



THE WOMEN AS ENTREPRENEUR -A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY IN DULIAJAN TOWN

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to examine the how women are empowered in entrepreneurial activities and to observe the motivating factors of women through which they can start their own entrepreneurial enterprises. In this context, the socio-economic status of the women entrepreneurs have been also explored and tried to make it link with their motivating factors for entrepreneurial activities. The study reveals that women entrepreneurs have been engaged in different types of entrepreneurial activities and successfully developed their socio-economic status through it. It is also significantly observed that the women have been empowered through economic independence through which they get the opportunity to have control over their self reliance, self-determination and a way to achieve favourable social status.

Key Words: - *Entrepreneurship Development, Empower, Entrepreneurial Activities.*

(I) Introduction

Women constituting half of the total population are of vital importance for the production system and social progress connected with economy. The women and their right to equality and justice are not abstractions detached from the perspectives of national development. They form an integral part of the development in its social, economic, political and cultural dimensions. This paper is an attempt to examine whether the women become empower through entrepreneurship. In this context, the socio-economic status of the women entrepreneurs has been observed and analyzed.

Women entrepreneurs represent a group of women who have broken away from the beaten track and are exploring new avenues of economic participation. Empowerment of women pre supports a drastic dynamic and democratic change in the perception of and expectation from women in our society. To help women attain economic independence is the first priority of such changes. Thus, when we talking about women's empowerment and women's status, it is important for us to recognize that interventions at all levels such as social, cultural, political and economic are required and are possible only if changes take place in the existing system and social structures, which are not at all favorable to women today. Women account for more than half of the world's illiterate population and achieving literacy could be one of the first steps to empowering women to participate more equally in society and free themselves from economic exploitation and oppression.¹ The empowerment of women and economic opportunity is a highly important end in itself. Education is one of the most important means of empowering women and giving them knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary for their becoming full partners in the all round development process.

Women entrepreneurs bring together the productive resources and act as a catalytic agent in the process of economic development and entrepreneurship is the skill and ability, which initiate innovations and undertake the risk. In every part of the world, women are paid less for their work and see fewer benefits of their labour. Discrimination and extra household responsibilities reduce their access to decent work, capital and time needed to improve their businesses, relative to men.² Women throughout the developing world engage in economically productive work and earn incomes. In this sense, economic empowerment of women is a prerequisite for sustainable development and for achieving the Millennium development Goals.

¹ Sinha, U.P. & Sinha, R. (2007): "Women Empowerment and Family Management in Tribal Region" Concept publishing company, New delhi.

² <http://www.enterprise-development.org/implementing-psd/womens-economic-empowerment>



The role of women as entrepreneurial activities is gradually increasing not only Assam but also all over the world. Women entrepreneurship development is the instrument of women empowerment. The most important factors in determining the success of development is the status and position of women in the society. This means that if the neglect of women in the development process of any society or the nation-state then it will be waste of a human resource. In this premise, it will be a disservice for any nation state to ignore its women population in its development efforts. Faleye (1999) stated that women's development is not nearly about reducing poverty by increasing productivity, but also about women's liberation and empowerment.³ Women perceive more and more clearly that if they really want empowerment and to contribute to the welfare of their family and society, the most effective way is to go out of home and earn money of the entrepreneurial activities.

(II) Theoretical Framework

Sociologists propose that entrepreneurship can be conceptualized as a social movement and entrepreneurs exit not only in the economy but in other spheres of society as well. Sociologists argue that entrepreneurship is most likely to emerge under a specific social culture. According to Weber, religious beliefs produce intensive effort in occupational pursuits, the systematic ordering of means to end and the accumulation of assets. It is beliefs which generate a drive for entrepreneurial growth.⁴ The famous sociologist Max Weber's theory of entrepreneur discusses in his famous study 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism'. (Weber; 1988) Weber's view of entrepreneurship is often identified with his theory of charisma. He analysis that some special type of human being or the charismatic person who makes other people want to follow him or her, simply by virtue of his or her extraordinary personality.⁵ More precisely, Weber makes two important contributions to the understanding of entrepreneurship in his study. First, looks at the decisive change in attitude towards entrepreneurship that took place sometime after the reformation in the western world, from bring one of acceptance and active promotion. And second, Weber analysis the way that a certain form of religion what he called ascetic Protestantism helped to develop a positive attitude towards moneymaking and work, something which facilitated the more general change in attitude towards the entrepreneur. Following this perspective, this study has tried to explore various factors that affects and influences the women entrepreneurs in their entrepreneurial activities.

(III) Field of the study

The present study is carried out in the 'Duliajan' Town of Dibrugarh district. Duliajan is an industrial town situated in Dibrugarh district in upper Assam and it is the located in the upper northeast corner of India. It is surrounded by lush green tea estates and largest tea growing areas of the world. The town is about 45 km far from Dibrugarh town. It is developing as an industrial town based on Oil India Limited, one of the country's largest oil and gas companies and Assam Gas Company Limited, which carries out business related to natural gas in India, owned by the Government of Assam. Duliajan has bounded by the following boundaries. North: Bordubi; South: Burhidihing River; East: Boruah Tiniali; West: Kathalguri. The first time visitor of 'greenery' all around, was blending harmoniously. In 2011 census, the total population of Duliajan is 28,626, while the total populations there are 14,898 males (52%) and 13,728 females (48%). The total workers in the city of Duliajan town are calculated as 9,882 which is 35% of the population of which 8,140 (28%) are males and 1,742 (6.09%) are females. Duliajan Oil Town has an average literacy rate of 84% (total literate peoples are 24,312) out of which male literacy rate is 45% (13,014) and, the female literacy rate is 39% (11,298).⁶ There are

³ Faleye, G.O. (1999). "Women and Accountability" A Case Study of the Family Support Programme in Osun-State, MPA project

⁴ Rajkonwar, A.B. (2004): "Entrepreneurship Development." Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi P- 66 and 67.

⁵ Weber, M (1988): "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" Trans, Talcott Persons. Gloucester, M.A: Peter Smith.

⁶ <http://www.census2011.co.in/data/town/291703-duliajan-oil-town-assam.html>



some of the women organization and clubs who emphasized the development activities of women and empowering the women all sides. There are more than 15 L.P, M.E and High School and two degree colleges and two junior colleges in Duliajan town. Duliajan is a multi-religious town. It has been included Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhism, and Christianity. In this town, more than 80% people belong to Hindu religion.

(IV) Application of Methodology

As domain of the study is concerned with women entrepreneurs, the respondents were collected from women entrepreneurs of Duliajan Town. After pilot study, it was explored that there were 241 women entrepreneurs and 100 women entrepreneurs were selected as respondents purposively. After that, these respondents have been divided into two categories on the basis of their marital status: i.e., 55% (55) married and 45% (45) unmarried women entrepreneurs. The research design of the study is exploratory in nature. The present study has been conducted with the help of both primary and secondary source of data. The primary data were collected through interview schedule and personal interviews and secondary data were collected from books, journals, govt. publications etc. After collection of the data, data were classified systematically on different items and questions wise since possible alternatives answer were provided to each questions, the classifications of response was done on the base of the alternative chosen by the respondent. After that, the classified data were put into tables and analyzed to find out a fruitful finding.

(V) Socio economic background of the respondents

Social background is of utmost importance as it is factor that shapes the life and life experiences of any individual. Social background plays a crucial role in shaping one's attitude, perceptions, and decisions of the individuals.

Age is a very important component of social background of the individual. The study reveals that, the highest numbers of respondents to the age group of 25-29, in this age group 29% (29) of the respondents were found. The next higher percentage is represented by age group of 30-34. In this age group 28% (28) of the respondents were found. The lowest number of respondents was found in the age group 50-54 and 55-59. In these groups 6% (06) and 2% (02) respondents were found respectively. In this study we enquired about the religion of the respondents. In this study, the majority of the respondents i.e., 94% (94) respondents are from Hinduism. As many as 4% (04) respondents are from Islamism and 2% (02) were the followers Christianity. Community wise, the respondents in this study are diverse. It was also found in this study that the respondents different communities. Here, the majority of the respondents i.e., 44% (44) respondents were belonging to Ahom community, 41% (41) respondents belong to other communities like Mishing, Nath, nepali etc ;9% (09) of the respondents belong to Kalita community, 4% (04) respondents belong to Muslim community and the lowest only 2% (02) respondents belong to Brahmin (Kaiyothy) community. In this study also shows that among the 100 respondents, 68% (68) respondents live in nuclear families and 32% (32) respondents were belong to joint families.

In this study, As far as the marital status of the respondents is concerned, among the 100 respondents 55% (55) respondents were married and 45% (45) respondents were unmarried. In the context of educational qualification of the respondents, In this study, it was found that among the 100 respondents the majority of the respondents of the universe of the study i.e., 38% (38) respondents were under graduate, 27% (27) respondents were educational standard is graduate, 22% respondents were educational standard is read up to class X, 11% (11) respondents were found whose standard was H.S.L.C pass and only 2% (02) respondents were post-graduate holders. Family source of income is a very important aspect in terms of the economic respondents of the respondents. In the context of occupational background of the respondents, Having known the family background of the respondents the researcher desired to know the occupational background of the respondents starting from their husband's occupation of the married women. In this study, it was out of 55 married women's, the majority of the married respondents i.e., 29% (29) respondents' husbands' occupation was trade and business, 11% (11) respondents' husbands engaged in Industrial enterprises, 9% (09) respondents' husbands were engaged in government service, 5% (05) respondents' husbands engaged in any other working



activities like driving, poultry firm etc. and only 1% respondents' husbands working in agriculture. In the context of unmarried women, the study reveals that the majority of the respondents' fathers i.e. 34% (34) were engaged in trade and business. As many as 27% (27) respondents' fathers occupations was industrial enterprise, 25% (25) respondents' fathers occupations was government service, 9% (09) respondents' fathers were engaged in agriculture and 5% (05) respondents' fathers were engaged in any other working activities.

Monthly family income is another element of social background of the respondents. The study also found that among the 100 respondents, the maximum number of the respondent's families i.e. 23% (23) belong to income groups rupees 8001/- to 13000/-. The income group of rupees 3001/- to 8000/- which covers 21% (21) and 15% (15) numbers of the respondent's family are from the income group of rupees 13001/- to 18000/-. As many as 13% (13) family of the respondents are from the income group 18001/- to 23000/- and only 5% (05) family of the respondents have no more income and who earn below 3000/- rupees per month for their survival.

(VI) Women and Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurship development is a process of enhancing entrepreneurial skills and knowledge through structured training and entrepreneurial income generating programmes. Entrepreneurship Development aims to enlarge the base of entrepreneurs in order to accelerate the pace at which new ventures enterprise are created. During the time of field study it has been observed that, women entrepreneurs are engaged in different types of entrepreneurial activities. which are: Garment making (item of clothing), Cutting and tailoring, knitting, embroidery & woolen articles, general store, beauty parlor, training institute, toy making, and food processing, steel fabrications, printing and binding and any other. The study found that women entrepreneurs prefer mostly dress related enterprises like garment making, cutting and tailoring, knitting, embroidery & woolen articles, toy making and general store. And another type of enterprises is beauty parlor, food processing, printing and binding etc. This study found among 100 respondents, 8% (08) women are involved in garment making (item of clothes). They produce only clothes for women and children and produce new varieties of garment like mekhaela, riha, blouse, frock, shirts; shaddars etc. which are mostly women wears. The make clothes of various designs keeping in view the changing fashions and local demands. Total unit of production by the individual firm varies from one to another. Out of 100 women entrepreneurs 28% (28) women have enterprise of cutting and tailoring. Knitting is another enterprise, in which women entrepreneurs tend to be interested as 7% (07) of the respondents were engaged in knitting. This unit produced ladies and children wear only. In the same 7% (07) and 10% (10) respondents engaged in embroidery & woolen articles and general store respectively. Out of 100 respondents 16% (16) were found to have been engaged in beauty parlor enterprise. 5% (05) of the respondents established privately training institute. 7% (07) of the respondents were engaged in food processing enterprise. Out of 100 respondents 2% (02), 2% (02) and 3% (03) of the respondents were engaged in toy making, steel fabrication and printing and binding enterprises respectively. Any other enterprises including jute, bamboo and cane craft and poultry firm etc are popular enterprise in which women entrepreneurs were found to be interested as 5% (05) of the respondents established such units respectively. In the present study, it is found that maximum of the women entrepreneurs have engaged in Cutting and tailoring entrepreneurial activities. On the other hand, a few women entrepreneurs have done the earlier working activities.

Family background is also taken into consideration in choosing an enterprise. In this study, we observed some of the influencing factor to empower and development of the women in the entrepreneurial activities. The study found that the majority i.e., 53% (53) of the respondents were very much influenced by herself that means occupational status of own, 38% (38) of the respondents were influenced by economic status of the family and 9% (09) of the respondents stated that occupational status of the family might be influencing factor for their present enterprise. The large majority of the respondents stated that they motivated by own. Because some of the respondents were engaged in different working activities before starting their enterprise and they were influenced primarily by previous association in the same line and they thought to take up business activity. Second largest majority of the respondents were very much influence by economic status of the family, because choice of entrepreneurial activity is not considered only on the basis of skills and technical knowledge, but also on the

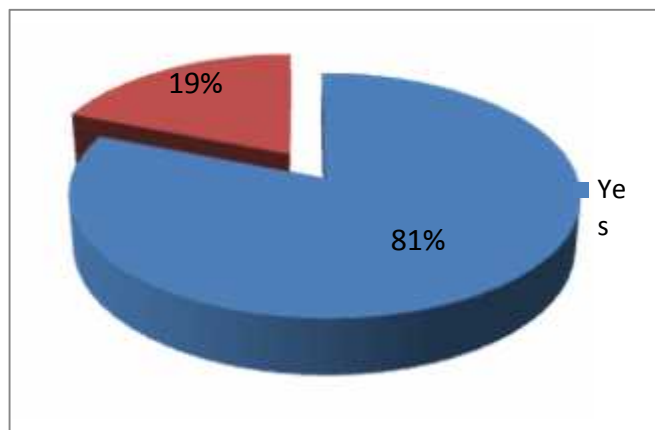


economic status of entrepreneurs family. Women entrepreneurs who belonged to high or medium income group family, they generally preferred to women to engage in business activity but lower income group families also considered women to enter into business enterprises that the necessary training obtained by themselves. Besides economic status, occupational status of the family was also considered to be relevant to choosing the type of enterprise. Family occupation means occupation of father, husband and mothers. Occupational status of the family would have an influence on the enterprise because of women entrepreneurs received help and co-operation from family in managing the enterprises.

In the context of monthly income of the respondents, it has been observed that they were much earning money in their enterprises. The study reveals that the maximum number of i.e., 49% (49) of the respondents belong to income group rupees less than 5000/-. The second majority of the respondents i.e., 41% (41) belong to income group rupees 5001/- to 10000/-. As many as 6% (06) of the respondents are from the income group rupees 10001/- to 15000/- and it also found that only 4% (04) of the respondents earn more than 15000 rupees. To escort a standard living, one has needed to be economically well. However, to raise per capita income of nation, one has needed to be economically sound. In the case, economic work may help the people to increase their economic status. During the time of field visit it was asked to the respondents regarding their view of economic position or status of the society. The study found that the majority, 97% (97) respondents have been replied that do they think that they are economically well being or satisfied after starting in entrepreneurial activities. In this study, it has been observed that 91% (91) women have to take financial responsibility of their family.

Now in the present situation, women participation in the any working activities or any entrepreneurial activities is quite progressive way. A good number of women have shown their willingness to do some of the working activities but at the same time they have to develop abilities for their activities. Status is a social position, as the ‘socially defined location or place’ which an individual occupies in a system of interaction or society. Thus, in any interaction, none of the participants is without status. Social status leads to social life of the people. In the context of social status, the following diagram displays that whether the respondents could help achieve a comparatively more favorable social status of participating in entrepreneurial activities.

Figure: I, Views of Respondents Towards Their Social Statuses For Entrepreneurial Activities



The study found that the majority of the respondents i.e., 81% (81) respondents opined that they could help achieve a comparatively more favorable social status of participating in entrepreneurial activities. 19% (19) respondents reported that they could not achieve a comparatively more favorable social status of participating in entrepreneurial activities. During the time field study, it has been asked to the respondents that do they feel that that after establishment as an entrepreneur, have you got a status in the society. In the response to this question out of 100 respondents, 69% (69) respondents mentioned that they have getting status in the society after establishment as an entrepreneur. But, rests of them 31% (31) respondents have not getting status in the society after establishment as an entrepreneur.



In this study, women's equal rights and regards in the family has been observed. During the time of field visit, it has been asked to the respondents that have they thinks that they are enjoying equal rights with the male members in the family. This question was asked separately both married and unmarried respondents. In this response to this question, out of 55 married respondents, i.e., 17% (17) respondents mentioned that they are equal rights and regards with the male member of the family. However, 38% (38) married respondents reported that they are not enjoying equal rights and regards with the male members of the family. Therefore, it was observed that these respondents have to depend on their male counterpart to take various household decisions.

After knowing the equal rights and regards of the married respondents with the male member of the family, the respondents were asked the unmarried respondents enjoying equal rights and regards in the their family. The study depicts that out of 45 unmarried respondents, i.e., 25% (25) respondents opined that they have equal rights and regards with the male member of the family. However, 20% (20) unmarried respondents said that they are not enjoying equal rights and regards with the male members of the family. In this study, it has been observed that women are empowered through various entrepreneurial activities. This study also observed that, some of the major impacts have been observed during the field study. Some of the Women entrepreneurs were upgrade their living standard for which they achieved satisfactory social status. Significantly in this study it was noticed that respondents expressed their contentment in terms of decision making of their entrepreneurial activities or their family.

(VII) Problems and prospect of women entrepreneurs

Every entrepreneur faces some problems in starting as well as maintaining an enterprise. The problems are mainly related to finance or capital, manpower, labour management, availability of raw material and training, marketing, site selection etc; On the other hand, out of these problems, finance and marketing are most difficult for women. For finance entrepreneurs, in general depend on some institutions like bank, insurance companies, co-operative credit society etc. In context of women entrepreneurs, women have to face a plethora of problems after engagement in entrepreneurial activities. Some of the problems generated from the patriarchal presumption towards the position of women in the society. Again another type of hindrances comes out due to poor communication, availability of training, communication skill, technical skills etc. So, it is important to understand the typical problems which the women entrepreneurs face and how do they overcame the problems.

In this study, it has been found that among the 100 respondents, the majority of the respondents i.e., 60% (60) respondents reported that they have face problems to involve in the entrepreneurial activities. On the other hand, 40% (40) of the respondents opined that they have not faced any problems to involve in the entrepreneurial activities. In these 60% (60) respondents, 19% (19) respondents opined that they have faced mostly capital problem that means insufficiency of capital. 13% (13) respondents reported that due to lack of marking problem they were not running their venture properly. 11% (11) respondents said that they have face other problems like; communication, skill etc. to involve in entrepreneurial activities. 7% (07) respondents mentioned that they have to face place selection. 6% (06) of the respondents talked about their family problem, which stands as barrier to involve in the present entrepreneurial activities and 4% (04) respondents said that they have to face unavailability of training, which is the main problems to involve in the present entrepreneurial activities. In this study it has been found that 40% (40) respondents opined that women have some distinctive problems in running a business enterprise. On the other hand, 60% (60) respondents reported that women can also equally run a business enterprise as like male member of the society.

The patriarchal structure of family imposes a maximum number of restrictions on their women. Due to such type of restriction women are dominated by their male members and their family. In this study, we observed that women are facing problems in their respective family during the entrepreneurial activities. This study found that out of 100 respondents, 22% (22) of the respondents mentioned that they are facing problems from their family side in doing the entrepreneurial activities. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents i.e., 78% (78) respondents said that there is no hindrance from their family side in doing the entrepreneurial activities. In



these 22 respondents, 11% (11) respondents opined about their lack of support from family side. They also opined that their respective families would not like to join their participation in entrepreneurial activities. 7% (07) respondents talked about lack of social acceptance in terms they engaged in entrepreneurial activities. 1% respondents mentioned that due to socialization process they have face problem in their family side in doing the entrepreneurial activities and rest of 3% (03) respondents inform that they have face other problems like traditional attitude, unequal status of women in society etc. in doing the entrepreneurial activities.

In the context of freedom of their profession, among the 55 married respondents, 45% (45) of the respondents opined that they have complete freedom to choose the profession as per their own will. On the other hand, 10% (10) respondents reported that there is no freedom to choose the profession as per their own will. Among the 10 married respondents, 8% (08) respondents opined that their husband taken decision and 2% (02) respondents said that some other member of the family i.e., elder brother and sister etc. taken decision about choosing their profession. Further, in this present study, among the 45 unmarried respondents, 38% (38) of the respondents mentioned that they have complete freedom to choose the profession as per their own will. On the other hand, 7% (07) respondents said that there is no freedom to choose the profession as per their own will. Out of 7 unmarried respondents, 3% (03) respondents opined that their brother taken decision of their profession. Again, 3% (03) respondents said that their father take decision of their profession. And rest of 1% respondents opined that there any other member of the family i.e., maternal uncle, elder sister etc. taken decision of their profession.

During the field study it has been noticed that if any professional women have complete ability as like male members in the society. It is important to know that, most of society's women have not work or any entrepreneurial activities due to their some problems. In this sense the patriarchal society responsible for it. Some of the cases, male members are thinks that they have complete ability to start any business enterprises and women are not. And at the same time it is important to know that are women also think that, they have complete ability as like male members to involve in any business enterprise. This study found that among the 100 respondents, 37% (37) of the respondents opined that they have complete ability as like male members to involve in any business enterprises. On the other hand, 63% (63) respondents reported that they have not complete ability as like male members to involve in any business enterprises. In these 63% respondents, the majority of the respondents i.e., 22% (22) respondents they think that they have no capability. Secondly, 17% (17) respondents think that they are mentally poor. 9% (09) respondents think that due to their hesitation they have not complete ability as like male members to involve in any business enterprise. Again, 9% (09) respondents think that they have no self confidence and lastly, 6% (06) respondents think that they are physically weak, in this reason they have no ability to involve in any business enterprise as like male members.

In this study, it has been observed that respondents have faced some kind of constraints in performing entrepreneurial activities, such as physical, social, psychological etc. Among the 100 respondents, the majority of the respondents i.e., 83% (83) respondents mentioned that they have to face some kind of constraints in performing the entrepreneurial activities. However, 17% (17) respondents opined that they have no any constraints in performing the entrepreneurial activities. In these 83% respondents, 39% (39) respondents opined that they have to face psychological constraints in performing the entrepreneurial activities. 35% (35) respondents reported that they have faced social constraints and rest of i.e., 9% (09) respondents said that they have to face physical constraints in performing the entrepreneurial activities.

In this present study it is important to know about the respondents' feelings towards their identity which lost somewhere when they participated in the women entrepreneurial activities. It is observed that out of 100 respondents, 50% (50) respondents' feels that they had somewhere lost their identity when they participated in the entrepreneurial activities. On the other hand, 50% (50) respondents opined that they have not lost their identity when they participated in the entrepreneurial activities. These 50% respondents, 23% (23) respondents feel that the main cause of de humanization by some concerned people. 16% (16) respondents opined that the



social relation is the main cause of their lost identity. 5% (05) respondents said that due to reason of losing social status somewhere they have lost identity when they participated in the entrepreneurial activities. 3% (03) respondents think that ignoring age is the main cause of their lost identity when they participated in the entrepreneurial activities. And 3% (03) respondents reported that some of the other causes, they have lost own identity somewhere when they participated in the entrepreneurial activities.

(VIII) Concluding remark

The study reveals that, women the capacity to access resources but due to lack of insufficiency of capital and lack of inspiration they are unable to make meaningful choices for proper economic enhancement. But a few of them try to overcome the problems faced by them to start their enterprise for economic upliftment. In this study, significantly it is depicted that some women try to change their mindset and take part in income generating activities and achieved a social status in the society. It is also significantly observed that the women have been empowered through economic independence through which they get the opportunity to have control over their self reliance, self-determination and a way to achieve favourable social status. They have started their activities to be successful entrepreneur. The women have come forward to face any kind challenges in context of role conflict, de motivation and hindrances of social institutions. They involved in different types of entrepreneurial activities and realized the prospect of entrepreneur. Of course, due to the impact of modern education and increasing scientific temperament women in Assam have been considered for entrepreneurial activities up to a mark. Now, the attitude of male members of the society based biased approach gradually decreased to some extent. Still there are some women entrepreneurs are victims of these problems. If the society as well as women themselves becomes aware about this it will be reduced to zero level; which may provide an egalitarian human society.

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