

## EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

**Dr. Tukaram Vaijanathrao Powale**

*Assistant Professor, Department of Economics*

*Late Babasaheb Deshmukh Gortheekar ACS Mahavidyalaya, Umri,*

*Tq. Umri, Dist. Nanded – 431 807 (MS)*

### **Abstract :**

*Empowerment of women and gender equality recognized globally as a key element to achieve progress in all areas. Empowerment in the context of women's development is a way of defining, challenging and overcoming barriers in a women's life through which she increases her ability to shape her life and environment. It is an active, multidimensional process which should enable women to realize their full identity and power in all spheres of life. Become an Entrepreneur is difficult process. The entrepreneur is commonly seen as a business leader and innovator of new ideas and business process. Entrepreneurship refers to the act of setting up a new business or reviving an existing business so as to take advantages from new opportunities. Empowerment of women is essentially the process of upliftment of economic, social and political status of women, the traditionally underprivileged ones, in the society. It is the process of guarding them against all forms of violence. It involves the building up of a society, a political environment, wherein women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination and the general feeling of persecution which goes with being a women in a traditionally male dominated structure. Entrepreneurship is the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. This wealth is created by individuals who take the major risk in terms of equity, time and career commitment of providing value to some products or services the product or service itself may or may not be new or unique but value must somehow be infused by the entrepreneur by securing and allocating the necessary skill and resources.*



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**Keywords :** Empowerment, Entrepreneurship, Self Help Groups, Rural Women, Micro enterprise, rural poverty.

**Introduction :**

Entrepreneurship plays an eminent role in creating an employment opportunity for rural communities, providing self-employment for those who have started-up a business of their own and enhancing the economic status of the rural sector as well. Now women are also interested to establish their own business as professionally both in the urban and rural area due to overcome poverty, generate family income and increasing standard of living. In this regard Faley (1999) argued that women's development is not nearly about reducing poverty by increasing productivity, but also about women's liberation and empowerment. So it is necessary to empower women socially, economically and technologically to enable them to stand in society on their own with confidence, It includes both controls over resources and ideology, greater self-confidence and an inner transformation of one's consciousness that enables one to overcome external affairs (Sharma & Varma, 2008). In today's competitive world, there are various ways by which women get themselves empowered. Entrepreneurship development and income generating activities are a feasible solution for empowering women who leads to economic independence, the opportunity to have control over their lives, self-reliance, self-determination and a way to achieve for themselves. Bhisht & Sharma (1991) argued that the entrepreneurship of women is considered to be an effective instrument to the economic development and empowerment of women. Considering this need the government of India has begun the process of empowering women through various national policies and developmental programmes and organizing women in Self Help Groups. The Self Help Groups (SHGs) is an organization of rural poor; particularly of women for the empowering women by providing micro credit to undertake the entrepreneurial activity.

**Research Methodology :**

This research paper is based on secondary data which were collected from research studies, books, journals, newspapers and ongoing academic working papers which focused on various aspects of women empowerment and entrepreneurship.

**Objectives of the Study :**

- To know about the micro enterprises for rural women and its areas of development.
- To know the advantages of micro enterprise in building women empowerment.
- To know the role of entrepreneurship development in women empowerment.

**Rural Women and Entrepreneurship :**

Rural women and the emergence of rural women entrepreneurship and their contribution to the national economy is quite noticeable in India. The numbers of women entrepreneurs have grown over a period of time, especially in late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Women entrepreneurs need to be lauded for their increased utilization of modern technology, increased investment, finding a niche in the global market, creating an extensive employment for others and setting the trend for other women entrepreneurs in the organized sector. While women entrepreneurs have demonstrated their potential, the fact remains that they are capable of contributing much more than what they already are. Therefore women entrepreneurs are needed to be studied separately for two more reasons. First, women entrepreneurs have been recognized during the last decade as an important unexploited source of economic growth as they are creating new jobs for themselves and others and also by being different. They also provide the society with different solutions to management, organization and business problems as well as to the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities. Secondly, women entrepreneurs have been neglected largely both in society in general and in the social sciences as well. Not only have women lower participation rates in entrepreneurship than men but they also generally choose to start and manage firms in different industries than men tend to do. Hence, women can effectively undertake both the production and processing oriented enterprises. Entrepreneurship development among rural women helps to enhance their personal capabilities and increase decision making status in the family and society as a whole.

**Concept of Women Empowerment and Women Entrepreneurship :**

According to United Nations Development program (1994) empowerment is a process which enables individuals or groups to change balance of power in social, economic and political relations in society. Therefore, women empowerment means giving the capacity and means to direct women's life towards desired goals. It is a process by which women gain greater control over resources (income, knowledge, information, technology, skill and training), decision making process, enhance the self-image of women, to become active participants in the process of change and to develop the skills to assert themselves. 'Women Entrepreneur' is a person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. The Government of India has defined women entrepreneurs as an enterprise owned and controlled by women having a minimum financial interest of 51 per cent of the capital and giving at least 51 per cent of the employment generated in the enterprise to women. In the simple sense, women entrepreneurs are those women who take the lead and organize the business or industry and provide employment to others. Entrepreneurship

development among rural women helps to enhance their personal capabilities and increase decision making status in the family and society as a whole.

### **Status of Women Entrepreneurship in India :**

The concept 'Women entrepreneurship' is becoming a global phenomenon and in India it became prominent in the latter half of the eighties. Now women's entrepreneurship has been recognized as an important untapped source of economic growth. In India it is estimated that women entrepreneurs presently comprise about 10 per cent of the total number of entrepreneurs with the percentage growing every year. If the prevailing trends continue, it is likely that in another five years women will comprise 20 per cent of the entrepreneurial force. Even though women own around 10 per cent of the total enterprises in the small sector, the gross output of these units is just 3.5 per cent of the total output of the SSI sector. In contrast, in developed countries such as United States, women own nearly 91 lakh small businesses and the number of women owned startups is going at nearly twice the rate of their male counterparts. India has 397 million workers, 123.9 million are women, 106 million are in rural areas, 18 million are in urban areas, only 7 per cent of India's labour force is in the organized sector; 93 per cent is in unorganized sector.

### **Women Empowerment through Entrepreneurship :**

Following are the impact of entrepreneurship development on women empowerment :

- Through entrepreneurship development self confidence level of women are increased and gave them a prosperous future.
- Now rural women are engaged in small the help of Self Help Groups by which they were economically empowered and attaining very good status in family and community.
- Entrepreneurship also helps to bring about awareness among rural women about savings, education, health, environment, cleanliness. Family welfare, social forestry etc.
- Micro enterprise is the best tool for rural women as it enables them to add to the family income and as such it provides family members to a better life style, including education for the children and improvement of family health.
- Some aspects of household decision making are reported to have changed as a result of women contribution in family income. Most of the men not consult with their wives in important family matters.
- Promoting entrepreneurship through microenterprise approach enables eradicating the rural poverty in developing economies to a larger extent. Entrepreneurship led to the

empowerment of women in so many things such as socio-economics opportunity, property rights, political participation and representation, social equality, personal right, market development, family development, community development, societal development, state development and at last development of the nation.

#### **Advantage of Micro Enterprise in Building Women Empowerment :**

Micro enterprises in rural area can help to empower women in rural areas. A micro enterprise is not only enhancing national productivity, generate employment but also helping to develop economic independence, personal and social capabilities among rural women. Following are some of the personal and social capabilities, which were developed as result of taking up enterprise among rural women :

- Economic freedom
- Improved standard of living
- Self confidence
- Sense of achievement
- Increased social interaction
- Engaged in political activities
- Increased participation in social meetings
- Development in leadership qualities
- Involvement in solving problems related to women and community
- Decision making capacity in family and community

The rural women are having basic indigenous knowledge, skill, potential and resources to establish and manage enterprise. Therefore promoting entrepreneurship through microenterprise approach has been recognized as the solution for incorporating women into the overall economic development process and enables eradicating the rural poverty in developing economies to a larger extent. Finally we can say that economic empowerment of rural women through micro entrepreneurship led to the empowerment of women in so many things such as socio-economic opportunity, political participation and representation, social equality, personal right, family development, market development, community development, societal development, state development and at last development of the nation.

**Conclusion :**

It can be said that today we are in a better position wherein women participation in the field of entrepreneurship is increasing at a considerable rate, efforts are being taken at the economy as well as global level to enhance women's involvement in the monopoly of men and proved that they are not inferior to men. The micro enterprises had major impact on social and economic life of rural women. The study concludes that there was an increase in self-confidence, self-reliance and independence of rural women due to the involvement in the entrepreneurial activities. Now women entrepreneurs are aware of opportunities available to them, but there is scope for improvement in it. The economic status of the women is now accepted as an indicator of a society's stage of development and therefore it becomes imperative for the government to frame policies for development of entrepreneurship among women. Raised literacy level could be helpful for the SHG members to overcome cognitive constraints and to understand government policies, technical understanding required skills.

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