



Role of Women in Entrepreneurship

**Khwairakpam Sharmila^{1*},
Rajnish Kumar²,
Manjul Jain³, Ravi Patel⁴**

¹Assistant Professor, DMU
University, Imphal

²Assistant Professor, School of
Agriculture, Gyanveer University
Sagar (M.P.) 470115

³Assistant Professor, School of
Agriculture, Eklavya University
Damoh (M.P.) 470661

⁴Assistant Professor, School of
Agriculture, Eklavya University
Damoh (M.P.) 470661



Open Access

*Corresponding Author
Khwairakpam Sharmila *

Article History

Received: 5. 1.2026

Revised: 10. 1.2026

Accepted: 15. 1.2026

This article is published under the
terms of the [Creative Commons
Attribution License 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is viewed as a strong driver of economic development, innovation, job creation, and social change. Entrepreneurship entails the process of searching for opportunities and taking risks with a view to creating value. In recent years, women have increasingly become an important force in entrepreneurship in both developed and developing countries. The increasing number of women participating in entrepreneurship is attributed to the evolving socio-economic environment, increased education levels, and access to information.

Historically, women were mostly restricted to home and economic chores without any recognition or economic freedom. However, globalization, industrialization, and technological development have created new opportunities for women to engage actively in economic activities. Women entrepreneurship is no longer limited to micro or home-based businesses; women are now at the forefront of small, medium, and large businesses, including start-ups and innovation-driven ventures. In nations such as India, women entrepreneurship has become a crucial area to deal with issues of unemployment, poverty, gender disparity, and regional disparities. Through entrepreneurial pursuits, women not only improve their individual economic conditions but also make contributions to family, social, and national development.

2. Concept and Meaning of Women Entrepreneurship

Women entrepreneurship refers to the process in which women embark on entrepreneurship activities like owning, organizing, and running businesses and business ventures. Women entrepreneurship involves various aspects, including women earning a living through various business ventures with financial risks and challenges. This process provides independence and momentum to economic and social development. Women entrepreneurship accounts for women undertaking and managing businesses and business ventures on their own and in combination. Women entrepreneurship comprises various aspects, including "opportunity-driven" and "necessity-driven." The "opportunity-driven" process refers to initiatives and ventures in search of innovation and success; on the contrary, "necessity-driven"

In India, an enterprise owned by women is one where women are in majority and participate substantially in terms of decision-making and employment generation. Women entrepreneurs embrace various levels of enterprise, ranging from micro and small enterprise, cooperatives, self-help group-based enterprise, start-ups, and social enterprise. This is closely related to women's empowerment with elements including economic independence, self-confidence, and social status.

3. Evolution of Women Entrepreneurship

The evolution of women entrepreneurship has been shaped by historical, social, economic, and political factors. At the global level, women's participation in entrepreneurship remained limited for centuries due to restrictive social norms, lack of education, and exclusion from economic resources. The industrial revolution marked a gradual shift, as women began to participate in paid employment and small-scale business activities. The late twentieth century witnessed a significant rise in women entrepreneurship, particularly in developed countries, driven by feminist movements, policy reforms, and expansion of the service sector.

In India, women entrepreneurship has evolved through distinct phases. During the pre-independence period, women were primarily involved in household-based and cottage industries such as spinning, weaving, food processing, and handicrafts. After independence, government policies focused mainly on women welfare rather than entrepreneurship promotion. The post-liberalization era brought new opportunities for women entrepreneurs through economic reforms, globalization, and privatization. In the contemporary period, women entrepreneurship has expanded rapidly with the growth of self-help groups, microfinance institutions, digital platforms, start-up ecosystems, and government support schemes. Today, women entrepreneurs in India are actively participating in agriculture, agribusiness, manufacturing, services, education, healthcare, and technology sectors.

4. Role and Importance of Women in Entrepreneurship

Women entrepreneurship plays a multidimensional role in economic and social development. Women entrepreneurs contribute significantly to economic growth by increasing productive capacity, promoting industrial

development, and strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Their participation enhances capital formation, income generation, and economic diversification. By establishing and managing enterprises, women entrepreneurs create employment opportunities for themselves and others, particularly for women from marginalized and rural backgrounds, thereby reducing unemployment and underemployment.

Women entrepreneurship also plays a crucial role in poverty alleviation and income security. Income earned by women entrepreneurs contributes directly to household welfare, including improved nutrition, healthcare, education, and living standards. Studies have shown that women are more likely than men to reinvest their income in family and community well-being, thereby multiplying the developmental impact of entrepreneurship. Beyond economic benefits, women entrepreneurship contributes to social empowerment by enhancing women's self-confidence, decision-making power, leadership skills, and social status. It challenges traditional gender roles and promotes gender equality by demonstrating women's capabilities as economic actors.

Furthermore, women entrepreneurs contribute to balanced regional development by promoting local resource utilization and encouraging economic activities in rural and backward regions. Their enterprises often focus on sustainable and eco-friendly practices, social responsibility, and community development. As a result, women entrepreneurship aligns closely with the goals of inclusive and sustainable development.

5. Sectoral Participation of Women Entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs are engaged in a wide range of economic sectors, reflecting their diverse skills, interests, and opportunities. In agriculture and allied sectors, women play a prominent role as agripreneurs, engaging in crop production, seed production, nursery management, dairy farming, poultry, fisheries, mushroom cultivation, and beekeeping. These

activities not only provide income but also enhance food security and rural livelihoods.

In agro-processing and value addition, women entrepreneurs are involved in food processing activities such as preparation of pickles, jams, bakery products, spices, and traditional foods. These enterprises add value to agricultural produce, reduce post-harvest losses, and create market opportunities. Women are also actively involved in cottage and small-scale industries, including handloom, handicrafts, textile production, garment making, and artisanal products, which preserve traditional skills and generate employment.

The service sector has witnessed significant participation of women entrepreneurs in areas such as education, healthcare, wellness services, hospitality, tourism, and retail. With the advent of digital technologies, women entrepreneurs are increasingly entering technology-based and online businesses, including e-commerce, digital marketing, content creation, and start-ups. Additionally, women are playing a growing role in social entrepreneurship, where enterprises are established to address social, environmental, and community challenges while maintaining financial sustainability.

6. Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs

Despite their increasing participation, women entrepreneurs face numerous challenges that hinder the growth and sustainability of their enterprises. One of the most significant challenges is limited access to finance. Women often face difficulties in obtaining loans from formal financial institutions due to lack of collateral, limited credit history, and gender bias in lending practices. As a result, many women rely on informal sources of finance, which are often costly and unreliable.

Socio-cultural barriers also pose major constraints to women entrepreneurship. Patriarchal norms, gender stereotypes, and traditional expectations regarding women's roles in the household restrict women's mobility, risk-

taking ability, and time availability. Women often face the dual burden of managing both business and household responsibilities, which affects their productivity and business growth. Educational and skill gaps further limit women's entrepreneurial potential, as many women lack access to formal education, technical training, managerial skills, and digital literacy.

Market-related challenges such as limited access to market information, weak networking, poor bargaining power, and lack of branding and marketing skills reduce the competitiveness of women-led enterprises. Additionally, legal and institutional barriers, including complex regulatory procedures, lack of awareness about government schemes, and limited access to support institutions, further constrain women entrepreneurship.

7. Government Initiatives for Promoting Women Entrepreneurship in India

Recognizing the importance of women entrepreneurship, the Government of India has implemented several policies and schemes to support women entrepreneurs. These initiatives aim to enhance access to finance, skill development, market linkages, and institutional support. Schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana provide collateral-free loans to women entrepreneurs, enabling them to start and expand micro and small enterprises. The Stand-Up India Scheme encourages women to establish greenfield enterprises by facilitating bank loans and support services.

Programs like the National Rural Livelihood Mission promote women-led self-help groups and micro-enterprises in rural areas, thereby strengthening livelihoods and social empowerment. The Women Entrepreneurship Platform provides a comprehensive ecosystem for mentoring, networking, funding, and capacity building. Online platforms such as Mahila E-Haat enable women entrepreneurs to market their products digitally and reach wider markets. Skill development initiatives like the Support to Training and Employment Programme focus on enhancing women's employability and entrepreneurial capabilities.

8. Role of Institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations

Institutions and non-governmental organizations play a vital role in promoting women entrepreneurship by complementing government efforts. Financial institutions provide credit, insurance, and financial literacy support to women entrepreneurs. Educational institutions and training centers promote entrepreneurship education, skill development, and innovation among women. Incubation centers and start-up accelerators offer mentoring, technical support, and market access to women-led enterprises. Non-governmental organizations play a critical role in mobilizing women, providing training, facilitating access to resources, and advocating for gender-sensitive policies.

9. Emerging Trends in Women Entrepreneurship

Women entrepreneurship is undergoing significant transformation due to technological advancement, changing market dynamics, and evolving social attitudes. There is a growing trend of women-led start-ups, particularly in technology, education, healthcare, and digital services. Digital entrepreneurship has enabled women to overcome mobility constraints and access national and global markets. Agripreneurship and food-based enterprises are gaining importance due to rising demand for safe, organic, and value-added food products. Women are also increasingly engaging in green and sustainable enterprises that focus on environmental conservation and social impact.

10. Strategies for Strengthening Women Entrepreneurship

Strengthening women entrepreneurship requires a comprehensive and integrated approach. Improving access to finance through gender-sensitive lending policies and financial inclusion initiatives is essential. Entrepreneurship education and skill development programs should be strengthened to enhance women's managerial, technical, and digital capabilities. Market linkages, networking opportunities, and mentoring support must be expanded to improve competitiveness. Creating women-friendly

policies, support systems, and work environments can help reduce socio-cultural barriers. Encouraging family and community support is equally important to enable women to balance entrepreneurial and domestic responsibilities.

11. Women Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development

Women entrepreneurship contributes significantly to sustainable development by promoting inclusive growth, reducing inequalities, and fostering innovation. Women-led enterprises support poverty reduction, gender equality, decent work, and economic growth, thereby contributing directly to the achievement of sustainable development goals. By integrating economic, social, and environmental objectives, women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in building resilient and sustainable societies.

CONCLUSION

Women entrepreneurship is a powerful instrument for achieving economic growth, social empowerment, and sustainable development. By enabling women to participate actively in entrepreneurial activities, societies can unlock immense human potential and promote inclusive progress. Although women entrepreneurs face multiple challenges related to finance, skills, social norms, and institutional barriers, supportive policies, education, and capacity-building initiatives have significantly improved the entrepreneurial landscape. A holistic and gender-sensitive approach involving government, institutions, families, and communities is essential to create an enabling environment for women entrepreneurs. Strengthening women entrepreneurship is not only an economic necessity but also a moral and social imperative for building a more equitable and sustainable future.

REFERENCES

Balachandra, L., & Dublisch, P. (2019). Women for women in entrepreneurship: understanding the role of other women for women's entrepreneurship. In *Go-to-*

- Market Strategies for Women Entrepreneurs: Creating and Exploring Success* (pp. 239-260). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Chavan, V. M., & Murkute, P. A. (2016). Role of women entrepreneurship in Indian economy. *International Journal of Science Technology and Management*, 5(3), 604-612.
- Farauddello, A., Songini, L., Pellegrini, M., & Gnan, L. (2017). The role of women as entrepreneurs in family business: A literature review. *Women Entrepreneurship in Family Business*, 72-100.
- Love, I., Nikolaev, B., & Dhakal, C. (2024). The well-being of women entrepreneurs: the role of gender inequality and gender roles. *Small Business Economics*, 62(1), 325-352.
- Sajjad, M., Kaleem, N., Chani, M. I., & Ahmed, M. (2020). Worldwide role of women entrepreneurs in economic development. *Asia Pacific Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 14(2), 151-160.