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Evolution of Women in India in the Business Sector

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Abstract: ***The topic of women in India as a part of the business sector since time immemorial has been that of controversy. The attempt to change this societal thinking hasn't been much of a success. The women of the industry strive for an identity to date. Having an independent life remains a dream to most. Women are restricted due to various reasons which are further discussed in the paper. The paper deals with the history of this country in relation and effect to its women and how they've struggled to be a part of the competitive industrial sector for almost seventy years now. How deep-rooted prejudice against women makes it a challenge for them to succeed. It also discusses the current scenario of the same in India and the change that has been brought about in all these years. This paper provides a literary view with the secondary data and personal knowledge available on the topic to make it more clear and apt.***

Keywords: Women, Business Sector, India, Evolution, Challenges, Current Scenario.

I. INTRODUCTION

The taboo of women working away from home in a country such as India isn't a new concept. This has been going on for centuries and now is the time to change this. The progress of women in the entrepreneurial sector is increasing but not at an expected rate. The number of women entrepreneurs remains incredibly low as compared to men even in this technology-driven, feminist era. The fight to match with the inequality issues is a daily thing. Not only in the business sector but also sectors such as primary (agriculture and farming) and others, women tend to have a lesser share of the same. Despite being a larger number of women engaged in agricultural activities i.e. 85%, only about 13% own land. So it does makes us wonder, why does this happen?

This society has been shaped the way where a woman is always the one sacrificing her dreams, and not a man. He gets all the opportunities to move ahead in life, make a living for him, or the other way where he joins his family in their family business and takes the name ahead but women aren't treated this way. They are just a mere liability. They'll need to be paid when they get married (in the form of dowry). And back in the day, earning for themselves wasn't an option for most women.

II. HISTORY

According to a report, there are around 8 million women entrepreneurs, and 10% of all formal enterprises are owned by women today. But, then achieving this wasn't always easy.

Since the early years even before the British intervened, Indian women belonging to the rural areas were engaged in some sort of business activities. It wasn't as magnanimous as running a multi-national corporation yet it was a way for them to earn a minimal salary that would help their kids and families. The cottage industries as they were called back then were just as common as a trend in fashion is today. Relevant. Women were engaged in making products like handicrafts, carpets, and handlooms. Since all the work was necessary for sustaining themselves, their households encouraged them and even got involved themselves for the work to share the load. This continues but the times changed and women wanted a part of the empowerment pie where everyone was getting their share. In a country like India, working women isn't a new concept as said above. We all have women spearheading business by teaching tuitions to the local kids or home salons. For years this informal, work from home business too has contented the women. Their share in the formal business sector remained as good as non-existent until there came the time to revolutionize. The other half of the population was growing restless as to the monopoly that men had formed over all of the major businesses.

Evidence has unequivocally established that entrepreneurial spirit is not a male prerogative. At the beginning of the 21st century, the country found its very own first female entrepreneur, Kalpana Saroj, who with her grit, perseverance and self-belief established a successful business. In India, though women have played a key role in society, their entrepreneurial ability has not been properly tapped due to their lower status.

It is only from the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards that their role has been explicitly recognized with a marked shift in the approach from women's welfare to women's development and empowerment. The development of women entrepreneurship has become an important aspect of our plan priorities. Several policies and programs are being implemented for the development of women entrepreneurship in India. In the USA, women own 25% of all business, even though their sales on an average are less than two-fifths of those of other small businesses. In Canada, women own one-third of small business and in France it is one-fifth.

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Women of this country have struggled long enough to fight for what's rightfully theirs. This fight will continue until what's necessary is achieved.

Women are provided with immense support from the government and some of these programs include the direct support from the institutions set up under the government and many schemes. Out of which, some are listed below:

A. Nationalized banks
B. State finance corporation
C. State industrial development corporation
D. District industries centers
E. Differential rate schemes
F. Mahila Udyog Nidhi scheme
G. Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)
H. State Small Industrial Development Corporations (SSIDCs)

In the words of president APJ Abdul Kalam "empowering women is a prerequisite for creating a good nation, when women are empowered, a 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."

III. CHALLENGES

This is a stigma that women are made to look only after the household chores and not the 'man-controlled' business world. Women, for centuries, have suffered miserably under those men who occupy the position of power. This needs to be changed have been said a lot of times but never actually put in use by anyone. The current feminism movement is fuel to this yet we fail to rip off the deep-rooted misogyny in our society. This tends to happen because of some of the reasons stated below:

1) *The Skewed Education:* The Indian societies since the British rule have considered women as not a primary but a secondary part of the action. Not being given the chance to excel in any field except that of the house has been an utter disrespect to the other half of the population which is ultimately the one who carries the race of career-oriented men forward. Women have been considered as an expendable part of this whole. A lot is to be blamed upon the education being provided to every different stratum of people. Women of the higher class status are given their due attention towards the importance of education but this isn't the case with the lower class people. They consider women as a liability. They do not understand the concept of equality which is a major problem and needs to be exterminated. The stats for the year 2011, shows us that out of the total educated people, 74.04%, 82.14% are men whereas only 65.46% are women. As said by Swami Vivekananda, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. "500 males can win India in 50 years which can be done with a few weeks by 500 women".
2) *The Pay Difference:* Even after proving themselves and their capabilities in almost every field, women are paid much less than the average salary as that of a man working on the same position of responsibility. In India, a woman earns 19% less than a man. Although the gap has decreased exponentially for decades, yet we fail to maintain equilibrium. After various surveys, it was found that there could be several reasons as per men who believe that there is a reason for this difference. Some of those are as follows:
3)

a) The difference in work experience
b) The inability to handle more pressurizing jobs such as those on the top management
c) The option to not prefer night jobs or jobs requiring overtime services
d) The fact that women are less competent when they get married
e) Maternity leads to a perception that they will quit
f) Women can't put the same number of working hours as men

Women have been an object of judgment in the eyes of men and it's not like the men don't want women to succeed anymore, they just need to end their preset mind notions that women work only when she has needs but because she wants to. In Southern Asia, Western Asia, and Africa, only 20% of women work at paid non-agricultural jobs. Worldwide, women's rate of paid employment outside of agriculture grew to 41% by 2008.

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4) *The Concept of Deep-rooted Misogyny:* Men in the Indian community have considered women as the weaker sex and there's all the truth to it. They are taught from the same people who although advocate women empowerment, fail to implement in their day to day lives. Whenever there's a task that's a little difficult, a man is always preferred than a woman. The Indian obsession of having at least one male child in the family so that they can have an actual heir that could continue their family progeny is to such a level that they resort to options like adoption which is why the rates of male child adoption in India are much higher than in any other country. Funny how the country which worships Goddesses more than Gods, in their real lives, prefers boys over girls under any given circumstances.
5) *Disparities in Basic Rights and Lack of Resources:* The fact that women weren't allowed to vote in India till after becoming a republic in 1947 says a lot about the inadequacy of the people and their representatives who didn't consider women as an important part in the whole Nationalism Movement. Being devoid of basic education and the opportunities is a common tradition in a developing nation such as India. What needs to be realized is that for the betterment of the entire society in general, the people need to come together with an open mindset to develop the country. Most of the financial institutions are skeptical about the entrepreneurial businesses run by the women. Women are generally sidelined as the risk aversion category in case a huge opportunity presents itself in front of them and thus so, the banks avoid giving loans to women entrepreneurs because all they care about is the profit. Whereas, the truth is that women, run businesses not only for themselves but also to provide opportunities to the people, especially to the disparaging women. The women entrepreneurs are suffering from inadequate financial resources and working capital. The women entrepreneurs lack access to external funds due to their inability to provide tangible security. Very few women have the tangible property in hand. An underestimation of power by the oppressor has been the wave of history forever.

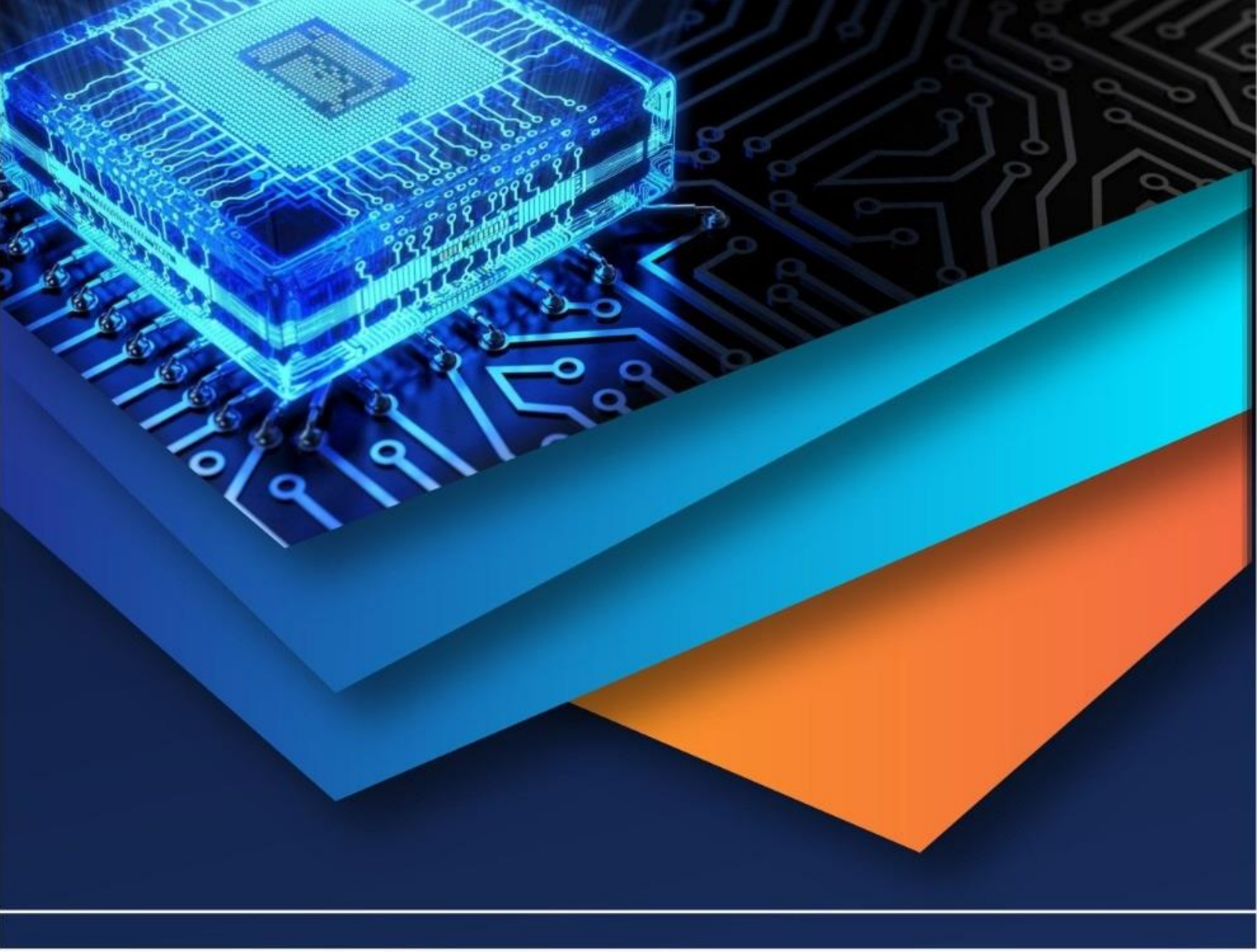
IV. CONCLUSION

A country as diversely complicated as India has never had anything the easy way. It always requires a step towards efforts and hard work to bring about a revolution of change. Women's equality might just be the best thing to happen to this country. The current rate needs to be upped by almost twice the rate in the upcoming years so that the country can call itself, a self-sufficient country. The poor laws of the country need to change for the betterment of the condition of the women. The banks and all other financial institutions should be given direct incentives and encouragements to help the upcoming and growing business entrepreneurs of the nation. Self-made entrepreneurs here in various fields are an inspiration to the normal person who dreams of having that level of success and respect in this society. The support that is necessary for a budding businessperson is an equal share of their personal and environmental factors which is why families should support their daughters and wives to get more and more financial independence. Women today are more willing to take up activities that were once considered the preserve of men and have proved that they are second to no one concerning contribution to the growth of the economy. Women entrepreneurship must be molded properly with entrepreneurial traits and skills to meet the changes in trends, challenges global markets, and also be competent enough to sustain and strive for excellence in the entrepreneurial arena. The women have always been considered the suppressed but now is the time to change, the time to grow beyond the aspects of mere mortal existence and make a world, a better place with equality and respect and honor.

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