



SUCCESSFUL WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF TAMILNADU-A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

Gone are the days when you would find women perched in the kitchen of the house. Nowadays you can see women not only competing shoulder to shoulder to men but even outdoing them in many fields. Whether it is business, Army or fashion designing. You can now find talented women in each and every field. This study was carried out with the aim to identify strategies and policies which could create an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs and/or would-be entrepreneurs in Tamilnadu. It aims to provide a set of practical and policy-worthy recommendations to promote the healthy growth of entrepreneurial activities and enterprises owned by women. The study was carried out based on existing research and secondary data. Case studies of successful women entrepreneurs were also conducted and the information obtained supported the analysis of the environment in which women entrepreneurs operate in and the challenges they face. The study underscores that women's entrepreneurship is an untapped source of economic growth in Tamilnadu, which has received scant policy attention so far. The study finds that sociocultural factors represent important barriers to women's entrepreneurial activities, while combining work and family life is also a challenge for a majority of women entrepreneurs. According to the study, support for starting an enterprise came essentially from informal sources, with a very small proportion of women having sought help from Government schemes and programmes. This case study highlights such women entrepreneurs particularly in Tamilnadu who have created a niche for themselves in the competitive business world and have won many laurels.

Key words: Women entrepreneur, Entrepreneurship Development.

INTRODUCTION

*"Women are the largest untapped reservoir of talent in the world;
When women participate in the economy, everyone benefits"*

~ Hillary Clinton

"Always do what you are proud of. Do it your way – whatever it may be, and your instincts would be right. Money is a commodity you don't take with you. It is the strong desire to do the best, which should drive me. Everything is transient including success. There is always this confidence that I will make it. I believe one should make human relationships work. I feel we all have a strong sense of duty of our existence. It is important to be good and find nice things about people and relate them"

~ Hemu Ramaiah, founder – Landmark Bookstore

Women have been successful in breaking their confinement within the limits of their homes by entering into varied kinds of professionals and services women entrepreneurs have proved to be on par with their men counterparts in business acumen and are emerging as smart and dynamic entrepreneurs. Women owned businesses are highly increasing in the economies of almost all countries. The hidden entrepreneurial potentials of women have gradually been changing with the growing sensitivity to the role and economic status in the society. Skill, knowledge and adaptability in business are the main reasons for women to emerge into business ventures.

"Women Entrepreneur? is a person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. Before the 20th century, women were operating businesses as a way of supplementing income. In many cases, they were trying to avoid poverty or making up for the loss of a spouse. The ventures that these women undertook were not known as entrepreneurial at the time Many of them usually had to bow to their domestic responsibilities. The term entrepreneur is used to describe individuals who have ideas for products and/or services that they turn into a working business. In earlier times, this term was reserved for men. Women became more involved in the business world only when the idea of women in business became palatable to the general public. However, this does not mean that there were no female entrepreneurs until that time. In the 17th century, Dutch Colonists who came to what is now known as New York City operated under a matriarchal society. In this society, many women inherited money and lands and, through this inheritance, became business owners. One of the most successful women from this time was Margaret Harden brook Philipse, who was a merchant, ship owner, and also involved in the trading of goods.

During the mid 18th century, it was popular for women to own certain businesses like brothels, alehouses, taverns, and retail shops, among others. Most of these businesses were not perceived with good reputations, because it was considered shameful



for women to be in these positions. Society at the time frowned upon women involved in such businesses because they took from the women's supposed gentle and frail nature. During the 18th and 19th centuries, more women came out from under the oppression of society's limits and began to emerge into the public eye. Despite the frowns of society, women like Rebecca Lukens flourished. In 1825, Lukens took her family business of ironworks and turned it into a profit generating steel business.

Entrepreneurs play very important role in socioeconomic welfare of the country. They identify the needs of the business, purchases the other factors of production and coordinates them for some productive purposes. They are the innovators, researchers and risk takers of the company. Due to the mixed economy in India, both public and private entrepreneurship exists here. Large scale sectors are under the public entrepreneurship. The middle and small scale sectors are under the private entrepreneurship. In order to develop entrepreneurship in this sector, Government of India has stepped towards the Entrepreneurship Development Programmes.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Empowerment of women means developing them as more aware individuals, who are politically active, economically productive and independent and are able to make intelligent discussion in matters that affect them. Women empowerment as a concept was defined as redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women. In its definition of women empowerment, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNDFW) includes factors such as

1. Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the way in which these relations may be changed; and
2. Developing a sense of self worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life.

STATUS OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN INDIA

The concept of "Women entrepreneurship" is becoming a global phenomenon and in India it became prominent in the latter half of the eighties. Now women's entrepreneurship has been recognized as an important untapped source of economic growth. In India it is estimated that women entrepreneurs presently comprise about 10% of the total number of entrepreneurs with the percentage growing every year. If the prevailing trends continue, it is likely that in another five years women will comprise 20 % of the entrepreneurial force. Even though women own around 10% of the total enterprises in the small sector, the gross output of these units is just 3.5% of the total output of the SSI sector. In contrast, in developed countries such as United States, women own nearly 91 lakh small businesses and the number of women-owned startups is going at nearly twice the rate of their male counterparts. India has 397 million workers, 123.9 million are women, 106 million are in rural areas, 18 million are in urban areas, only 7% of India's labour force is in the organized sector; 93% is in unorganized sector.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This paper highlights the cases of such women entrepreneurs who have struggled and have established a mark for themselves in this male-dominated industry particularly in the state of Tamil Nadu. As the area of study is emergent, research into women entrepreneurs is necessarily exploratory in nature. The data collected were secondary in nature and the sources of data were internet, magazines and newspaper articles.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF TAMIL NADU - A CASE STUDY

Gone are the days when you would find women perched in the kitchen of the house. Nowadays you can see women not only competing shoulder to shoulder to men but even outdoing them in many fields. Whether it is business, Army or fashion designing. You can now find talented women in each and every field.

There is no dearth of exceptional and talented women entrepreneurs in India. We have many examples in the present who have made big name for themselves in the business world but what about tomorrow? Who will be the torch bearer for women power in the future? We at IndianWeb2 have exclusively chalked out a list of young women entrepreneurs who have the potential and skill to make it big in the near future.

Here we go.

CASE 1: DENISE HUFFTON, DREAM WEAVER, CHENNAI

To dream big is normal but to wake up and work hard to realize that dream calls for extraordinary boldness and confidence. That is why it is said that 'the road to success runs uphill'. While history is replete with people who have achieved success in



their own unique way under mottled circumstances, the success story of the mother daughter duo Cheryl and Denise of Chennai is extraordinary. Based in Chennai, Dream Weaver produces biodegradable single use garments for hospitals and wellness clinics. Dream Weaver has entered a niche sector in a short span. It produces aprons, masks, undergarments and so on for spas and hospitals. Unusually, the company was started by a mother daughter duo with no business background and its workforce consists entirely of underprivileged women. Also, nobody else produces such garments in any of the southern states.

Denise Huffton, who founded Dream Weaver, got this idea when she was in the final year of her undergraduate course in business administration. At that time, Denise attended a friend's wedding where she noticed disposable napkins being used. She started exploring the possibility of using this nonwoven material for other purposes. She spent weeks listing products that could be used by spas, beauty salons and hospitals. Eventually, she identified aprons, caps and masks as products that would most likely be used. Denise was keen to ensure that personal hygiene did not come at the cost of pollution. The spun material that she came across at the wedding seemed the ideal choice since it was biodegradable. Today the net sales of the company from big clients are worth almost Rs. 2 lakh per month and the company has been able to have an annual turnover of Rs. 30 lakhs. It has become a leading producer of one time use disposable materials used in spas and beauty parlours such as mouth masks, disposable towels, napkins, paper bags, head caps, aprons, gowns, laundry bags etc.

So Dream Weavers had arrived on the scene and took deep roots to stay and flourish. In the last five years the company has been able to garner orders from more than 15 big companies and about 50 small companies are regular clients of Dream Weavers. The company then acquired import export license also and now has been able to sell its products beyond the frontiers of the country. The company's products are being exported to many countries like Dubai, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Australia. In Dubai Denise has been able to get clients like Chanakya which gave orders for them for manufacturing G-string panties, unisex panties etc. Denise is now based in Dubai most of the time as she is bent upon getting more clients and selling her products internationally on a wider scale.

CASE 2: Mrs.S.JOSEPHINE,VIBIS NATURAL BEE FARM, IN MADURAI

With 10 boxes Josephine began her journey and made a profit of around Rs.3,000 in three months. "Bees are like any other pet animals. Women should come forward to rear honeybees. It is suitable for them as 90 per cent of the work is done by the bees only. One needs to spend only two hours a week for maintaining 10 boxes," she notes. Now, she has about 2,000 boxes to cultivate honey. She also supplies boxes and machineries to farmers in 11 districts, mostly for government schemes under the National Horticulture Mission.

Currently, Josephine is busy setting up her own machinery for processing honey and to produce some value added products. Besides, she is planning to establish an area titled 'Honey Parlour' where people can buy unadulterated honey besides witnessing all kinds of bees and machineries involved in apiculture. "She also wants to prove that ethics, principles and business can coexist harmoniously," she volunteers to introduce women into this sweet business. KVIC and Department of Horticulture for the help they extend. So far she has imparted training to about 2000 women and helped about a dozen women to earn decent profit in Tiruchi, Tirupur, Coimbatore and Virudhunagar districts.

Today, she manages to earn about Rs.50,000 a month. During the flower blooming seasons, she pockets a few thousands more. Her diary is filled with dates for schools and colleges where she waxes eloquent on honeybees, honey cultivation and other products including the royal jelly, bee venom, wax, pollen and propolis. She also sells more than a dozen varieties of honey such as Thulasi honey, rose honey, naaval honey, neem, amla, pepper, lichi, crunch (punnai), coorg under the brand name VIBIS. The taste, colour and medicinal values differ as it is based on the nectar and nature of flower, she notes. She is exports to Sri Lanka and Singapore.

Josephine has employed 20 people who are with her round the year besides some temporary workers during the peak season. She also has set up boxes in various parts of Kerala.

CASE 3:Mrs.R.SWARNALATHA, SHRIMP FARM UNIT, NAGAPATINAM DISTRICT

Mrs. R. Swarnalatha, Papakoil, Nagapatinam district, has BS.c (Home Science) graduate. She started shrimp farming in 1994. She has got expertise in shrimp farming and *Sea bass* farming since 1997. She also works as a consultant for other shrimp farms located in Papakoil, Nagapatinam and helps her husband as consultant for fish feed export. She basically belongs to an agricultural family. She could adapt to aquaculture without any difficulty and her aim is to support her husband in aquaculture activities. Her self interest and motivation given by family members encouraged her to take up brackish water shrimp farming seriously. Shrimp seeds were purchased and Six lakhs seeds were stocked in her farm i.e. 1 lakh/ ha. For 6



hectares 3 tones of shrimps are harvested and therefore the total harvest / year are 6 tones. The harvested shrimps were sold to Liberty Sea Foods, Nila Sea Foods and Baby Marine Sea Foods.

There are fifteen men and three women workers working in the farm. The age group of labourers ranged from 25 – 40 years. The average experience among the labourers was more than 10 years. The work done by the women labour in the farm was scrapping, pond preparation, weeding and hand picking. Social problems like poaching, labour problems and technical problems in the farms were also experienced. Thus, Mrs. R. Swarnalatha, is a pioneer in generating local employment and income. She is also a role model for shrimp farmers to bring forth their best in income earning activities.

CASE 4: MRS. SANTHANALAKSHIMI AND MRS. THENMOZHI, PREMIERE MARINE PRODUCTS, MANDAPAM

Mrs. Santhanalakshimi and Mrs. Thenmozhi, are pioneer technicians leading a women wage labours group at Premiere Marine Products, Liberty Groups of Companies (Tamil Nadu Fisheries Development Corporation) Mandapam, Tamil Nadu. They are educated upto primary level. First they joined as labourers in this company. They possess 10 -12 years of experience. This experience has helped them to gain good knowledge in processing, packing, maintaining the official records of the workers and market techniques.

The duty of Mrs. Santhanalakshimi and Mrs. Thenmozhi begins with the collection of raw fish stocks from the marketing department in the company, taking attendance of the women wage earners, deciding the day's work for the workers and distribution of raw materials that needs to be processed by the labourers. The processing operations are done by women wage labours in the company under the supervision of Mrs. Santhanalakshimi and Mrs. Thenmozhi. The operations include, de-heading, peeling, removal of alimentary canal, back scraping, final checking and packing. Allotting labour for each processing activity and quantity to be processed is also decided by both Mrs. Santhanalakshimi and Mrs. Thenmozhi. One hundred and fifty women wage earners who work in this processing plant are supervised by both Mrs. Santhanalakshimi and Mrs. Thenmozhi.

One hundred and fifty women wage workers in this processing plant are supervised by both Mrs. Santhanalakshimi and Mrs. Thenmozhi. The age group of these women ranges from 18 – 35. They work in 3 shifts (8 am – 4 pm; 4 pm – 12 am; 12am – 8am. Ten women process 20 kgs of shrimp in an hour. 800 kg of shrimps /day is processed by each woman. The workers in the processing plant are provided with boots, slippers and working coats. They have a separate room for rest. During peak season women are also hired for processing work from Kaniyakumaari, Nagapatinam and Kerala. This is also coordinated by Mrs. Santhanalakshimi and Mrs. Thenmozhi. They take care of in the women workers grievances and problems and also support them in availing all welfare measures announced by the State Government.

Fifteen to 24 tones processed fish products are exported (on order) every day from this processing plant. The peak season for processing work is during the months of May – September. The processed shrimps are exported to Japan, UAE, Australia and USA by sea. Mrs. Santhanalakshimi and Mrs. Thenmozhi, are very loyal, sincere and hard working technicians in the company. Although being women with minimizing formal education, leadership qualities, good management techniques adopted in handling the labourer has led to the growth of this company and facilitated many women wage workers to take up this work with ease.

CASE 5: MRS. R. REVATHY IS THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF SHRI HARIHARAN AQUATECH, CHOO LAIMEDU, CHENNAI.

Mrs. R. Revathy is the Managing Director of Shri Hariharan Aquatech, Choolaimedu, Chennai. She possesses a post graduate qualification. She was also working as a Manager of Pharma Gem (INDIA), Chennai. She is having an experience of 10 years in this aquaculture accessories business. She is supported by her family members and friends in managing this business. Mrs. R. Revathy supplies the following products like shrimp feeds, medicines, probiotics, chemicals and farm implements like net, aerators, tubes, air stones, air valves, filter cloth, bags, lead weight and tube rolls required for shrimp farms, crab farms and hatcheries in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka. In Tamil Nadu and Pondichery the inputs are supplied to hatcheries like 'Rank Marine', BMR Groups, Oceanic Shrimping Ltd, Vaishali, Tropical Bio marine and Sono hatcheries. Inputs are also supplied to shrimp farms at Vedaraniyam, Pattukottai, Cuddalore, Marrakkanam and Cheiyur.

Peak season for her business is from January – April and from July – August (the months when shrimp farms go for stocking) and the lean period is from May – June and September – November (when most of the shrimp farms do not stock). No credit and loan is availed for the business. The income from the business is again invested in the business and also used for household expenditure. Information about the market rates of the inputs are gathered from newspapers, aqua magazines and thorough Internet. The profit earned is again invested in the business. Mrs. R. Revathy, has emerged as a successful women

entry in the field of aquaculture accessories business management. She has been innovative in recognizing a niche area for self employment in aquaculture.

The District of Madurai is the industrially developing area in which some of the entrepreneurs excel in small scale industry. Even though the government organizes women by various associations, they are not ready to undertake the business. As compared to men, women are less motivated to start business units due to some unwanted fear, lack of motivation and kind of activities. Thus, the study aims at undertaking the entrepreneurial development among women highlights their motivational forces and relationship between socio-economic background of women entrepreneurs, motivational factors and their existing entrepreneurial traits.

CASE 6: MS. BHUVANESWARI, M/S. SRUTHIRAS BEAUTY PARLOUR

Ms. Bhuvanewari came to know CED through the press release in the newspapers. She consulted the Programme Officer and then joined the Entrepreneurship Skill Development Programme in Cosmetology & Beautician trade. She told that she has understood the demand for Hair and Beauty care in the market and she took a conscious decision to establish a business venture in the said trade. Before attending the training programme, she was a home maker. After completion of the training programme, she was able to open a beauty parlour in the name of M/s. Sruthiras Beauty Parlour with her own investment of Rs.1 Lakh without expecting the support of the Bank. Her current turnover per month is Rs.20000/-. She also goes for outdoor functions. Earlier her husband was not happy with her business. But now he accepts. Although, she did not avail any bank finance, she was advised to avail financial assistance under the existing Government Schemes, such as, UYEGP, PMEGP and NEEDS for her expansion programmes.

CASE 7: MS. SUSILA, SUCCESS XEROX

Ms. Susila came to know CED through "NANAYAM" Magazine. She approached CED (Tamil Nadu) and she was briefed about the various ESDPs. Since she was having a computer at home and she wanted to start a browsing and DTP centre. She was firm in joining ESDP in DTP programme and successfully completed the training. She started her unit within two months from the date of the completion of the Skill Training Programme in the name of Success Xerox with an investment of Rs.5 Lakhs. She purchased two more computers and started a browsing centre. She has employed two persons to assist her. In her centre she offers Typing, Photocopy, Colour printout, Spiral binding and lamination works. Although, she did not avail any bank finance, she was advised to avail financial assistance under the existing Government Schemes, such as, UYEGP, PMEGP and NEEDS for her expansion programmes.

CASE 8: MS. SYED AMMAL, MAT PRODUCTS

Ms. Syed Ammal came to know CED through the District Industries Centre (DIC). She then approached the programme officer of CED to undergo the training. She acknowledged that she was motivated to start a new venture through the EDP and got the contact details of the funding agencies. She was able to identify her strengths and weaknesses from the training programme and develop her competencies. She started to produce mat with an investment of Rs.5 Lakhs in which Rs.1 lakh is availed from bank loan. Earlier her family including her husband did not support. But now things have changed. She is doing good business. She is exporting mats. She is earning Rs.30000/- per month. She has employed 30 employees in her unit. Although, she did not avail any bank finance, she was advised to avail financial assistance under the existing Government Schemes, such as, UYEGP, PMEGP and NEEDS for her expansion programmes.

CASE 9: MS. KAMALA, GARMENTS MANUFACTURER

Ms. Kamala came to know CED through Magazine. She approached CED (Tamil Nadu) for undergoing the training programme. She successfully completed the training. The training helped her in many ways. She came to know about the funding agencies & how to avail loan from banks. She developed interest in starting business in Garments Manufacturing. She had fifteen years of working experience in a garment export company. So she started a garment unit. She has established a Garments manufacturing company with an investment of Rs.4 Lakhs in which she availed Rs.3 Lakhs from bank loan. She is now able to earn Rs.25000/- per month. She has employed 8 persons. Recently she got an order from Ramana garments for Rs.2 Lakhs. Although, she did not avail any bank finance, she was advised to avail financial assistance under the existing Government Schemes, such as, UYEGP, PMEGP and NEEDS for her expansion programmes.

CASE 10: MS. EVANCIYA PRISCILLA, GARMENTS MANUFACTURER

One of Ms. Evanciya Priscilla's faculty referred CED to her. She had self-interest in fashion designing. She knows basics of tailoring. She opted for Fashion Design and made herself enrolled in the training Programme. The Programme Officer selected her to undergo the training programme. Basically she's a tailor. The training motivated her to start her own business. She has now established a garment manufacturing unit with Rs.8 Lakhs and her monthly income is Rs.15000/-. She has



employed 30 persons in her unit. In future she has plans to expand her business. In the photograph is Evanciya's husband Mr. Sam showing us the unit. Although, she did not avail any bank finance, she was advised to avail financial assistance under the existing Government Schemes, such as, UYEGP, PMEGP and NEEDS for her expansion programmes.

CONCLUSION

The major learning from these enterprises of women entrepreneur was that there is a need for family support for women to start an enterprise and maintain the same. On the marketing front, most of the enterprises case studied mentioned that product quality and pricing were an important component. India is brimming with the success stories of women. They stand tall from the rest of the crowd and are applauded for their achievements in their respective field. These women entrepreneurs are assertive, persuasive and willing to take risks. These women entrepreneurs from Tamil Nadu have proved that the lack of formal business education or age or external factors can never pull them down. They managed to survive and succeed in this cut throat competition with their hard work, diligence and perseverance. The basic qualities required for entrepreneurs and the basic characters of Indian women, reveal that, much potential is available among the Indian women on their entrepreneurial ability. This potential is to be recognized, brought out and exposed for utilization in productive and service sectors for the development of the nation.

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