



Economic Empowerment Of Women Through Food Processing Units In Karnataka – A Study

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Abstract: The present study will throw light on a specific section of the working class – the women engaged in food processing. Women have been taking up variety of careers and sources to earn income. Days have gone when they were confined to four walls doing only household chores. Women, in addition to the stereotyped ones, have readily accepted these days challenging careers. One such work is food processing. Many women have been found to use their skills and knowledge about food in productive ways by engaging in food processing. The food processing may be of different types and quantity, but these enterprises have been found to be great success whether attached with home or not. They have obtained a great acceptance among the general masses. Most of the women have parallel household responsibilities. Thus, they adopt unique approach and attitude towards their own work. The present study will help to understand this approach and will throw light on their knowledge, attitude and practices and problems. It will be of great importance as a contribution to database on working women. It will point out as to how these women differ with respect to other working women. The database will be useful in formulating policies and programs for working women. It will show what they need and thus create a base for program planning for government and non government agencies working in the area of women welfare.

Keywords: Livelihood security, Food processing, Entrepreneurship, Resources, Management.

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Introduction

The study on women entrepreneurs engaged in food processing is of great significance to the subject of Home Science. Home science aims at overall development of women. This can be largely achieved by economic independence. Starting and developing an enterprise may be related to food or not, is a great challenge in itself. Thus, a study on women who have undertaken such tasks will be of great motivation to others. It will direct others how to use one's skills and expertise in creative manner. In addition to these aspects, it also becomes important to know how they manage their work and home simultaneously. These management practices are like foundations of Home Scientists and ray of light for others.

The demand for readymade food items has increased. Due to globalization and higher exposure to the media, people have become aware of the nutritious and healthy diet. More and more people are inclined toward readymade food available in the market as they not only save time and efforts but choice available also increases. People can opt for supplemented foods, non seasonal foods or food unavailable in own regional area when they choose to use readymade food items. Foods which are prepared traditionally by women in groups are considered to be very close to homemade foods. People prefer to eat papad, khakhara, pickles and many such items made by women professionally. Therefore the women entrepreneurs engaged in food processing occupy a special place in food unit. Their importance and contribution can be understood by studying groups of such women. The study in the present research format is an effort to better understand groups of such working women and their contribution/ role in food processing unit. Women entrepreneurs engaged in food processing being an integral part of food processing unit assumes great importance automatically and thus studying it becomes equally important.

Success of Entrepreneurship

The success of women entrepreneurs engaged in food processing industry was considered in terms of the following only:

- Number of years of enterprise
- Number of employees
- Income from the enterprise

Concept of Women Empowerment and Women Entrepreneurship:

According to United Nations Development program (1994) empowerment is a process which enables individuals or groups to change balances of power in social, economic and political relations in society. Therefore, women empowerment means giving the capacity and

means to direct women's life towards desired goals. It is a process by which women gain greater control over resources (income, knowledge, information, technology, skill and training), decision making process, enhance the self-image of women, to become active participants in the process of change and to develop the skills to assert themselves.

"Women Entrepreneur" is a person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. The Government of India has defined women entrepreneurs as an enterprise owned and controlled by women having a minimum financial interest of 51 per cent of the capital and giving at least 51 per cent of the employment generated in the enterprise to women. In the simplest sense, women entrepreneurs are those women who take the lead and organize the business or industry and provide employment to others. Entrepreneurship development among rural women helps to enhance their personal capabilities and increase decision making status in the family and society as a whole.

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.

Role of Self Help Groups in Empowering Women:

Participation in income generating activities helps in the overall empowerment of women. The SHGs had major impact on social and economic life of rural women. It empowers women and trains them to take active part in the socio-economic progress of the nation and make them sensitized, self-made and self-disciplined. In this regard Pattanaik (2003) has stated that SHGs are continuously striving for a better future for rural women as participants, decision-makers and

beneficiaries in the domestic, economic, social and cultural spheres of life. But due to certain constraints like gender inequality, exploitation, women torture, various SHGs is not organized properly and effectively. The SHGs have inculcated great confidence in the minds of rural women to succeed in their day-to-day life. The SHGs bring out the capacity of women in molding the community in right perspective and explore the initiative of women in taking the entrepreneurial ventures.

Makandar & Mulla (2013) argued that women's participation in SHGs enabled them to discover inner strength, gain self-confidence, social, economic, political and psychological empowerment and capacity building. Participation of women in SHGs makes a significant impact on the empowerment in social aspect also. SHGs helps women come out in open and discuss their problems. SHGs also helps to bring about awareness among rural women about savings, education, health, environment, cleanliness, family welfare, social forestry, etc. again SHGs could be linked to literacy programmes run by government and it could be made an integral part of SHG activities. Raised literacy level could be helpful for the SHG members to overcome cognitive constraints and to understand government policies, technical understanding and gaining required skills.

Empowerment should be extremely induced so that women can exercise a level of autonomy. There should also be 'self-empowerment' so that women can look at their own lives. The process of 'learning by doing and earning' would certainly empower rural women. More and more rural women need to be involved in self-employment. Self-employment in agriculture, village and small industries and retail trade and services should be expanded. Self-employment is also conducive to the development of individual initiative and entrepreneurial talent and offers greater personal freedom. The added advantage is that the institution of family remains undisturbed. The emergence of self-help groups in this context is a welcome development. The groups would provide a permanent forum for articulating their needs and contributing their perspectives to development.

Self-help group should be developed as an institution for financial intermediation as well as people's network rather than a vehicle for credit disbursal only. Self Help Group is able to overcome most of the practical problems encountered in the implementation of the various income generating programmes for the economic empowerment of women. The SHGs are a viable alternative to achieve the objectives of rural development and to get community

participation in all rural development programs. The possible outcomes of women's entrepreneur through SHGs at household level are self-employment, sustainable livelihoods, enhanced social dignity and better status of women. SHG would lead to benefits not only to the individual women and women's groups but also for the family and community as a whole through collective action for development. Empowerment is not just for meeting their economic needs but also for more holistic social development.

SUMMARY

In traditional Indian society women are accorded inferior status in family hierarchy. The Indian society considered women as weaker sex. Such sociological and cultural traditions and taboos have kept women dormant for quite a long time. In 19th century many social reforms in India rose against the evil practices. From Ram Mohan Roy to Gandhiji, efforts were focused to improve status of women. With globalization and knowledge based society spreading like wildfire in the world today, the realization of women's crucial role in human development has been gaining acceptance.

Entrepreneurship is suitable to women and it is possible to do work when she has free time. Self-employed women has no restrictions and time bound work which makes it easy for her to manage the responsibilities of work, home and child at a time. Secondly, it is convenient for women to control a small business. This pattern of working in small business suits her dual role. With this, there is a growing realization that the strength of a country is in the small business.

The department of food has been imparting training to women through its community canning and processing centers as well as mobile extension units. The growth of food processing industry generally also brings about increased opportunities for employment of women as packaging; quality control and marketing operation in this industry are specially suited for women.

The present study will throw light on a specific section of working class – the women engaged in food processing. Women have been taking up variety of careers and sources to earn income. Days have gone when they were confined to four walls doing only household chores. Women, in addition to the stereotyped ones, have readily accepted these days challenging careers. One such work is food processing. Many women have been found to use their skills and knowledge about food in productive ways by engaging in food processing. The food processing may be of different types and quantity, but these enterprises have been found to be great success whether attached with home or not. They have obtained a great acceptance among the general masses.

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