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Evolution of Women Entrepreneurship in
India

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Abstract

Women have been an integral part of our society but because of many societal norms, they stand behind male members of the family, not because they are incompetent but because of the male chauvinism that has persisted across different eras. Whenever we read about the role of women, they are always represented as the sophisticated, dependent, and professionally incapable human being, which stands to be false. Sexism is one of the major outcomes being nurtured under the patriarchal society. This paper highlights the evolution of women with patriarchy as the key focus across different centuries and all that needs to be implemented and changes that have to be made to eradicate it from the root, for creating a gender-neutral professional environment for everyone.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, Development, Women, Indian society*

1.0 Introduction

This world was constructed in such a way that every single living and non-living thing present on this planet maintains an equilibrium. Human beings have an integral role in it too, considering the history and the present scenario. From eras, we have been witnessing changes that have taken place in terms of roles and statuses among human beings. Women have played a central role in terms of maintaining the stability & development of society as a whole. However, despite having such a fundamental role, the need to maintain gender equality and a sustainable environment is always emphasized upon. The sole reason being the inequality and dominance of a particular gender throughout different domains like workforce, household, agriculture, education, etc. There has been an enormous evolution in the status of women, but still, women have to fight for basic human rights and needs.

The seed of patriarchy has been sown centuries back which has now turned into a tree with roots & branches so widespread that it is overshadowing the other budding trees of the society. Women have been majorly overlooked when it comes to professional life, patriarchy has played a crucial role in creating a prejudice that women aren't good professionals and can only do household chores.

For centuries, women haven't been provided with proper education from the initial stage, and empowerment of women has just been limited to mere participation in a formal system, which later results in financial dependence on male members of the family. Financial dependence gives male members of the family the upper hand to dominate the female counterpart and make all the decisions for them. The dominance of male member can be felt when he plays the role of a father by neglecting the education of his daughter even though she wants to study, husband by controlling all the expenses, decisions, social life as well as sexual life, and boss by not evaluating a female subordinate according to her capabilities and work. Women usually have less accessibility to facilities like education, medical care, employment, entrepreneurship, training. The ability to control her sexual life is also taken away which results in losing control over her choice to become a mother and making decisions about her children's life.

2.0 Women Entrepreneurship in India

Women's development has been considered the key to the overall sustainable development of a nation. A female who plays an intriguing role by frequently interacting and actively adjusting herself with socio-economic, financial and support spheres in society is called a woman entrepreneur (Pirakatheeswari, 2015, p. 129). Women Entrepreneur is an individual who acknowledges moving apart to meet her necessities and becomes monetarily autonomous. A powerful urge to accomplish something positive is an inbuilt nature of entrepreneurial women, who are equipped for contributing qualities in both family and public activity. "Women entrepreneur alludes similarly to somebody who has begun a one-woman business, to somebody who is ahead in a privately-run company or association or, to somebody who is an investor in a public organization which she runs". Women have the potential and the assurance to set up, maintain and regulate their undertakings in an orderly way.

The Government of India has defined a women entrepreneur enterprise as, "*An enterprise owned and controlled by women having a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and giving at least 51% of the employment generated in the enterprise to women*"

Women tend to go into businesses or start their ventures as soon as they complete their education. According to a review led by Women and Entrepreneurship in India, 58% of women entrepreneurs are in the age group of 25-30. Ordinarily, most women based organizations are miniature undertakings, proficient administrations, clothes and extras, and food and drinks. As indicated by different assessments, women represent 25-35% of workers at new companies and the number is expanding. As per financial speculators and other capital financial specialists, a developing number of women, encouraged by prominent startup examples of overcoming adversity both in India and the globe, are increasing. (Hariharan & Murugan, 2014, p. 96).

A woman entrepreneur is one who incubates new ideas, starts her enterprise with these ideas, and provides added value to a society based on their independent initiative. Women in India are faced with many problems to get ahead in their life in business. Women entrepreneurs face many problems in their efforts to develop their enterprise (Vijayakumar & Jayachitra, 2013, p. 14). There are umpteen problems faced by women at various stages beginning from their initial commencement of enterprise, in running their enterprise. Despite many problems, a distinguishing feature of a woman entrepreneur is the willingness to work hard. She has to follow the principle, "Hard-work is the key to success." She works for challenge, accomplishment and service to others.

3.0 The Changing Role of Women Entrepreneurs Through The Decades

Indians have always been entrepreneurs, no matter which sphere they work. Since ages, we have seen businesses being passed on from fathers to their sons and businesses going from rags to riches. The male dominance in society has never let the females realise their true potentials. The existence of patriarchy and other societal norms barred them from entering into the family business or to do something of their own. The women were accountable for doing daily house chores, looking after the children and elderly people in the family etc. It is said that the family is a chariot with wheels which are driven by both the male and female members of the family. If one of the wheels is lagging, the chariot i.e. the family will not be able to grow and develop (Chavan & Murkute, 2016, p. 610). In the same way, when we speak about a nation, women entrepreneurship plays a dominant role in economic development and makes significant contributions to the economic growth of the country. The development of the country would be

very slow if women entrepreneurship is ignored and stopped to join the mainstream of productive activities. It was not until the 1960s that women brought in the transformation in their status and evolution of the female entrepreneurs in the Indian society.

- **The 1960s**

Indian society has always been dominated by men. The women have never had a say in the decisions relating to family matters or even relating to their own lives. The state of the Indian economy was even worse compared to the present scenario. The practise of female foeticide and malnutrition in girl children was quite prevalent. The United Nation Children's Fund put forth a figure of around five million girls missing in the country due to the above practices. The violence on the grounds of dowry was quite prominent which led to the implementation of Dowry prohibition Act to decrease this practice as well as crimes reported in the society. It was not quite late for women to realise their true potential. This period marked the starting point for women to see themselves as bread earners from bread makers in the family. Their role changed from being mere guardians of home to legitimate participants in the discourse of life.

The women during this period were motivated to start their small size enterprises at the ease of their homes. Many of them started some of the enterprises single-handedly. They got occupied in activities like making papads, pottery, bangle making etc. to earn a source of income. The period also saw the need for imparting education to children. Not only the male child but in some places, the families started sending their girls to school. Ritu Kumar, the famous international designer from the Indian origin, brought in profound changes with establishing her brand regarding female entrepreneurship. She believed that India is a large reservoir of artistic skills which can be utilised and help transform the status of Indian women. With her International experience and delicate skills present in Indian society, she took a step forward to start her brand. Due to societal constraints and lack of finance, she started her journey in a small village in Kolkata with block printing (M. Charantimath, 2013, pp. 1–3).

- **The 1970s**

This period brought a change in the needs of women. Compared to the previous periods, where all women looked up for home, marriage and children, they now aspired to have an occupation. They were very much willing to take up the challenge of balancing their roles in

social and occupational sectors, balancing their personal and professional lives; balancing between taking care of their family and their businesses/jobs. The beginning of the 70s also brought in a wave of feminist activism and voices were raised against issues like gender inequality, rape, spousal violence faced by women, *sati*, divorce laws, political representation and land rights. The wave of women asking for their rights began. The term 'women entrepreneurship' came into existence.

Another notable recognition came for the country with the establishment of Biocon, an Indian biopharmaceutical company under the leadership of Kiran Mazumdar Shaw.

The company has now spread its wings all over the global markets including the developed countries like the United States and Europe. The company caters to the needs of a hundred and twenty-one countries worldwide. Ms Shaw has faced her hardships but she always had the courage and determination to set up her enterprise. While trying to set up an efficient biotechnology startup in the country, she faced financial and infrastructural challenges. It was difficult for her to educate people about the need for good cheap drugs. However, her persistent efforts paid off when she finally set up a Research and Development Team (R&D) in 1984. The team was assigned to research on finding new enzymes to develop affordable drugs. But she received her breakthrough when in 1987, Narayanan Vaghul of Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI) helped her with a humongous financial aid. Kiran didn't only find success but also did face bankruptcy at times when finances were low. Yet her hard work paid off as she set up two subsidiary bodies – *Syngene* and *Clinigene* (Sharma, 2020). The number of women entrepreneurs during this period did not see an enormous increase. The crime rate against women related to molestation, rapes etc. showed a spatial increase and the decade laid the foundation for the 1980s where women were more confident, working with a vision to make their place in the business market.

- **The 1980s**

The decade brought in a great spurt of technological advancements along with professional education. The priority was shifted to education with the coming of the fourth five-year plan. The changing nature of dealing with crimes against women was quite visible. Several non-profit organizations and political parties raised their voices which caught up media's attention. The notable change was brought in by Mary Roy, a female activist who won a lawsuit

which made a girl child hold equal rights for the inheritance of property/ land as the male child. The lawsuit saw bearing its fruits in the state of Kerala where literacy gained importance over time for both the genders.

This decade saw markets filled with men which resulted in greater hardships for women. Despite the difficulties in the market, Vandana Luthra Curly and Curves (VLCC), currently the biggest wellness companies in India entered the market under the leadership of Vandana Luthra. The company has now spread its wings in eleven Asian countries and there were a set of troubles faced by her when she began with this venture. She was determined to do something in the healthcare sector and hence, put forward this idea with a small bank loan (Drillers, 2019). The decade saw the rise in several women who became aware of the rights available to them. Education was encouraged for girl children and they were no longer confined to stay back at homes and help their mothers. There was an increase in the number of females going to school and taking up professional education.

- **The 1990s**

The era of independence began for women in the country. They were confident in what they did and became goal-oriented. This century saw about 1,96,000 women entrepreneurs emerging, overshadowing the men in society. The zeal in the women entrepreneurs attracted foreign aids from all over the world to support the establishment of women enterprises and non-profit organisations rising in their support. Earlier the females were looked upon strangely for running small businesses like xerox stores or grocery shops, the wave brought in by the industrial policy of 1991 created a pool of opportunities for both males and females in the country (Chavan & Murkute, 2016, p. 608). This policy promoted liberalization, globalization and privatization. The women can now be seen in every sector/ industry- a service industry or a trading business. As the development process continued, the reasons for women entering the industry varied. While some entered to expand their family business or set up something on their own to become financially independent, some took it to bring their families out of debts.

This decade brought in many changes along with the biggest achievement for the women entrepreneurs. The planning commission and the Indian government recognized the efforts put in by these entrepreneurs and threw light on the need for these women entrepreneurs for the economic growth of the country. Framing and implementation of several policies as an aid to

these women were seen as the only effective and efficient strategy for reducing the urban and rural poverty levels. The aid was also extended to them in the form of subsidies, tax waivers and concessions for their goods and services being produced. The eighth five-year plan formulated at the beginning of this decade saw the need to formulate certain special programs which can help rural women engage in income-generating activities and take up new employment opportunities. These are some of the plans launched during the Eight-Five Year Plan: Prime Minister Rojgar Yojana and Entrepreneurship Development Programmes(EDP's) were introduced to develop entrepreneurial qualities among rural women. 'Women in agriculture' scheme was introduced to train women farmers having small and marginal holdings in agriculture and allied activities. To generate more employment opportunities for women Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) took special measures in remote areas. Women cooperatives schemes were formed to help women in agro-based industries like dairy farming, poultry, animal husbandry, horticulture etc. with full financial support from the Government (Vijayakumar & Jayachitra, 2013, p. 16).

- **21st Century**

With struggles faced overtime by the entrepreneurs, they are now being recognised as the *innovators* and innovating new things to compete with others, which is recognised as the most difficult task an entrepreneur undergoes. As per the research conducted in the first part of the century, it has been shown that the women-owned firms may have underperformed at aggregate levels compared to men-owned firms, but they are more likely to stay in business for a longer period. The performance not being up to the mark is the outcome of various challenges a woman faces while establishing her business in the market (Pahwa & Chakraborty, 2007, pp. 1–3). Male entrepreneurs are more likely to be driven by the motive to earn lots of money whereas for females it is the way to seek greater control over their professional as well as personal lives (Tiwari & Tiwari, 2007, pp. 1–3). Earlier for Women, there were only 3 Ks: Kitchen, Kids, Knitting, then came 3 Ps: Powder, Pappad, Pickles and now at present there are 4 Es: Electricity, Electronics, Energy, Engineering. Indian women have undergone a long way and are becoming increasingly visible and successful in all spheres and have shifted from the kitchen to a higher level of professional activities (Gurnani, 2014, p. 943).

4.0 Push and Pull Factors

Analysing the case of famous women entrepreneurs, something that was common in them is their determination. According to a study conducted, it was shown that most of the women were attracted to enter the market to get a better life, be financially independent and support their families with additional income (Ibemcha Chanu, 2018, p. 1050). There have been certain pull factors (motivational factors) captivating many women in the entrepreneurship field over the years.

1. Being dominated by men in the society, women feel the need to do something of their own as a matter of their self-respect and personal development.
2. They are motivated enough to take the risks and face the challenges to make their place in the market.
3. Their determination and perseverance have helped them achieve in every field.
4. Over the years, the aids provided by the government and simplification of rules has been an added benefit for women to set up their enterprises.

Women, as the history recalled, have been confined to the four walls of their houses carrying out their daily activities. With times passing, women may have moved out of those homes but remained confined in those four walls of the society, where she struggles and fights the orthodox beliefs and thoughts of the people. The push factors/challenges they face are quite similar among the group.

1. Social Norms: Women faced a great deal of resistance because of the socio-cultural norms present across different centuries. Society has played a crucial role in shaping the status of women. Women are generally compressed between the traditions and their dreams. They are not liberated enough to choose what they want to pursue. Society is not supportive enough to promote working women because they consider household chores as the primary objective of women's life. Women who are working aren't appreciated for their work and their work is always treated secondary in comparison to the male members of the family irrespective of the position, salary and the status they hold. There are huge family-related expectations from a woman which aren't present in the case of men. Due to the reproductive responsibilities present with them, their job has been limited to taking

care and nurturing family members. This somehow limited the opportunities in the labour market.

2. Education: The education of women has been discredited for centuries. Education was considered as something which should only be limited to men and women were excluded due to the gender roles ascribed which were limited only to the household. This is the reason why the literacy rate of women in India is among one of the lowest in the world. The girls weren't allowed to study and in case they were allowed it can only last till the age of 8-10 years, and after that, they were married off. This ultimately leads to the ignorance of their right to education and economic contribution, hindering their opportunity to entrepreneurship.
3. Poverty: This scenario plays a very important role in obstructing the way to entrepreneurship for women. Lately, across all the countries, it is observed that women have been either entirely or majorly dependent on their male counterparts for financial needs. The inequality of distribution in income has severely affected the growing slope of women entrepreneurs. Because of these reasons, women were highly dominated and were made to live according to male family members. Hence, they weren't allowed to become financially dependent, and if, in this situation, they become a widow or get separated from their husband, it harshly affects their socio-economic conditions and pushes them towards poverty.
4. Lack of self-confidence: Every human being requires inspiration & certainty for their dream to become reality but in the case of women, the seed of their dreams & aspirations die before it can prosper. They might gather the courage to follow their dreams but society, even the family members of the women, drags them down. They aren't given space since childhood and it becomes a habit with time to depend on others, so even if they get the opportunity, they don't have enough confidence in themselves to become self-sufficient.
5. The conflict between work and domestic commitments: Unlike men, women are expected to take care of the family and household chores along with their careers because of the gender-defined roles by society. There are cases where women are allowed to work only till they get married, till they become mothers or after their kids grow up. All these kinds of situations create a conflict between their career as well as their personal life. Women

aren't appreciated when they prioritize their job, this pushes them towards conflicts & disturbing situations which also influences their efficiency & motivation.

6. Family & Tax Policies: The regulatory bodies like Tax policies, Social Welfare System & family policies highly affect the cost and effectiveness of the entrepreneurship of women. Maternity leave policies and provision of different organisations also affect the work-life of women because in most cases it is observed that they either end up losing their position or restrictive leaves.

5.0 Government Programmes and Policies

The life of women not only as an entrepreneur but also as an individual has been full of hardships and a continuous struggle to make their place in this male-dominated society. With these challenges they face, there were some policies and programmes which acted as a catalyst to drive these entrepreneurs towards their goals. These programmes have resulted in successful outcomes to help in various decades and continue to do so.

1. Setting up of Self-Help Groups: A Self-Help Group (SHG) is a small voluntary association of people who come together to find a solution to a common issue. It usually consists of people from the same socio-economic background or same gender. In India, women are having harder lives (in rural areas in particular) and they have to discharge the onerous tasks of running households, collection of firewood for cooking, fetching drinking water and taking care of the children. In the labour market, (as rural non-agricultural labour) they earn Rs. 44 per day while their male counterparts earn Rs. 67 per day (United Nations, 2002, pp. 1–3). The SHGs help them in availing better access to credit, additional family income, and also look after better nutrition to children and improvement in school attendance.
2. Integration of women in development: This came in as a separate chapter focussing on a few major suggestions to include women in the development process by the Government of India. It was suggested to treat women as a specific target group in all major development programs of the country. The suggestions were further given and implemented for imparting vocational training, assistance to market their products in the market and their involvement in the decision-making process.

3. Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP): The Women Entrepreneurship Platform was launched by National Institution for Transforming India(NITI) Aayog in partnership with Small industrial Development Bank of India(SIDBI) to provide a platform for budding women entrepreneurs of India. It has been established on the base of 3 pillars :
 - *Iccha Shakti*: It represents the motivation & confidence of women to work as entrepreneurs.
 - *Gyaan Shakti*: It represents the power of knowledge that can be provided as support for women entrepreneurs to grow faster.
 - *Karma Shakti*: It represents the support provided to women entrepreneurs in upscaling their venture.This scheme focuses on providing incubation for women entrepreneurs and accelerating the process.
4. Trade-Related Entrepreneurship Assistance and Development(TREAD) Scheme: This scheme aims at providing economic empowerment to women by imparting required entrepreneurial skills, training, counselling extension activities and development of personality with the help of NGOs. The Government of India not just focuses on the skill development part through this scheme but also financial assistance by granting 30% of the total cost of the project and the rest 70 % to be covered through a loan.
5. Udyogini Scheme: This scheme by the Government of India focuses on the women who are working in the field of agriculture or small ventures and have income less than or equal to 45,000 with special benefits to the widow, disabled and ST/ST category women.
6. Annapurna Scheme: This scheme was implemented by the government of India for women who want to establish a food catering business. The Government of India offers a loan of 50,000 with a repayment duration of 3 years.

6.0 Road Ahead

Across different countries, it is very much evident that the life of women entrepreneurs has been severely affected because of the patriarchal attributes of the society. It is crucial to acknowledge the repercussion of the male-centric society in the life of women and their changing roles so far. To make the condition better for women entrepreneurs, public policies can be formulated keeping in consideration the following necessary points which are as follows:

- Help women to develop a positive attitude and self-confidence with the help of different role models and ambassadors of the world. The idea is to raise awareness in women about the potential of entrepreneurship.
- Training women to develop skills required for successful entrepreneurship and leading a venture so that they can work efficiently with proper risk management and optimum use of the management resources available.
- It was observed that women have faced several barriers related to financial aspects, so it is necessary to impart financial literacy to them, so that they can make informed decisions related to their ventures. Efforts should be made to remove the financial gap between men and women.
- Networking plays a crucial role in entrepreneurship. It helps in accessing business ideas, customers, investors etc. Women should be helped in creating good networks with people belonging to their field of interest.
- For women to become successful entrepreneurs, it is really necessary for policymakers to work towards formulating policy frameworks in such a way that tax policies and family law doesn't drag them down. Removal of economic disincentives in tax-benefits, stronger policy in addition to the family and social policy to make sure that women don't face discrimination of any kind in the workplace.

7.0 Conclusion

One question that arises after the whole analysis of the evolution of women entrepreneurs and the support required by them in prospering is whether women should be given the support through special agencies or through integrating it in the mainstream programmes. European Union in its framework towards women empowerment and support for entrepreneurship uses both the approaches to tackle these issues depending on the societal attitude towards women as well as the situation in the labour market. More efforts should be made in terms of creating an environment that can provide social security with lesser barriers. It is necessary to implement a gender-neutral education system which can impart the learnings related to entrepreneurship in the society so that gender-related issues in the field can be removed. It can be observed across different centuries that the condition of women entrepreneurs has become better with time but the main issue is the patriarchal system that has existed in India since ages. With times changing,

the women have also become the bread earners in the family and some are getting support from their families. Despite the positive changes quite evident, there are many changes which have to be done to make a woman feel celebrated in society.

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