members and are happy with the group support.

- Five members agreed that training in basic business management, accounting and entrepreneurial skills may help them and others have no idea about all these.
- Some respondents strongly expressed that finance and marketing are the major problems.
- All agreed that risk factor is unavoidable and it varied with the type of business.

After the analysis of the study the following problems were identified.

- Size of the business is very small therefore the activities and expenses are not economical.
- Capital investment is a major problem because the respondents are not willing to expand the business and are afraid of the risk in business.
- Frequently they face criticism from others.
- Dealing with men customers is always a problem though majority of the respondents have more women customers.
- They are not aware of marketing and sales promotion techniques.
- All the respondents agreed that balancing both home and business is a major problem.
- All expressed that they never had any training but only 40% agreed to take some training course if offered by the Government.

Suggestions

- A report on the National Commission on Self Employed women and Women in Informal Sector, popularly known as “ Shrama Shakti Report” emphasized that women possessing skills, education and sense of enterprise should be encouraged to set up self employment programmes.. Identification of deserving women can be undertaken by the DIC at the district level and DWCRA groups.
- There are variety of misconceptions, apprehensions and doubts about the women entrepreneurs. They can be removed by exposing the achievements and success stories of women entrepreneurs.
- The base of several women entrepreneurs are homes. It should be changed. Just like men, they should also opt for commercial centers for their business, even if it is small.
- All women in informal, small trade sector should be given training in skills of management and accounting.

- The 1991 Industrial Policy provided for women entrepreneur training through Entrepreneur Development Programme at national and state level. But none of the women know about it. There should be publicity about all these.
- All should treat women entrepreneurs as economic agents and should give equal status with men.
- If women are motivated and supported by family members many more women will enter into the trade sector.

Conclusion

The study reveals that the role of women can be good traders like men if proper guidance and support are given. Women who were successful in trade are empowered both economically and socially. They are able to support the family and because their contribution their children are getting good education. If they are given support from the Government on one side and the family from the other side they can prove their talent and stand at par with men.

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