
EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP: NAVIGATING THROUGH INDIA'S MSME LANDSCAPE

***P. Durga Rani**

Assistant Professor, Badruka College of Commerce and Arts, Kachiguda, Hyderabad.

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***Corresponding Author: P. Durga Rani**

Assistant Professor, Badruka College of Commerce and Arts, Kachiguda, Hyderabad.

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ABSTRACT

Women are the most integral, important and influential gender of the society. As our former Prime Minister and a great educationalist Dr.SarvepallyRadha Krishnan once said that “ If a man is educated only one person is educated but if a woman is educated, it is equal to educating a whole university.” This single sentence has in it all the underlying facts about the importance of women to be educated. At the same time it also reveals that women play an important role in influencing and also creating an impact on the people in the family and society at large. The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, is a ministry in the Government of India, which is an apex executive body for the formulation and administration of rules, regulations and laws relating to micro, small and medium enterprises in India. Most of the women from the rural and urban area avail Creches services and manufacture handicrafts by spinning and weaving etc. This helps them to provide employment to the women staying nearby which in turn increases the economy of the people and also GDP of the country. India has 63 million micro, small and medium enterprises of which women employing 22 to 27 own 20% million people. India is also ranked 57th among 65 countries in the Master card index of women entrepreneurs¹² (MIWE, 2021)

This article highlights that women have proved themselves in various fields and also started many small scale units, but at the same time society needs to understand that they are the most important and influential part of family and society. Hence, they need to make themselves perfect and updated according to the changing times for a prosperous and better society.

And as the acronym holds true, to be **Wonderfully Organised** and to **Maintain Everything** is the Natural quality of **WOMEN**.

KEYWORDS: Women entrepreneurs, MSME, Economy, Growth, Government Schemes.

INTRODUCTION

Women are the most important and integral part of any society. It is strongly believed specially in our Indian system that “**YatraNaariPoojyantetatraramantiDevaaH**” which means that “where women are worshiped, Gods dwell in that region”. Most of the times we come across many heinous crimes on women and also they are victimised on many aspects. But, the underlying fact remains that they are the most powerful, multitalented and multitasking people of the society. A woman is always the reason to bring change in the family and also in the society. The origin or the beginning of the creation itself starts with women and even nature and mother earth are considered to be in the form of women wherein they are worshipped by all the people of the society.

Women Entrepreneurs – need of the present economic growth of our country.

Participation of women in the economy is essential not just for a sustainable economic development but also for gender equality in India. Some surveys suggests that businesses with at least one female founder have better inclusive work culture and so if we employ three times more women than men there is a possibility to generate 10% more cumulative revenue. Such surveys and research made the Government to take necessary measures to enhance the participation of women in various organisations.

To encourage women to start their own business organisations, Government of India has started many schemes which are being updated from time to time according to the requirement of the changing socio, political and economic situations in the world.

OBJECTIVES

- To outline the range of support available to women entrepreneurs through central and state schemes.
- To understand the needs of women entrepreneurship ecosystem which receive maximum, minimum, adequate, or no support from the government
- How these schemes target women entrepreneurs
- Future directions to bridge the gaps in scheme-based support to women entrepreneurs

Research Methodology

The data collected for the study of this paper is secondary data. The data is ten from various research papers, articles, journals and publications.

Origin of MSME

On the cusp of International Women's Day in 2018, the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) unveiled UdyamSakhi, a dynamic network dedicated to fostering social entrepreneurship. This initiative aims to cultivate innovative business models centered on affordable products and services, addressing prevailing social disparities. Designed to serve approximately 8 million Indian women who are either embarking on or managing their own ventures, UdyamSakhi offers a comprehensive array of resources. From educational tools for entrepreneurship to incubation facilities, from specialized training programs on fundraising to mentorship opportunities and personalized investor engagements, the platform caters to diverse needs. Moreover, it extends support through market research facilities and technical guidance.

In essence, UdyamSakhi underscores the Indian government's steadfast commitment to redefining women's roles beyond domestic confines. Today's women exhibit remarkable courage, embrace risk, pursue their visions with unwavering determination, and refuse to settle for anything less.

The women being benefitted by them, income generated by MSME run by women, the various obstacles faced by them, possible solutions and suggestions for the growth of women entrepreneurs is the subject matter of our presentation.

MSME: Empowering Homemakers to Entrepreneurs

Recognizing women as the backbone of society, the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) has been instrumental in empowering women entrepreneurs through various schemes, enabling them to unleash their potential and carve out their own identities. Since its inception, the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) Scheme has facilitated the establishment of 1.38 lakh projects by women entrepreneurs, constituting approximately 30% of the total projects under PMEGP. Women entrepreneurs under this scheme are accorded Special Category status, entitling them to 25% and 35% subsidies for projects set up in urban and rural areas respectively. Moreover, women beneficiaries contribute only 5% of the project cost, compared to the general category's 10%. Additionally, through the Khadi Programme of KVIC, women entrepreneurs have established

30,437 projects during 2016-17 and 2017-18, receiving margin money disbursements totaling 85,305 lakh Rupees. Beyond MSME, the Government of India has implemented a range of initiatives aimed at women's empowerment and safety. Programs such as BetiBachao, BetiPadhao, Stand Up India, Mission Indradhanush, Mudra Yojana Scheme, TREAD (Trade Related Entrepreneurship Assistance and Development) Scheme, MahilaUdyamNidhi Scheme, Annapurna Scheme, Stree Shakti Package for Women Entrepreneurs, BhartiyaMahila Business Bank Loan, Dena Shakti Scheme, Udyogini Scheme, and Cent Kalyani

Scheme have significantly contributed to the welfare of women across India. These initiatives collectively serve to uplift and empower women, facilitating their active participation in various sectors of the economy and fostering their socio-economic progress.

MSME (Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises)

In India there are 63 million micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), out of which around 20% of the organizations are owned by women and they are in turn giving employment to around 22 to 27 million people. MasterCard Index of Women Entrepreneurs¹² (MIWE, 2021). Estimates have ranked India as 57th country among 65 countries. Some of the estimations suggest that by accelerating women's entrepreneurship, India has the efficiency to create more than 30 million women-owned enterprises, thereby potentially creating 150 to 170 million jobs.

According to the survey conducted by NSS, India had 63.38 million MSMEs out of which 60.84 million establishments are proprietary concerns. The establishments owned by women constitute only 20.37% among them. The women – owned MSMEs are different in different states.

**MSME establishments under women-owned enterprises
survey conducted by NSS**

Sl. No	Name of the state	Ownership of MSME by women(Percentage)
1	West Bengal	23.42%
2	Tamil Nadu	10.37%
3	Telangana	7.85%
4	Karnataka	7.56%
5	Andhra Pradesh	6.76%
6	Kerala	4.00%
7	Sikkim	0.04%

According to the above information given by the survey of NSS it is evident that the highest share of women led MSME is of West Bengal which is about 23.42% and the lowest percentage of MSMEs is of Sikkim which is about 0.04%. The findings of the survey also indicate that southern states of our country have relatively more favourable ecosystem for women entrepreneurs. These five-state count in terms of the number of establishments under women-owned enterprises in south India where, Tamil Nadu leads with 10.37%, followed by the states of Telangana with 7.85%, Karnataka with 7.56%, Andhra Pradesh with 6.76%, and Kerala with 4% of women MSMEs.

Women MSME in Urban and Rural areas

According to the annual report of Ministry of MSME, the rural areas have an increase in the number of women entrepreneurs in comparison to the women entrepreneurs in urban areas. When we calculate the same in percentages, we have about 22.24% of women in rural regions and 18.42% of women entrepreneurs exist in urban areas.

Gender inequality in MSMEs

There is a huge gender gap in the employment being provided by MSME. On an average only 24% of women employees are there in MSMEs as against 76% of men employees. According to the statistical data, MSME sector has provided employment opportunity to a total of 110.98 million employees, out of which, 84.46 million i.e., (76%) were men employees and 26.49 million i.e., (24%) were women employees. The female employees in MSMEs in rural areas is more, which is about 13.75 million female employees, whereas in urban areas the count is 12.74 million female employees, which is slightly lesser when compared to rural areas.

Segregation of MSME with regard to investment, turn over and employment

Based on investment in plant and machinery or equipment and annual turnover Ministry of MSMEs has segregated the enterprises into Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. The enterprises which have investment less than INR 10 million and annual turn-over up to INR 50 million are called as Micro enterprises. The enterprise which has investment less than INR 100 and annual turn-over up to INR 500 million are categorized as small enterprises and the enterprises which have investment INR 200 million and annual turn-over up to INR 1000 million. (As per the annual report of 2021-22)

Most of the enterprises owned by women in India are single person micro-enterprises. 30% of India's GDP is generated from the MSME sector, employing 111million people. MSME

led by women create employment for about 22 to 27 million people.

There are about 17% of enterprises owned by women have employees, 95% of the enterprises are operating with less than six employees. The size of an enterprise is inversely proportionate to the enterprises led by women.

The above data reveals that most of the women in India are permitted to micro-enterprises only. Hence, there is an alarming requirement to guide and motivate women so that they become efficient enough to start small and medium enterprises.

Obstacles faced by women entrepreneurs

Many of the barriers to women's empowerment and equality are deeply rooted in cultural norms.

It's ironic that a country like India, which recently celebrated becoming the first Asian nation to successfully launch a Mars mission on its first attempt, still ranks 108th out of 146 countries in the World Economic Forum (WEF) gender gap index, a position unchanged from 2017. Despite boasting one of the largest artificial intelligence (AI) workforces globally, India also grapples with one of the widest AI gender gaps, with only 22% of AI roles occupied by women—a concerning statistic.

- Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) reported that women in India and the Republic of Korea appeared to face the most difficulty in accessing business financing compared to their male peers.
- Women-owned MSMEs face challenges in accessing credit due to a lack of collateral and tangible assets, limited avenues to prove creditworthiness and perception biases against lending to female entrepreneurs or women-led enterprises.
- Women-owned businesses are home-run, micro and informal in nature, so they have limited exposure to market spaces and marketing skills.
- Women-owned businesses are needed to deal with mobility and logistics challenges and safety and security issues to manage the business and achieve the required goals of the enterprise.
- Women-owned businesses also lag in terms of digital and technical skills due to low literacy rates and lack of access to mobile and the Internet.

FINDINGS

1. Facilitating convenient and easy last-mile access to all entrepreneurship support schemes is crucial for governments.
2. Scheme access options should be made available to beneficiaries both physically and digitally, together with the opportunity for aided support.
3. Research uncovered significant information asymmetry within the scheme, with inadequate details on application procedures, application locations, and contact points for assistance.
4. Access points for providing last-mile assistance and enrollment in entrepreneurship support schemes are conspicuously absent.
5. Establishing a robust village-level frontline force is essential to ensure physical and assisted access to entrepreneurship support schemes at the grassroots level.
6. The frontline force could consist of a combination of business correspondents, post office personnel, and Common Service Centers (CSCs) or Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs). Currently, such access is limited to certain schemes.
7. It is imperative to offer beneficiaries the option of accessing schemes through both digital and physical means, with support available throughout the entire process.
8. Women, in particular, could benefit from having female frontline functionaries who can facilitate their access to government schemes, as evidenced by the positive impact of female CSC and BC agents.
10. Reports suggest that Common Service Centers (CSCs) have played a crucial role in enabling the government to deliver digital literacy to 45 million rural individuals in India through the Prime Minister Grameen Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA). CSCs have served as vital last-mile access points for implementing the scheme, facilitating enrollments and registrations under various government initiatives for citizens. For instance, more than 50% of the 42 cases examined in the report "Decoding Government Support to Women Entrepreneurs in India" highlight the instrumental role of CSCs in extending government support to women entrepreneurs.

SUGGESTIONS

Women need to be made well aware of the different programs and possibilities that are available to them for personal growth. Schemes that offer gender-disaggregated data are conspicuously lacking, which makes it difficult to evaluate their effectiveness and acceptance. It is imperative that schemes are designed to incorporate gender-disaggregated

data analytics into their outcomes, enabling the identification of trends and potential reasons for underperformance in specific regions. By doing so, customized solutions can be developed to address the needs of these areas effectively. Collecting, reporting, disseminating, and utilizing gender-disaggregated data on schemes is essential for understanding their impact on enterprises owned by men versus those owned by women. The central government should integrate the quality of support offered to women entrepreneurs and women-owned enterprises as a criterion in entrepreneurship rankings, such as the India Innovation Index, Start-up ranking, and ease of doing business index. This inclusion will not only highlight the importance of gender equality in entrepreneurship but also incentivize the creation of more supportive environments for women entrepreneurs.

CONCLUSION

We hereby conclude that given an opportunity women can excel in various fields. For Indian women, achieving empowerment can often feel like an uphill battle as they navigate the delicate balance between societal customs and personal aspirations. While the Indian government is making strides towards women's upliftment, there is also a pressing need for increased awareness among women regarding their rights and the various government schemes and benefits designed to facilitate their overall empowerment. Even illiterate and semi-literate women entrepreneurs from both rural and urban areas have been able to access certain government schemes to kick-start or sustain their businesses.

The inspiring story of two women entrepreneurs, Priyashri Mani and NishitaVasanth, who established their enterprise in the Pali hills of the Kodaikanal district in Tamil Nadu, exemplifies the gradual but significant mind-set shift among stakeholders in the MSME and start-up ecosystem. By leveraging loans provided under Indian government schemes, they overcame logistical challenges and established 'Hoopoe,' a honey harvesting start-up. Their journey not only underscores the burgeoning landscape of women entrepreneurship in India but also highlights women's versatility in assuming roles ranging from rainmakers to change makers and social capitalists.

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