

## General Article

**Women Entrepreneurship: Challenges in the Present Technological Era**Satpal<sup>A\*</sup>, Rupa Rathee<sup>A</sup> and Pallavi Rajain<sup>A</sup><sup>A</sup> Department of Management Studies, Deenbandhu Chhotu Ram University of Science and Technology, Murthal (Sonapat), India

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**Abstract**

*An entrepreneur is a person who has an enterprising quality with an eye on opportunities and an uncanny vision, a person who is willing to take risks because of the adventurous skill within, same holds good for women also. The present paper endeavours to study the concept of women entrepreneur and challenges faced by them in India. This paper is mostly based on secondary data and observations; for the identification of these issues the authors have reviewed different research articles and reports. Findings of this study reveal that absence of balance between family and career, socio-cultural barriers, male dominated society, illiteracy or low level of education, dearth of financial assistance, lack of technical knowhow, marketing and entrepreneurial skills, lack of self-confidence and mobility constraints are major problems of women entrepreneurship development. Some suggestions have been provided to deal with these problems. Also with the increase in the number of women getting educated, there is considerable awareness among women to be self-employed and gradually the role of women is changing in the society.*

**Keywords:** Women entrepreneurs, challenges for women entrepreneurs, overcoming challenges

**1. Introduction**

The origin of the basic word —Entrepreneurship is from a French word —1828, borrowing of French Entrepreneur "one who undertakes or manages," from Original French entrepreneur "undertake." The Oxford English Dictionary (of 1897) defines the term —Entrepreneur in similar way as the director or a manager of a public musical institution, one who gets-up entertainment arranged, especially musical performance. Initially in the early 16th century, it was applied to those who were engaged in military expeditions. In 17<sup>th</sup> century it was extended to cover civil engineering activities such as construction and fortification.

Entrepreneurship refers to the act of setting up a new business or reviving an existing business so as to take advantages from new opportunities. A woman entrepreneur is an adult who owns and runs an enterprise, especially a commercial one, often at personal financial risk. The International Labor Organization defined the women's enterprise as a small unit where one or more women entrepreneurs have not less than 50 per cent financial holdings. Women entrepreneurs face a series of problems right from the beginning till the enterprise functions. Being a woman itself poses various problems to a woman entrepreneur.

**2. Literature Review**

Winn (2004) examines some of the decision making factors and socio-personal constraints that affect women

entrepreneurship globally. Despite the increased gender parity in the workforce today, few women attain management positions at the top in large corporations. Policy-makers and educators who are interested in increasing women in the executive ranks need to understand the interaction between family and career aspirations in order to properly guide those who choose business leadership positions. Unless one can put the business/family interface into perspective, one cannot remove the barriers that women encounter as they pursue their careers. Similarly, Jamali (2009) examines the reciprocation of constraints and opportunities affecting female entrepreneurship in developing countries. The paper adopts an integrative research design with multiple levels and an interpretive research methodology, focusing on in-depth interviews with ten women entrepreneurs to explore their perceptions and interpretations of constraints and opportunities facing female entrepreneurship. The findings presented in his paper clearly illustrate the relevance of micro- and macro-level factors in entrepreneurship research and the usefulness of integrating multiple lens and units of analysis to capture the complexity of the women entrepreneurship experience in any particular context. Sarbapriya and Ishita (2011) focus on woman entrepreneur in India and also they talk about the status of woman entrepreneurs and the problems faced by them when they set up and manage their own businesses in the competitive world of business environment. Actually, there are significant differences between women entrepreneurs and the men entrepreneurs on ground of perseverance, potentiality and ability to work hard, as well as the abilities specific to emotional intelligence. At last, some general measures have been

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suggested to encourage women entrepreneurship in India. Goyal and Parkash (2011) endeavour to study the concept of women entrepreneur, reasons because of which women become entrepreneurs, reasons for slow progress of women entrepreneurs in developing nation like India, suggestions for the growth of women entrepreneurs, schemes for promoting women & development of women entrepreneurship in India, case study of a women entrepreneur of Ludhiana. The study is concluded with the opinion that efforts are being taken to fulfil the promise equal opportunity in all spheres to the Indian women and guaranteeing equal rights of participation. But unfortunately, the government sponsored development activities have benefited only a limited section of women i.e. the urban middle class women. Lathwal (2011) identifies the major problems of women entrepreneurs in Delhi with the objectives of analysing the various problems faced by them and by suggesting the remedial measure which will help in the speeding up of women Entrepreneurship in the city. Successful women entrepreneurs has been seen mostly among the mid thirty and early forty age group. The government schemes, incentives and subsidies have inspired and provided support measures to women entrepreneurs in and around the city. In her research, one of the findings was that while a majority of women came from a family business background and they were mostly married to business families. The business environment helped them to get prepared mentally, therefore helping them to easily enter into business. Also, Kumbhar and Kumbhar (2011) discuss several problems faced by women entrepreneurs like start up finance, access to technology, management and marketing skills and lack of confidence. Also they discuss the role of various associations promoting women entrepreneurs like SHG, WIT and SEWA. Lastly they provide suggestions for the development of women entrepreneurship which will help them in earning money and becoming economically independent. This will lead to an improvement is not only the women, from the point of view of better health, education and skill but an improvement in her living condition also by being able to use cleaner fuel, better house, better sanitation, facilities and infrastructural facilities. Bhardwaj, Parashar, Pandey and Sahu (2012) intended to find out various motivating and de-motivating internal and external factors of women entrepreneurship. They attempt to quantify some for non-parametric factors to give the sense of ranking these factors. They also suggest the way of eliminating and reducing hurdles present in front of women entrepreneurship development in Indian Context. The study tried to find out the difference among various set of people of the crucial factors which are concerned with the women entrepreneurial opportunities at large. Issues have been identified through various literature studied. These factors may vary from place to place and business to business but women entrepreneurship is necessary for the growth of any economy whether it is large or small. Behara and Niranjana (2012) intended to find out various Problems, motivating and de-motivating factors of women entrepreneurship. They also suggest the way of eliminating and reducing hurdles of the women

entrepreneurship development in Indian Context. The root cause of these problems lies in the social systems and attitudes. Government has emerged as a major catalyst by way of providing training incentives and other facilities to succeed particularly in rural areas. But very few entrepreneurs could approach for assistance which is an indication that there is need to revitalize the whole system. But this marks only the beginning of an arduous journey ahead for the Indian woman entrepreneurs. Kumari, S (2012) analyses the different problems and challenges facing women entrepreneurship in India after independence. Time has come for women to come out of the drudgery of housework and express their creativity and entrepreneurship. Political developments in India have also been responsible for determining the role of women in a changing society. Entry of women in organised business as entrepreneurs is fairly recent, but women have been contributing to production process since times immemorial. Government has been making every effort by giving facilities and exercising persuasion to induce parents to send their daughters in schools. Though such efforts have been successful to some extent, the breakthrough can come only when women receive equal opportunities along with men. Shankar (2013) endeavours to study the concept of women entrepreneur in India what are the reasons to become an entrepreneur, reasons for slow progress of women entrepreneurs in India, what schemes are render by Government of India for promotion and development of women entrepreneur in India. Women entrepreneurs have become a strong driving force in today's corporate world. Not only are they able to equalize their duties of both motherhood and entrepreneurship but they also comprise of almost half of all businesses owned today. Many Women entrepreneurs have an average age of 40 – 60 years old because they have had previous careers in other areas. Their primary goal is not monetary reward but rather personal satisfaction and community involvement. Kumbhar, V (2013) discusses the issues regarding women entrepreneurship in rural India. His paper is mostly based on secondary data and some observations; for the identification of these issues the author has reviewed different research articles and reports. Findings of his study reveal that absence of definite agenda of life, absence of balance between family and career obligations of women, poor degree of freedom to take financial decisions, absence of direct ownership of the property, no awareness about capacities, low ability to bear risk, problems of work with male workers, negligence by financial institutions, lack of self-confidence, lack of professional education, mobility constraints and lack of interaction with successful entrepreneurs are major problems of women entrepreneurship development in India. Mehta and Mehta (2011) discuss various challenges faced by rural women entrepreneurs and some suggestions for effective development of women entrepreneurs. The women confined themselves to three K's-Kitchen, kids & knitting. Right efforts on from all areas are required in the development of women entrepreneurs. Role of rural women entrepreneurs in economic development is inevitable. The only urgent need is to create a favourable atmosphere to increase self-employment for women and

over all developments of the country. Thus, there are bright prospects for rural women entrepreneurship in India. Choudhary and Rayalwar (2011) intend to highlight some issues with reference to the strategic challenges and opportunities from a gender focus to analyse the prospects of rural small and medium entrepreneurship for women. Women entrepreneurs faced many obstacles specifically in marketing their product that have to be overcome in order to give them access to the same opportunities as men. Indian rural market, if properly explored through the women entrepreneurs, offers unique opportunities to develop a strong network of rural enterprises. With increased educational opportunities; the women in India need to get more organized into small groups through sustained efforts.

### 3. Major Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs

1. Balance between family and career- Women in India are very emotionally attached to their home and families. They are supposed to attend to all the domestic work, to look after the children and other family members. They are overburdened with family responsibilities like taking care of husband, children and in laws which takes away a lot of their time and energy. In such situation, it is very difficult to concentrate and run an organization successfully and efficiently.
2. Socio-cultural barriers- The traditions and customs prevailing in Indian societies sometimes stand as an obstacle before women which stop them from growing and prospering. Castes and religions dominate our society and hinder women entrepreneurs too. In rural areas, they face even greater social barriers. They are always seen with an eye of suspicion.
3. Male dominated society- Even though our constitution speaks of equality between genders, male superiority is still the order of the day. Women are not treated equal to men. Their entry into business requires the approval of the head of the family who is mostly a male member. Entrepreneurship has traditionally been seen as a male task. All these hamper the growth of women entrepreneurs.
4. Illiteracy or low level of Education- Women in India are lagging far behind in the field of education. Even after more than 60 years of independence many women are still illiterate. Those who are educated are provided either less or inadequate education than their male counterpart partly due to early marriage, partly due to household responsibilities and partly due to poverty. Due to lack of proper education, most women entrepreneurs remain in dark about the development of new technology, new methods of production, marketing, networking and other governmental support which will encourage them to rise in the field of management.
5. Dearth of financial assistance- Women entrepreneurs suffer a lot in raising and meeting the financial needs of the business. Bankers, creditors and financial institutes do not come forward to provide financial

assistance to women borrowers on the ground of their less credit worthiness. They also face financial problem due to blockage of funds in raw materials, inventory, work-in-progress, finished goods and non-receipt of payment from customers in time.

6. Lack of Technical knowhow- Management has become a specialised job which only efficient managers perform. Women entrepreneurs sometimes are not efficient in managerial functions like planning, organising, controlling, directing, motivating, recruiting, coordinating, and leading an enterprise. Therefore, less and limited managerial ability of women has become a problem for them to run the enterprise successfully.
7. Marketing Skills- Since most women cannot run around for marketing, distribution and money collection, they have to depend on middle men for the above activities. Middle men tend to exploit them in the appearance of helping. They work in order to add their own profit margin which result in less sales and lesser profit for women entrepreneurs.
8. Entrepreneurial Skill- Lack of entrepreneurial aptitude is a matter of concern for women entrepreneurs. They have limited entrepreneurial abilities. Even after attending various training programmes on entrepreneurship women entrepreneurs fail to overcome the risks and troubles that may come up in an organisational working.
9. Lack of Self-Confidence- Women entrepreneurs because of their inherent nature, lack self-confidence which is essentially a motivating factor in running an enterprise successfully. They have to work hard to strike a balance between managing a family and managing an enterprise. Sometimes they have to sacrifice their entrepreneurial urge in order to strike a balance between the two which results in loss of a prospective entrepreneur.
10. Mobility Constraints- Women mobility in India is highly limited and has become a problem due to traditional values and limited driving skills. Moving alone and asking for a room to stay out at night for business purposes is still looked upon with suspicious eyes. Sometimes, inexperienced women feel uncomfortable in dealing with men who show extra interest in them other than work related aspects.

### 4. Suggestions to Overcome the Challenges

1. Government should provide separate financial aid to women entrepreneurs so that they do not face any difficulty in setting up their organization.
2. Special infrastructural facilities should be provided to help women in establishing their enterprise easily and quickly.
3. Training Programmes specially directed at women entrepreneurs should be conducted to enhance their entrepreneurial skills and abilities which help them in day to day functioning of business.
4. Top ranking women entrepreneurs must be felicitated so that more women are encouraged and motivated to pursue such careers.

5. Provision for better educational facilities should be provided starting from school and further for higher education and also several vocational studies.
6. Women Entrepreneurs' Guidance cell should be opened in all cities to handle problems related to day to day functioning like production, marketing, and distribution problems.
7. Several legal policies and regulations for the setup of an enterprise by women must be simplified to help women entrepreneurs in establishing their business and getting speedy approval regarding several legal formalities.
8. Mostly importantly the support of family members is required so that women can move out of their homes with confidence. They can give better output when it is known to them that their decisions are supported by their family.
9. Organization of fairs, exhibitions and workshops for women entrepreneurs which will help them to connect with each other and share ideas and problems. It will also provide guidance to new women entrepreneurs who can take help and suggestions from their already established counterparts.
10. Making provision for marketing and sales assistance so that women entrepreneurs are not cheated by middle men.

## Conclusion

From the various research papers studied several challenges faced by women entrepreneurs have come into focus. These include balance between family and career, socio-cultural barriers, male dominated society, illiteracy or low level of education, dearth of financial assistance, lack of technical knowhow, marketing and entrepreneurial skills, lack of self-confidence and mobility constraints. Despite the increased gender parity in the workforce today, few women attain top management positions in large corporations. These women entrepreneurs have an average age of forty to sixty years because they have had previous careers in other areas. Their primary goal is not monetary gains but rather personal satisfaction and achievement. Time has come for women to come out of the burden of housework and give way to their creativity and entrepreneurship. Social and political developments in India have also been responsible for determining the role of women in a changing society. The government schemes, incentives and subsidies have stimulated and provided support measures to women entrepreneurs. With the increase in the number of women getting education, there is considerable awareness among women to be self-employed thus leading to change in the role of women in the society.

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