



WOMEN EMPOWRMENT: ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

Dr.D.Jayamma,

Assistant Professor of Commerce,
Gobi Arts & Science College,
Gobichettipalayam.

Jayamsenthil2010@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The Indian Knowledge System (IKS) has played a multifaceted role in influencing women's empowerment in India. India, a nation with a rich cultural and historical heritage, occupies a unique position due to its traditional knowledge systems and sociocultural dynamics that influence gender roles and empowerment. The Indian Knowledge System encompasses a variety of indigenous and traditional practices, including education, health, governance, and community practices, that have historically shaped societal behaviours and attitudes towards women.

Women's empowerment in India is not merely a matter of economic and social advancement, but also involves overcoming a longstanding history of gender discrimination ingrained in the socio-cultural fabric of the country. Traditional Indian knowledge systems have supported and challenged these gender norms. On the one hand, cultural and religious practices rooted in ancient texts and traditions have often been cited as reasons for gender disparities and limitations in women's roles in society. On the other hand, the reinterpretation and modernization of these traditional knowledge systems can serve as powerful catalysts for women's empowerment. Efforts to empower women in India through education, economic participation, and political representation have shown varying levels of success. The potential of these systems to foster empowerment lies in the integration and adaptation of traditional knowledge with modern educational and empowerment strategies.

INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM (IKS)

- **Ethical & Purpose-Driven:** Businesses are often driven by *Dharma* (duty) and *Satya* (truthfulness), ensuring socially responsible and ethical operations.
- **Sustainability & Community:** Rooted in traditional wisdom, many women entrepreneurs prioritize *Sarvodaya* (welfare of all) and environmental sustainability over pure profit maximization.
- **Leveraging Indigenous Knowledge:** Women utilize traditional knowledge for products, such as in organic agriculture and herbal medicine, strengthening local, sustainable industries.
- **Resilience and Adaptability:** The traditional Indian value of resilience helps women entrepreneurs navigate challenges and economic disruptions.

STATUS AND GROWTH OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP :

- **Contribution:** Approximately 20% of MSMEs in India are owned by women, employing 22 to 27 million people.
- **Age Profile:** 58% of female entrepreneurs in India are aged 20 to 30 years at the time of starting, indicating a young, ambitious workforce.
- **Economic Impact:** While 19% of working-age women participate in formal work, boosting women's entrepreneurship could generate 150-170 million jobs.

- **Evolution:** From early, home-based businesses, women are now entering sectors like IT and manufacturing, supported by SHGs and government initiatives.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP & IKS :

- **Traditional Knowledge Integration:** Women entrepreneurs often leverage traditional, sustainable practices (e.g., handicrafts, food processing, natural products) in line with IKS, promoting ecological balance and economic empowerment.
- **Ethical Frameworks:** The integration of traditional Indian ethical values, such as *Dharma* (duty) and *Sewa* (service), into business practices helps create sustainable, long-term ventures, distinguishing them from purely profit-driven models.
- **Cultural Roots & Resilience:** Despite facing significant, male-dominated, socio-cultural barriers and limited access to capital, Indian women entrepreneurs demonstrate high resilience and creativity, often acting as agents of change in their communities.
- **Governmental Support & Policies:** Initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana and Stand-Up India aim to foster this sector by providing financial support specifically to women-led MSMEs and startups.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES :

- **Barriers:** Key obstacles include limited financial literacy, lack of direct property ownership, and societal biases, resulting in only 19% participation of working-age women in formal, paid work.
- **Opportunities:** The growth of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) has significantly boosted rural women's entrepreneurship.
- **Future Focus:** Future empowerment hinges on culturally sensitive policies, legal protection of indigenous knowledge, and leveraging technology to bridge the gender gap.
- **Government Support & Schemes:** Initiatives like Bharatiya Mahila Bank Business Loan, Udyogini Scheme, and the Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) provide easier access to finance and training.
- **Education and Skill Development:** A rise in educated, tech-savvy women is driving innovation and enabling them to enter unconventional sectors.
- **IKS Integration:** Leveraging traditional wisdom, such as sustainable, community-oriented business models inherent in Indian culture, can foster unique, ethical, and sustainable enterprises.
- **Changing Social Attitudes:** Increasing awareness and support from families are empowering more women to pursue entrepreneurship as a career.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES :

- **Patriarchal Mindset:** Social attitudes and gender inequality often treat women as dependent, restricting their mobility and freedom to make independent business decisions.
- **Financial Constraints:** Women struggle to access capital, lack property in their name for collateral, and are often perceived as less credit-worthy by banks.
- **Dual Responsibility:** Balancing family, household, and business obligations places an immense burden on women, limiting their time for business development.
- **Lack of Marketing Knowledge:** Stiff competition from organized sectors and limited access to professional, technical, and marketing networks hinder growth.
- **Low Risk-Bearing Ability:** Due to a lack of social support and financial safety nets, women often have a lower capacity to bear risk, reducing their confidence.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE GROWTH :

- Enhance access to training on modern business techniques, such as financial management and digital marketing.
- Provide better support for and access to, raw materials and market linkages for local, traditional products.
- Foster mentorship opportunities to guide women entrepreneurs through the complexities of scaling their businesses.

CONCLUSION:

The Indian Knowledge System has both helped and hindered women's empowerment. Some traditions value women's roles, while others keep the gender gap alive. Combining traditional knowledge with modern methods can boost women's empowerment, particularly in education, business, and economic involvement.

Indigenous practices, such as self-help groups and microfinance, have helped women gain financial independence and social status, particularly in rural areas. Women entrepreneurs use traditional knowledge in areas such as herbal products, arts, and crafts, but still face social and institutional barriers. Entrepreneurship among women, no doubt improves the wealth of the nation in general and of the family in particular. Women today are more willing to take up activities that were once considered the preserve of men, and have proved that they are second to no one with respect to contribution to the growth of the economy. Women entrepreneurship must be moulded properly with entrepreneurial traits and skills to meet the changes in trends, challenges global markets and also be competent enough to sustain and strive for excellence in the entrepreneurial arena.

References:

1. Ankita. Education and empowerment of women in ancient India: exploring a glorious past. Shodh Sari- An International Multidisciplinary Journal. 2024;3(3):347-362.
2. Kumari N. Indian knowledge system and women: a journey towards access to justice and empowerment. Indian Journal of Law and Legal Research. 2023;VI(IV):713-729.
3. Bertaux N, Crable E. Learning about women. Economic development, entrepreneurship and the environment in India: A case study. Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship. 2007 Dec;12(04):467-478.
4. www. Google.com
5. www. Wikipedia.com

