

THE WOMEN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The women play a very small role in the field of entrepreneurship in India. Their role in social entrepreneurship there is even smaller. Several factors are responsible for this situation. These include, culture, biology, poverty, and lack of education, among others. However, some women are trying to improve this situation.

The objectives of this paper include, defining entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship; providing examples of women social entrepreneurship in India; their challenges; and suggestions for dealing with those challenges

Key words: Women social entrepreneurship in India, examples of women social entrepreneurs in India, their challenges, and suggestions to deal with those challenges.

INTRODCUTION & OBJECTIVES

India

India, with its more than a billion people, is the second largest populated country in the World, after China. India, the largest democracy in the world, is also facing numerous problems.

It has an unemployment rate of 8.8% (2013). Only 32.6% of its people have access to improved sanitation facilities. According to the World Bank, while India's poverty rate has fallen from 37% in 2005 to 21.9% in 2012, the absolute number of its people living in poverty has actually increased due to the rising population. (Habitat for Humanity, UK, 2019)

Millions of people in India, especially in its rural areas, don't have access to electricity. Instead they use fossil fuels (fire-wood, biomass, kerosene oil) for cooking and lighting. (IEA statistics, 2010, cited in Goyal, 2016).

According to a census report, one in six people in Indian cities live in some 100,000 sprawling slums with conditions unfit for human habitation. (Johnson 2013)

Indian Women

According to the United Nations Development Programme, human development reports 2017, India ranked 130 in a list of 189 countries on Gender Inequality Index (GII). The GII reflects on Indian women's reproductive health, empowerment, and labour. (UNDP, 2018).

In terms of employment, only 39 percent of Indian women is formally employed, compared to 81 percent of Indian men and 71 percent of Chinese women. Furthermore, India came second to last in a Gender Female Entrepreneurship Index of women entrepreneurs in 17 countries. (Guardian News and Media Limited, 2015).

Clearly, there is a need to promote women entrepreneurship in India.

Objectives

Several individuals (men and women) and organizations (local, national, and international) are trying to help solve India's plethora of problems. The primary purpose of this

research is to discuss the role of women social entrepreneurs in India. Specifically, this article has the following objectives:

1. Define Social Entrepreneurship.
2. Provide examples of women social entrepreneurship in India.
3. Discuss challenges that the women social entrepreneurs in India are facing.
4. Discuss efforts being made to empower women in India.
5. Make suggestions to empower women.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Let me first define “entrepreneurship”, before defining “social entrepreneurship.” According to Joseph A. Schumpeter (1951), an entrepreneur creates value by allocating resources to “new uses and new combinations.”

According to Peter Drucker (1985), entrepreneurs, by definition, shift resources from areas of low productivity and yield to areas of higher productivity and yield.

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. (Tiwari 2017)

A widely used definition is that entrepreneurship is doing something different and taking a risk.

Let me now define the term, “social entrepreneurship”, which broadly speaking, can be classified into two groups: (a) Social entrepreneurship which is primarily socially oriented, and (b) Social entrepreneurship which has both social and economic orientation.

Enterprises with primarily social orientation promote social good without any regard for economic gain. It is like doing charitable work. Socio-economic entrepreneurs, on the other hand, promote social good as they also try to make economic gains to support their work for social good. (see also Goyal et al., 2016).

In either case, these organizations address various kinds of social problems in the areas such as health, education, employment, residence, culture, and environment. (Also see Sivathanu and Bhise 2013; and Bulsara, Gandhi, and Chandwani 2015)

EXAMPLES OF WOMEN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS IN INDIA

As India faces a whole host of social problems, social entrepreneurs, including the women social entrepreneurs, continue to rise to the occasion and find out ways to address and solve these problems. Some of them, along with their contribution, are briefly described below.

Shri Mahila Griha Udyog

Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad, widely known as Lijjat, is a cooperative of Indian women that offers several consumer products such as packaged foods, toiletries, and medicines. It was started in Bombay in 1959 by seven women with a meager capital of Rs. 80 (about \$15). In 2018, with an employment force of 43,000 women all over India, it had a turnover of more than Rs. 800 crore (over \$ 109 million). It is a classic example of women entrepreneurship to empower women. (Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia, 2019).

Ela Bhatt, Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)

Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is a trade union of female workers, based in Ahmedabad, India. With a membership of more than two million women, it is the largest organization of self-employed women.

It was established by Ms. Ela Bhatt, a civil rights leader, and a group of some other women in 1972. Its goals include providing full employment to women; and improving their quality of life, health care, and child care, among others. (Wikipedia 2019)

Sunitha Krishnan, Prajwala

Thousands of women and children are forced into the flesh trade in India every year. Prajwala (eternal fire) is an organisation that was set up by Ms. Sunitha Krishnan and Brother Jose Vetticatil in 1996. It, on the one hand, fights sex trafficking, and, on the other, it also protects and rehabilitates women and children. It provides them a life of dignity and helps them adjust back into the society. It has rescued thousands of victims to-date. (See also Business India 2017; Lakshmi and Kumar, 2014; and Sharma, et al. 2015).

Aditi Gupta, Menstrupedia

Menstruation is an unmentionable subject in India, even offensive to talk about sometimes. Lack of information about menstruation creates notions and behavior that are not healthy for women, especially young girls. Therefore, in 2012, Ms. Aditi Gupta, with her husband, Tuhin Paul, co-founded Menstrupedia.com to educate them to separate facts from fictions and to have healthy periods.

Sheetal Mehta Walsh, Shanti Life

Ms. Sheetal Mehta Walsh, with her husband Paul Walsh, co-founded Shanti Life. It empowers and enables vulnerable women in India to achieve secure livelihoods and enhance their personal safety through access to sanitation as a priority.”

It provides low interest loans to improve basic sanitation facilities, among others. To ensure that the loans are effective, they deliver them along with appropriate training and education.

Its initial focus is on the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. (Shanti Life).

Gloria Benny, Make a Difference

Make A Difference was founded by Gloria Benny, Jithin Nedumala, Sujith Varkey, Kavin K K, Santosh Babu, and Jithin John Varghese.

It is helping improve conditions of children in orphanages and shelters across India in several ways, including mentoring and training. (Wikipedia 2019).

Anu Sridharan, NextDrop

In most urban areas in India, people get their tap water every 2-10 days, but no one knows exactly when it would happen. Citizens feel ignored and angry. Enormous time and resources are wasted.

NextDrop, started by Ms. Anu Sridharan, began using real-time data and cell phones to inform people about the status of the water services and the exact time of water availability on a given day in their areas.

Starting in the areas of Hubli-Dharwad and Bangalore, it is saving an enormous amount of time and other resources for millions of people in India. (NextDrop)

Priya Naik, Samhita Social Ventures

Ms. Priya Naik founded Samhita Social Ventures to help people and organizations to come together to help them in various areas such as poverty reduction, livelihood opportunities, and social justice. Samhita, meaning collective good, brings together people who can bring change in the community and those who have the resources to support them. (Samhita.org)

Naiyya Saggi, BabyChakra

Ms. Naiyya Saggi founded BabyChakra to enable new parents and parents to access local services relating to parenting, maternity, and childcare. It is India's largest pregnancy and parenting platform.

It has hundreds of experts and doctors who can answer different kinds of questions pertaining to health and nutrition. Its Pregnancy Tracker, or Baby Tracker, can answer questions about the various stages of baby's development. (Babychakra.com)

Aditi Avasthi, Embibe

Ms. Aditi Avasthi founded Embibe in 2012. It offers various kinds of educational services for high school and college students to help them prepare for different kinds of competitive exams.

Using its data, technology, and personalized feedback, it helps them prepare to excel in these examinations and the related routines. The students need to excel in these exams to be admitted to the prestigious educational institutions of their choice. (Embibe.com)

Meena Ganesh, Portea Medical

Ms. Meena Ganesh and her husband acquired Portea Medical in 2013. The organization provides various kinds of healthcare services to people in the comfort of their own homes. These services are particularly helpful to the elderly people who don't have the necessary strength go to the hospitals and doctors physically.

Prukalpa Sankar, SocialCops

Different government ministries in India collect data on different sectors and programs without much coordination and unification. As a result, they can't unify their data and make appropriate decisions.

Ms. Prukalpa Sankar and Varun Banka co-founded SocialCops in 2012. It's a technology company that helps officials build accurate data on different levels on important matters like income and savings, access to healthcare, and the quality of infrastructure. This helps them make better decisions.

For example, in 2016, it developed the [DISHA Dashboard](#) for 20 government agencies for their various projects. (Yadav 2018)

Sairee Chahal, Sheroes.in

SHEROES is a women's community platform, offering support, resources, opportunities and interactions via Sheroes.com. Its members discuss health, careers, relationships, and prevention of sexual harassment. They share their life stories, achievements and moments. It also

offers a helpline where community members can talk to counsellors on all aspects of their growth journeys.

Over a million women have been directly helped by Sairee's leadership. SHEROES intends to help more than 100 million women in the next five years. (Saireechahal.com)

OBSTACLES AND CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN

It is a blessing to be a woman in India. She is loved as a mother, as a daughter, and as a wife. However, at times, it may also be a curse to be a woman in India. She is not welcome as a daughter because of the dowry her parents need to pay to get her married. She does not have much freedom to do things on her own.

Women in India, especially those who try to become entrepreneurs or social entrepreneurs, face a host of problems and challenges. Here are some of them.

The Motherhood

Only women give births. Naturally, they are seen as mothers first. They, at least initially, also need to spend more time at home to stay with their children. However, the work they do at home is often classified as part of the 'informal sector' or the 'shadow economy'. (Torri and Martinez, 2014.)

Maria Mies labelled this situation as the 'housewifization' of labour, which treats women's work as subsistence work and does not include it in the production of capital. They are paid less than their male counterparts for the similar work; despite the laws against it. (See Carr, Chen, and Jhabvala, 1996; as cited in Datta and Gailey, 2012)

Childhood

Right from their early childhood, girls are taught to be introvert, not to speak much in the front of men, and not to be aggressive. They are often being readied to become brides.

All these discriminatory family and cultural practices against girls, as compared to their male counterparts, make them weak, passive, introvert, and have a low need for success.

Education and Training

According to Ghosh (2002, as cited in Datta and Gailey, 2012), lack of macro-technical skills among women of poorer socioeconomic resources is a primary reason of their subservience to men.

Access to Resources

Because of their family and cultural challenges, as described above, it is difficult for women to start their own business, or even learn entrepreneurial skills, against the wishes of their father/husband.

Even when some women have crossed those hurdles, they face challenges in selecting businesses to pursue, raising funds, producing goods and services, marketing them, and managing them.

Personality

The protective and discriminatory nature of their family upbringing and their unsupportive socio-cultural environment often make the Indian women risk-averse. They lack

the self-confidence to start a business on their own which is often risky by its nature. They are happy and proud to be related to their successful husbands, children, or parents.

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Meaning of Empowerment

The meaning of empowerment has been explained using different words by different writers. These include words such as independence, being free, power to make decisions, control over resources, personal strength, self-control, self-reliance, and freedom of choice and action. (See Moser, 1989, Moser 1993; and Rolands, 1997; all as cited in Basargekar, 2009).

In her widely acknowledged article, Kabeer (1999) says that “ability to make choices” is a key element of women empowerment. This in turn, Kabeer states, depends upon three variables: (1) Access to resources, (2) Agency, and (3) Achievements.

According to a study by V Krishnamoorthy and R Balasubramani (2014), “ambition, skills and knowledge, family support, market opportunities, independence, government subsidy and satisfaction are the important entrepreneurial motivational factors” for women.

According to Torri and Martinez (2014), empowering women requires their education, their ownership of resources, and their access to job market.

Role of Microfinance

In 1976, Prof. Muhammad Yunus addressed the socio-economic issues of poverty, under-utilized skills, and women empowerment in Bangladesh by introducing the concept of Grameen Bank. He believed that the women can take micro loans, use their skills to start a small business, pay back loans, and come out of poverty. The Grameen Bank, his Nobel Peace Prize winning initiative, has been copied in many countries including in India. (Sharma, Singla, and Grover, 2015)

Microfinance empowers women by giving them direct access to capital, starting and running their own business, earn their own living, and support their own families. It gives them self-esteem and respect.

According to Naila Kabeer (2001), women’s participation in microcredit programmes in Bangladesh also led to their increased involvement in community affairs, reduction in domestic violence, and an overall sense of more power.

A research into seven microfinance projects in India, conducted by ICICI and UNDP, concluded that these projects were successful in building savings, reducing migration in search of employment, bringing gender issues on the common platform and reducing economic vulnerability and dependence on moneylenders. They, however, were not able to reach the poorest of the poor people. (See Basargekar 2009; and Torri and Martinez, 2014)

The microfinance program also has its problems. In spite of its huge success, the micro-finance programs are not able to reach the poorest 20 per cent of the population. (Torri and Martinez, 2014).

Karnani (2009), questioning the value of microfinance programs, suggested that overall India should reallocate its resources away from microfinance and support instead larger firms in labor intensive industries. This would help lessen poverty, as it is happening in China, Korea, Taiwan, and other developing countries.

Institutional and Organizational Efforts

Several organizations and institutions have been established to recognize, support, and empower women, women entrepreneurship, and women social entrepreneurship in India. Some of these are presented below.

For the first time, India's Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-12) acknowledged that women are not only equal to men as citizens, but they are also agents of economic and social growth. (Lavanya, 2010, cited in Sharma, Singla, and Grover, 2015).

India has a separate Ministry of Women and Child Development to promote social and economic empowerment of women; and to promote children's development, care and protection. (Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2006).

The British Council, in partnership with Diageo, has established the "Young Women Social Entrepreneurship Development Programme" to promote social enterprise expertise among women in India. (British Council, 2015, cited in Sharma, Singla, and Grover, 2015).

The Federation of Indian Women Entrepreneur was established in 1993 to promote networking among different organizations of women entrepreneurs in India.

Federation of Ladies Organization was established in 1983 to promote women entrepreneurship and women empowerment.

Women's India trust (WIT) was established in 1968 by Kamila Tyabji. Its objective is to help export items produced by Indian women to various countries.

Consortium of Women Entrepreneur of India (CWEI) was established in 2001. It helps women find methods of production, marketing, and finance.

There are several other local, statewide, national and international organizations to empower women in India.

The women cooperatives provide a variety of services in the areas such as financing, water supply, sanitation, housing, schools, and health.

About 65 million people live in slums in India. Dharavi (near Mumbai) is the largest slum area in the country. However, over the years, with the help of cooperatives, and others, its residents have established thousands of successful small businesses. (Datta and Gailey, 2012; and Tripathi and Agarwal, 2013)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The women business owners are making important contributions to India's socio-economic health and pride. Various efforts are being made to promote and empower them. All these efforts are laudable and helpful. However, much more is needed to empower them and to recognize them as equal partners in India's economic and social advancement.

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