

## CASE STUDY

# 7 A FIRST GENERATION WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR FROM UNORGANIZED SECTOR

**\*Dr. Usha Devi.N**

\*Associate professor, Dept. of Commerce, MLA First Grade College for Women, Bangalore, India

### Abstract

The Author met Mrs. ASHWINI NAYAK, an entrepreneur from unorganized sector, in an International Conference and had an informal interaction with her. Discussion with the entrepreneur inspired the author that Mrs. Ashwini Nayak story can be a source of inspiration for many budding entrepreneurs. Therefore, selected the same for the study, where an effort is made to cram the real life experience of Mrs. Ashwini Nayak and how her personality reflects on the society.

‘Empowering the women is a prerequisite for creating a good nation; when women are empowered, society with stability is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their thoughts and their value systems lead to the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation’

- DR.A.P.J. ABDUL KALAM

Former President of India

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Entrepreneurs play a significant role in the generation of employment opportunities and improvement of standard of living of the people. They also contribute for the growth, technological progress, import reduction and export promotion. They do not bother about obstructions and barriers, which they face in their day to day business life; instead they function like a well oiled machine and make every process in the business exciting and productive. Then who

is this entrepreneur? Entrepreneur is a creative thinker, innovator, risk taker and self motivated individual, who create jobs not only for himself/herself but also generates jobs for many others. In the process, he/she solves problems, add values and seeks excellence.

It is a known fact that women constitute half the humanity. Women are in no way inferior to men. Participation of women in economic activity on par with men is, therefore, necessary for the development of mankind. This fact is supported by many experts. For instance, Swami Vivekananda, while commenting about women, said, ‘as a bird cannot fly with one wing, no society can make progress unless its women join men in all activities. It has been rightly stated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru that, ‘in order to awaken the people, it is the women, who should be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves. Therefore, empowerment of women through the promotion of women entrepreneurship should become need of the hour in India. Mahatma Gandhiji always said that, ‘in order to strengthen the women’s empowerment, female literacy has to be promoted. It is very interesting to note that the Government supportive schemes resulted in the promotion of women entrepreneurship and the number of women entrepreneurs has grown over a period of time, especially in the 1990s and their contribution to the national economy is quite visible. Further, Women’s entrepreneurship has been recognized during the last decade as an important untapped source of economic growth.

As women entrepreneurs are considered to be one of the most important inputs in the economic development of the country, an effort is made by the author to study the story of a successful woman entrepreneur, which can be used not only as a discussion material in management schools and other forums, but also many lessons can be learnt for shaping future managers.

### THE CONCEPT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Women entrepreneurs may be defined as the woman or group of women, who initiates, organizes and operates a business enterprise. According to the Government of India, women entrepreneurship refers to an enterprise owned and controlled by a woman and having a minimum financial investment of 51 percent and offering at least 51 percent of employment generated in the enterprise to women.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the demographic characteristics of an woman entrepreneur
2. To find the woman entrepreneur's professional profile
3. To explore the strategies adopted in her business

### METHODOLOGY

Author met Mrs. ASHWINI NAYAK, an entrepreneur from unorganized sector, in an International Conference in 2007 and had an informal interaction with her. Discussion with the entrepreneur inspired the author that Mrs. Ashwini Nayak story can be a source of inspiration for many budding entrepreneurs. Therefore, selected the same for the study, where an effort is made to cram the real life experience of Mrs. Ashwini Nayak and how her personality reflects on the society.

### FINDINGS

#### 1. Demographic Characteristics

Mrs. Ashwini Nayak, forty five years old entrepreneur is a graduate and belongs to joint family with four dependents. Her family income was less than Rs.10000 per annum before becoming entrepreneur, but today her family income is Rs. 30 lakhs. She is a house wife and mother of two children.

She pursued gardening as a hobby. She used to pick some of the beautiful flowers from her garden and press them between pages of books to dry. Later she would arrange them systematically. Some of her friends and relatives found these very attractive and would place orders with her for dried flower decoration for their houses and offices. She started producing more and more dried flower designs and they were sold as fast as she could produce.

Very soon she could sense it as a great opportunity for her hobby to be converted into a business venture. She then made a firm decision to establish a dried flowers enterprise. She borrowed eighty rupees from her friends to start the business. In the beginning her customers were friends, neighbors and relatives.

She did her own research for finding out the plants and flowers, which are more suitable for dried flower decoration. She even consulted horticulture experts to learn the process of controlling the growth of fungus in flowers. She also participated in several sales exhibitions held by the government and women's organizations. In five years time, she made these dried flower decoration so popular that it became status symbol. The turnover increased from Rs 6,196 in the first year to 30 lakhs in few years. For Mrs. Ashwini Nayak "setting high standards and practicing them, remaining focused and always willing to learn" was considered as need of the hour. It was this quality, which helped her to reach

her destination.

Like any other women, she faced the problem of maintaining work-life balance, as she had to play dual role of business women and care taker of her family as well. She could not get loan easily from the bank, because she had no property in her name to use them as collateral security for obtaining funds from the bank. She was not aware of technological developments, subsidies and concessions in respect of loans / infrastructure facilities etc. that are available to them. She was also stressed in the initial stages of the business, which affected her health. In spite of facing many hurdles, Mrs. Aswini Nayak's optimistic attitude made her to convert her simple hobby i.e. gardening into a business. Mrs. Ashwini Nayak narrated the difficulties she faced in the initial days, when she started the business without hesitation. Author tried to find out whether she had any role models, who were her source of inspiration. She mentioned that her parents, teachers and husband had a great influence over her in imbibing some of the important human qualities.

## 2. Professional Profile

She started the business with the support of her husband, but today she has nine employees. When she started her business, no other entrepreneur was doing such type of business. But now many such units have started flourishing. In spite of the severe competition, she is confident of achieving success because of her continued practice to innovate designs, patterns and even market.

The following strategies, which she implemented in her business, helped her to convert her dream into reality:

- Customers complaints should be analyzed and reviewed every day and their problems should be attended immediately.
- Drive out fear, create an environment for innovation and personal development and

instill in every employee a sense of pride in the work they do.

- Business should have one culture i.e. family culture.
- Organization's interest should be to retain long-term relationships with the customers, dealers and vendors.
- The stakeholders of the business should have one strategy i.e. uncompromising values at work.

## 3. Business strategies

She considers her creativity, business sensitivity, personalized attention and sense of service as factors that made a housewife and mother as an entrepreneur.

When she was asked whether she has any message for youngsters, she said, 'Woman should come out of their traditional occupation like garments –making, tailoring, food processing, handicrafts and parlors etc., and accept more challenging and economic activities' like Consultancy, Interior designing, Diagnostic laboratories, Catering services, Advertisement services, engineering goods, IT services etc. She also said that young women should be motivated into this field through audio visual media. Financial institutions should provide loans at concessional rates and Government subsidy can be increased to women entrepreneurs.

She strongly believed and conveyed that, 'Great leaders raise the aspirations of their followers, and they make people more confident, energetic and enthusiastic. She also said that the people, who are motivated by great leaders, dream big, make sacrifices and achieve miracles. Therefore, development of such great leaders through training and mentoring should become cry of the hour in our country. Further, With a view to transforming employment seekers into job generators, education system should prepare

students right from college education to get oriented to setting up enterprises, which would provide them creativity, freedom and ability to generate wealth.

Mrs. Ashwini Nayak's opinion is that many women entrepreneurs in India are enthusiastic, hard working, ambitious, patient and devoted. Despite various good traits, they are facing several constraints in psychological factors (lack of self motivation, poor risk taking ability), constraints in social factors (lack of social contacts), constraints in technical factors (lack of project ideas, lack of process know how), constraints in economic factors (lack of financial support from family, lack of economic ownership and control) etc. Therefore, she suggests that government should design unique training programs for imparting entrepreneurial talent in Indian women on large scale. Apart from this, counseling should be provided to the women entrepreneurs and to her family members by the NGOs, psychologists, and managerial / technical experts.

She also expressed that the micro-credit plays an important role in the upliftment of women. But many women entrepreneurs are not aware of this scheme. Therefore, concerned authorities should take the responsibility of creating awareness about the different schemes available to them. Further, since majority of the women are ignorant of their legal rights, legal literacy classes should be organized to enhance their awareness. As marketing products is one of the main problems for women entrepreneurs, women co-operative societies can be started to procure the products from women entrepreneurs. This will help them in selling their products at a reasonable price.

Policies and programs tend to be "men streamed" and too often do not take into account the specific needs of women entrepreneurs and would-be women entrepreneurs. As a consequence, equal opportunity between men and women from

the perspective of entrepreneurship is still not a reality in India says Mrs. Ashwini Nayak.

She also adds that in order to harness the potential of women entrepreneurs and for their continued growth and development, it is necessary to formulate appropriate strategies for stimulating, supporting and sustaining their efforts in this direction. Such a strategy needs to be in congruence with field realities, and should especially take cognizance of the problems women entrepreneurs face within the current system.

## CONCLUSION

An innovative idea together with willingness to take risks has led Mrs. Ashwini Nayak to convert her simple hobby into an enterprise. Author recommends that Mrs. Ashwini Nayak should be honored business standard award for her outstanding performance and also conveys that youngsters should take inspiration from Mrs. Ashwini Nayak's business life and challenge themselves to fulfill the vision of the country i.e. making India an economic superpower by promoting entrepreneurship.

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