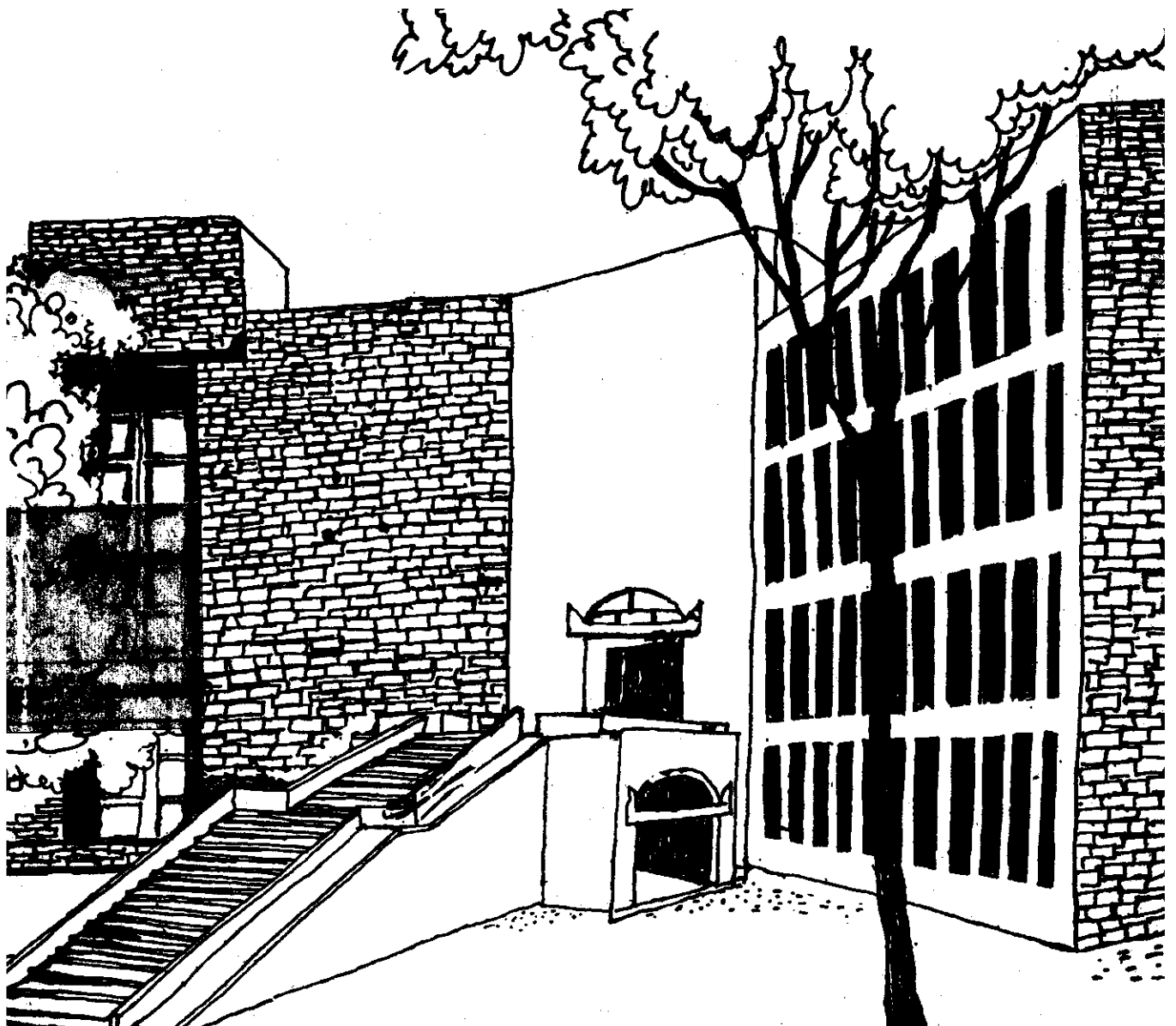




Working Paper



MOTIVES, ABILITIES AND ATTITUDES OF AN
ENTREPRENEUR - SOME PROPOSITIONS

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we have conceptualized the entrepreneurial process as comprising of three stages - the decision to become an entrepreneur, which field to be an entrepreneur in, and the actual creation of an organization.

Each stage makes certain demands on an entrepreneur. This paper examines some of these demands.

The entrepreneur has to cope with the demands of the entrepreneurial process. For this, he requires certain motives, abilities and attitudes. This paper attempts to derive propositions regarding what motives, abilities and attitudes an entrepreneur may require. It also briefly tries to explain how these qualities may develop in an entrepreneur.

INTRODUCTION*

India's development is fraught with several messy problems such as inequity in the distribution of resources, lack of education, poverty, poor health and sanitation, social conflicts and so on. Surmounting these problems requires many creative solutions tailored to the Indian context. In a country such as ours, any effort at developing such solutions must be institutional, not individual.

More often than not, such institutional efforts are initiated and built by one or a few persons whom we call entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are individuals or a group of individuals who create and maintain or aggrandize an organization. Despite the acknowledged importance of these individuals, there is little, if any, systematic research on the kind of people they are, their motives, abilities and attitudes. The few studies that are available on this, fail to provide us with an understanding of why these motives, abilities and attitudes are important to an entrepreneur.

This paper attempts to understand what motives, abilities and attitudes an entrepreneur may require, given the demands made on him by the entrepreneurial process.

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THE ENTREPRENEURIAL PROCESS

The entrepreneurial process may be conceptualized as a three stage process. In the first stage, a person takes the decision to become an entrepreneur. In the second, he would decide on the field in which he wants to start an organization. And in the third stage, the entrepreneur would begin and continue the process of building the organization.

1. Stage I: The decision to be an entrepreneur

The first step towards becoming an entrepreneur is deciding to be one.

Some people acknowledge that becoming an entrepreneur is a lucrative proposition. Some believe it would provide them with the freedom to pursue their ideas. Many people express a desire to become entrepreneurs for one or other reason. Yet few among them finally take the decision to be an entrepreneur.

Why is this so? Apparently there may be several blocks that restrict entrepreneurial start-ups. In this section of the paper, we will examine what these blocks may be and the motives, abilities and attitudes that an entrepreneur may require, to overcome these blocks.

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1.10 One block to entrepreneurship may be the reluctance to forego comforts that the self and family enjoys. In the course of working as an employee in an organization, a person may be getting a salary and perquisites that allow him to live comfortably. If he wants to become an entrepreneur, he may have to forego these comforts. And there is likely to be a reluctance to do so.

What motives, abilities or attitudes in a person are likely to counter this reluctance?

1.11 A strong urge to create something

What drives a person to leave his comforts and become an entrepreneur may be the urge to create something new. Perhaps the person, in the course of his work experience, develops a product or service, which he believes could profitably exploit a strongly felt need in the public. He may find his employer unwilling to experiment with it. But he remains strongly convinced of its feasibility. Under these circumstances, he may think of starting his own organization to implement his ideas.

Jain and Ansari (1988) studied the personal and situational characteristics of 29 entrepreneurs

in the manufacturing sector. They found that the urge to implement new ideas was a major inducer of entrepreneurial activity. There is no research evidence on how this urge develops in an individual. We interviewed two entrepreneurs in the social development sector. The data from these interviews suggests that this urge may have developed through close association with other entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs seemed to have had immense faith in the capabilities of our respondents. At their instance, the respondents developed an urge to create something of their own.

1.12 A strong discomfort with authority figures

Another quality that may enable a person to leave comforts and become an entrepreneur is the strong discomfort he feels with authority figures. This may be indirectly evident in the dissatisfaction he feels in any employee position.

Collins, Moore and Unwalla (1970) studied the life stories of 110 entrepreneurs in the manufacturing sector of Michigan State. Many of their respondents reported dissatisfying work experiences prior to

becoming entrepreneurs. A TAT analysis of 40 entrepreneurs indicated that this dissatisfaction arose from a discomfort with authority figures. They were unwilling to submit to authority and unable to accept it. Jain and Ansari (1988) also report that 10 of the 29 entrepreneurs they studied, had dissatisfying job experiences prior to becoming entrepreneurs. Perhaps this may have arisen out of a discomfort with authority figures. Their data, however, provides no evidence in this regard.

Collins and his colleagues trace this discomfort with authority to the childhood experiences of the entrepreneurs. They found that many of their respondents did not have stable and reliable parental (especially father) figures during childhood. To these entrepreneurs, the father was either a failure or a remote figure who rejected them. This dissatisfying experience with an authority figure became a generalized discomfort with all authority figures.

Hornaday and Bunker (1970) provide corroborative evidence in their study of 20 entrepreneurs from both manufacturing and service sectors. Structured

interviews indicated that 18 of the respondents reacted strongly against their father who, they felt, had provided inadequate financial or emotional support. This may have resulted in a discomfort with authority figures, which motivated the entrepreneurs to leave their jobs and start their own organization.

Our interviews of two entrepreneurs also seem to indicate that discomfort with authority figures may have been one of the factors which made them entrepreneurs. Both the entrepreneurs left home following differences with their fathers. We may infer that this reflects a discomfort with authority figures.

1.13 The need for status or recognition

The need for status or recognition within one's community, where the community has a trend of entrepreneurship, may also induce a person to leave comforts and become an entrepreneur.

Sociological studies have provided some evidence of this (Owens and Nandy, 1977; Papenek, 1973). Owens and Nandy studied the entrepreneurs of the Mahisya community. What intrigued them was that

the members of this community, within a few years, had dominated the Howrah light engineering industry as entrepreneurs. Examination of the traditions of the Mahisya community revealed that entrepreneurs were given a high status while non-entrepreneurs were given a relatively low status in the community. Youth were exposed to visible symbols indicative of an entrepreneur's success - like high land ownership, big houses - and told to emulate them. Thus, the youth were strongly motivated to become entrepreneurs.

This was also true of the Memons of Pakistan. Papanek (1973) found that business entrepreneurs in this community earned higher status than non-entrepreneurs. This acted as a motivator for youth to become entrepreneurs.

The need for status may arise out of the status deprivation that the entrepreneur's family and/or community faced in the past. The Mahisyas whom Owens and Nandy studied, shared a belief that they had originally been Kshatriyas. Later the Brahmins eroded their status and reduced them to being agricultural labourers. The members shared a strong need to reestablish the community's former (high) status.

Becoming entrepreneurs enabled them to do so. First they sought economic dominance in the village through entrepreneurship. Each Mahisya entrepreneur invested his wealth in land and buildings - providing visible indicators of their economic status. Through this, they sought improved social status. They sought access to clubs and associations which had earlier been the exclusive preserve of upper castes. In this way, entrepreneurs set about reestablishing the community's status within the village. Through this process each of them obtained high status within the community.

1.14 Adaptability

Leaving the material comforts to become an entrepreneur requires a willingness to face material and physical deprivation, if need be.

Entrepreneurs are thus likely to be adaptive to fluctuating fortunes. They may be willing to give up a life of comfort, even luxury, for one of relative physical and material discomfort, if only for a short while. They may do their best to reduce the probability and extent of such discomfort. But nonetheless, they would remain prepared to face it.

There does not seem to be any literature on whether entrepreneurs are adaptive. Yet, the interviews of two entrepreneurs suggest that adaptability is important. One of them had faced times when he obtained food, shelter and clothing from his friends. He had also faced times when such dependence was not necessary.

Adaptability seems to develop following experiences of fluctuating fortunes during early life. The entrepreneurs we interviewed had experienced both poverty and comfort during their childhood and youth. They had learnt to face both with equanimity. Exposure to elders such as grandfather or mother, who faced these times with equanimity, may have contributed to the development of adaptability. Collins, Moore and Unwalla (1970) provide excerpts of interviews with 110 entrepreneurs, some of which indicated that the families experienced shifting fortunes.

- 1.2 So far we have discussed one possible block to becoming entrepreneurs - the reluctance to leave comforts, even temporarily, for a life of material and physical discomfort.

There may be other blocks. For instance, some persons may be plagued by doubts about their

capabilities. They may have convinced themselves that becoming an entrepreneur is a tough job, perhaps beyond them. Others may fear failure - what would people say if they failed? What would happen to their carefully built reputation?

What motives, abilities or attitudes does a person need to counter these doubts or fears?

1.21 Self-confidence

A person who becomes an entrepreneur is likely to be self-confident i.e. he may have an immense faith in his ability to solve problems. He may believe that he is bigger than his problems. He may believe that through his efforts, he can change his environment. So he believes, he can be a successful entrepreneur.

A number of studies have reported that entrepreneurs are confident people (deBono, 1985; Hagen, 1962; Jain and Ansari, 1988; Rao and Mehta, 1978; Stevenson and Gumpert, 1985).

Self-confidence appears to develop following childhood and adult experiences which enhance a person's self-worth. To quote Hagen (1962), a

person "...must be valued highly - loved, nurtured dependably - by his parent of the opposite sex. Unless the attitude of the parent of the same sex is too adverse, this sex - satisfying variation alone may be sufficient to convince him that he is important enough to be able to achieve" (p.140).

Other childhood experiences of dealing with the environment capably can also possibly develop a confidence in one's abilities. Collins and his colleagues (1970) report that many of their respondents were forced, because of poverty, to deal with their environment. Some had to negotiate for a place for the family to stay. Some had to take up jobs to earn enough to survive. These experiences were successful ones. They may have developed the feeling that one could solve one's problems. This may be reflective of the feeling of self-confidence.

Summary: So far we have discussed the motives, abilities and attitudes which enable a person to leave a job and become an entrepreneur. Almost simultaneously, this person has to decide on which field to make an entry into. The choice of the specific field to enter may be dictated

by a familiarity with some key aspects of the operating environment of the field or by his tastes or inclinations. We are, however, concerned with the motives, abilities and attitudes which enable a person to choose a field. The next section of this paper elaborates on this.

2. Stage II: which field should one make an entry into?

Our concern, expressed at the beginning of the paper is with developing organizations to help solve our country's messy problems. Though these organizations do have to be financially viable, many (e.g. voluntary organizations) are not meant to be money-making. The entrepreneur cannot expect to generate material gains for himself through these organizations. This is a feature in contrast to starting an organization in the business field.

Many people would be reluctant to enter the social development field for this reason.

Despite that, persons who do enter this field as entrepreneurs are likely to need a strong altruistic motive or an urge to provide help to the needy. Coupled with this, they are possibly not strongly motivated toward material acquisition.

This urge to be helpful is likely to come about in a person if he has come in close contact with powerful role models of that kind.

Our data from interviews with two entrepreneurs in social development indicate this possibility. One of the entrepreneurs said he was strongly influenced by Gandhi's service ideals. This may have influenced him to work towards rehabilitating refugees from Pakistan. The other entrepreneur seems to have been strongly influenced by Vinoba Bhave. He joined the Bhoodan movement and subsequently worked towards giving land to the landless.

Summary: In this section we have discussed the importance of the altruistic motive for persons choosing to enter the social development field. Those who have a stronger acquisitive motive may be drawn to the business field. Once the person decides on which field to enter he starts creating his organization.

3. Stage III: Creating an organization

The process of creating an organization can be considered to have two important features.

1. The entrepreneur's exposure to enormous risks.
2. A scarcity of resources under which he has to operate.

In this section of the paper, we will examine these features and the demands they make on an entrepreneur, in some detail. Then we will derive the motives, abilities and attitudes that an entrepreneur would require to meet these demands. We will also briefly look at how these motives, abilities or attitudes may have come about.

3.1 Exposure to risks

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While creating an organization, an entrepreneur makes a number of assumptions. For instance, he assumes a certain demand for the product or service. He assumes that government regulations in respect of his product or service will remain the same. He assumes that resources will be easily available. And so on.

The entrepreneur is open to the chance that these assumptions will be proved wrong. For instance, he may have overestimated the demand for his product or service. This may lead to a situation where costs outstrip returns. He may then get wiped out. This illustrates that the entrepreneur is exposed to a lot of risk.

If the entrepreneur is to survive and succeed, he needs to minimize these risks. And to minimize

these risks, he needs to keep himself informed about his operating environment.

Certain motives, abilities or attitudes could facilitate the process of keeping informed. What could these be?

3.11 The ability to develop and utilize a network of contacts:

An entrepreneur needs to develop several contacts in stakeholder organizations such as financial institutions, the government and so on. This would provide him with information on the policies of these organizations and the likely changes in these. This may also enable him to influence the policies such that they are advantageous to him. Alternately, it gives him time to respond to these changes.

Therefore an entrepreneur needs the ability to develop and utilize a wide network of contacts. For this, they may need the ability to relate with others effectively. Hornaday and Bunker (1970) interviewed 20 entrepreneurs from the manufacturing and service sectors. They found that entrepreneurs rated themselves high on the ability to relate

effectively with others. It is likely that this enabled them to develop contacts. Our interviews indicated that the respondents had a wide network of contacts. Evidently, they had the ability to relate effectively with others.

There is no research evidence on how this ability develops. Our interviews also do not provide a clue.

3.12 A willingness to do any job

A willingness to do any job means that the entrepreneur is willing to make a sales call, repair a machine, take delivery of raw materials, clean the premises, and so on. Doing these things himself can provide him with useful information about the steps necessary in the performance of tasks within the organization. It can also provide him with information on the stakeholder organizations or the clients.

For instance, if the entrepreneur works on the shop-floor, he gets an idea of the activities involved, the time taken by the activities, the sequence necessary, and so on. This information could be a useful means of controlling his employees in the future.

If the entrepreneur makes the sales calls himself, for instance, he is likely to learn about what type of people buy his products and what type of people don't. He will learn how they make their decisions, what their priorities are, and so on. If he follows up on sales, he may get information on the response to the product, what he can do to make it more useful or attractive, and so on.

We see from these examples that willingness to do any job keeps the entrepreneur informed and thereby minimises his risks.

Some studies (e.g. Owens and Nandy, 1977) have found that entrepreneurs from some communities are willing to do even manual labour. Owens and Nandy report that entrepreneurs from the Mahisya community initially work at the machines themselves. It is likely that they obtain information on the machine - its design and maintenance requirements, the kinds of activities and the amount of time required to process an order. This quality is possibly what is referred to as hands-on functioning.

A likely source of this willingness to do any job may be the background of the entrepreneur's community.

For instance, Owens and Nandy report that the Mahisyas were traditionally agricultural labourers who respected manual labour. This early respect for labour explains their willingness to do any job as entrepreneurs. It partly explains their ability to survive and succeed as entrepreneurs.

Another source could be the exposure to powerful role models such as Gandhi, who respected any job.

3.13 Alertness

Alertness is a state of readiness, which is characterized by an openness of all senses to the environment. Alertness enables an entrepreneur to absorb a lot of information, while meeting a client or a supplier or in any other situation. It also enables an entrepreneur to be sensitive to anomalies in the information so obtained and to seek clarifications. This reduces the possibility of his being misinformed.

There does not seem to be literature to support this proposition. It is also not clear how this ability develops. However, our interviews indicate that exposure to dangerous situations or situations

that threaten the survival of a person can develop this alertness.

For instance, one of our respondents said that the experience of participating in the Underground movement in various capacities, demanded a total alertness of his faculties. It was a great responsibility to protect the lives of the people who were underground. He did not want that through his failure, these people get caught by the Britishers and lose their lives. This demanded alertness of all his faculties - the price of stupidity was high.

3.2 Scarcity of resources

When an entrepreneur creates an organization, he usually starts with limited resources. He has limited space, limited money and few, if any, people working for him.

The entrepreneur must therefore learn to manage with scarce resources. He must also be able to generate additional resources. Managing with scarce resources implies using existing resources productively. Waste or inefficiency in resource utilization must be minimized. Each resource must be used to the maximum possible extent.

What are the motives, abilities and attitudes that may help in these endeavours?

3.21 Willingness and ability to work hard

The entrepreneur must be willing and able to work hard. He may need to be willing to spend whole days and nights in creating the organization.

This is essential because the entrepreneur often has no one in his employment at this stage. All the activities then have to be initiated and completed by him. He has to personally attend to problems or issues arising within the organization. He also has to personally attend to the demands of his external environment. Unless he works hard, he would not be able to attend to all these demands.

Many studies have indicated that entrepreneurs are hardworking (Altaf, 1983; Barmash, 1969; deBono, 1985; Jain and Ansari, 1988; Smith, 1967). Our interviews also provide evidence that entrepreneurs work hard during the creation of the organization.

This ability to work hard has been traced to certain practices at home. Altaf, for instance, found that among the Pakistani entrepreneurs he

studied, leisure had been reduced or completely eliminated during their childhood. As children, they had to spend time learning to read and then by-heart the Holy Quran. The faster they learnt it, the more the status given to the family. Children thereby learnt to work hard and not waste time.

3.22 Willingness to do any kind of job

An entrepreneur needs to be willing to do any kind of job, be it the repairing of machines, buying of materials, meeting suppliers or creditors or clearing the work space. This is again because initially, he has few, if any, employees.

Unless he attends to all these activities, the organization may take longer to become operational. Thus costs may exceed the budget. This would mean that resources have been used inefficiently. Therefore, at least before the organization starts generating resources through its operations, the entrepreneur must be willing to do any kind of job. If all resources are used up before the organization becomes operational, the entrepreneur may have to give some convincing explanations, before resource-providers release more resources.

3.23 Resourcefulness

An entrepreneur also would require to be resourceful. That is, he must be able to use existing resources in novel ways, for new purposes. He must be able to convert problems into opportunities. This may enable him to save the cost of investing in new items and thereby enable him to manage with scarce resources.

Jain and Ansari's (1988) study of 29 successful entrepreneurs in the manufacturing sector, provides some interesting examples. For instance, when Mr. K.M.Mappillai, founder of MRF, started manufacturing balloons initially, he faced a problem. It was difficult to remove the sand particles that stuck to the balloons, as they dried in the sun. Instead of throwing away the balloons, he started selling them as sand-rattle balloons. This is an illustration of how resourcefulness can save costs and enable the entrepreneur to manage with scarce resources.

Resourcefulness or creativity is likely to develop in environments that promote self-discovery, permit exploration of the environment, provide early access to numerous role models, provide access to cultural

stimuli in the chosen field, and reward creative behaviour (Khandwala, 1984; Walberg et.al., 1979).

3.24 The ability to develop and utilize a wide network of contacts

An entrepreneur needs to develop and utilize a network of contacts. This would be beneficial in several ways, some of which we explored earlier. First, these contacts would be a source of material or human resources. Second, they could enable access to resource-providers. For instance, they could provide advice on whom to approach for resources at reasonable terms, when and how to approach them and so on. They could also put in a word in the entrepreneur's favour, to the resource-providers.

Some studies provide evidence for this. Owens and Nandy (1977) studied aspects of the Mahisya community that enabled several members to become entrepreneurs in the Howrah light engineering industry. They found that one of the enabling factors was a network of contacts between Mahisya entrepreneurs. This network often provided material assistance to an entrepreneur during the days of starting an organization and later. Similarly merchants in Pallavaram

got access to credit with no interest obligations through their relatives who were already established in the business (Mines, 1973). Our interviews indicate that entrepreneurs in social development also have a wide network of contacts. For one of them, these contacts were a useful source of material resources and space to set up his organization.

3.25 An ability to communicate persuasively

The entrepreneur must be able to communicate persuasively with potential resource providers, i.e., he must be able to convince them that his needs are genuine.

For instance, suppose an entrepreneur requires funds for purchase of some equipment which is more expensive than alternate equipment available for the purpose. To persuade the resource - providers such as financial institutions, that the equipment is necessary, the entrepreneur must convey its benefits in a language they understand. He must also communicate the benefits that he thinks the resource-provider will be interested in. Only then is it likely that he will get the resources.

There appears to be no research evidence on how people develop into persuasive communicators.

However, early participation in debates or dramatics may have helped. The entrepreneurs we interviewed appear to be clear and persuasive communicators. One of them had actively participated in several debates, as a member of Changers Club - an informal association of socialistic youth. He believed that these debates sharpened his analytical skills. Also, an extensive reading of English classics provided him with a greater command over the language. It is likely that both these factors enabled him to become a persuasive communicator. The other entrepreneur wrote and developed dramas to communicate certain messages to slum-dwellers. This experience of trying to educate slum-dwellers through dramas both reflected and developed his communication abilities.

3.26 Persistence

The third stage of the entrepreneurial process is likely to be long drawn out. It may take several years before the entrepreneur's organization takes root. During this period, the entrepreneur is likely to face a number of obstacles. He may have to go through innumerable anxieties and frustrations.

For instance, the government may delay sanction of a license, the financial institutions may turn down his request for funds, and so on.

Despite all this, the entrepreneur must keep going. Therefore he is likely to be persistent.

Barmash's (1969) study of self-made men provides evidence of this quality in the entrepreneurs. More recently, Jain and Ansari (1983) provide several examples of persistence among the entrepreneurs they studied.

It appears that this persistence is related to a deep conviction in the product, and in the entrepreneur's own capabilities.

Summary: In this section, we have looked at some of the motives, abilities and attitudes that enable an entrepreneur to create an organization. We have not touched upon the qualities required for successful management of the organization. We will endeavour to discuss it in a subsequent paper.

CONCLUSION

1. This paper has conceptualized the entrepreneurial process as comprising of three stages - the decision to

be an entrepreneur, the decision on which field to enter and the actual creation of the organization. Each stage makes certain demands on an entrepreneur. To cope with these demands, the entrepreneur requires certain motives, abilities and attitudes. This paper has attempted to derive propositions on what some of the motives, abilities and attitudes are likely to be.

Any one of these motives, abilities or attitudes is not enough to become a successful entrepreneur. An entrepreneur has to go through all the three stages of the entrepreneurial process. Therefore he has to cope with the demands of all the three stages. Therefore, he would require a combination of the qualities discussed to be successful.

The more of these qualities he has in combination, the more likely he is to succeed in the entrepreneurial attempt.

2. It may be argued that many of the qualities discussed are common to both effective managers and entrepreneurs. This is possibly true. However, what may distinguish an entrepreneur from a manager are some of the entry stage qualities. It is likely that the entrepreneur will have a stronger urge to create something new and a stronger

discomfort with authority figures than would a manager. This hypothesis requires to be tested.

3. This paper has briefly attempted to understand how these abilities, motives and attitudes develop. The evidence indicates that some of the qualities are developed through experience.

Therefore it seems to be reasonable to talk of developing these entrepreneurial qualities through training programmes.

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