

# Women Entrepreneurs in Odisha

*Subhrata Pattnaik*

According to the National Knowledge Commission of India (2008), entrepreneurship is the “professional application of knowledge, skills and competencies or monetizing a new idea, by an individual or a set of people, by launching an enterprise de novo or diversifying from an existing one (distinct from seeking self-employment as in a profession or trade), thus to pursue growth while generating wealth, employment and social good”.

Normally, entrepreneurship is viewed as competency associated with innovation & growth which is distinctly different from self-employment, which is generally pursued for earning a livelihood and not necessarily focus on innovation and growth. Unfortunately, existing base of enterprises in Odisha is mostly (around 70%) self-employed units. Entrepreneurship is a creative and innovative response in any field of social, business, agriculture, education and others.”

Entrepreneurship is a concept, which attracts everyone towards it, it is the feeling of creating something new with or without any help. Innovation is the first criteria for entrepreneurship and as the economy changed so did the thought process of the people changed and this was seen more in the developed country. The development of entrepreneur is a old phenomenon for the developed countries. They are growing very fast in developed countries like the U.S, U.K and

Canada where 30 percent of all small companies are women-owned and it is being contemplated that if women continue to grow at the same pace then very soon their percentage will rise to 50 percent. (but in developing country like India it technically gained momentum since a decade or two).

## **Concept of Women Entrepreneur :**

The woman or a group of women who initiate, organize, and operate a business enterprise is known as women entrepreneur. A women entrepreneur has to perform all the activities involved in establishing an enterprise. These include idea generation and screening, determination of objectives, project preparation, product analysis etc.

## **According to Government of India:**

“A woman entrepreneur is defined as an enterprise owned and controlled by a woman and having a minimum financial interest of 51 percent of the capital and giving at least 51 percent of the employment generated in the enterprise to women”.

“Woman who innovates, imitates or adopts a business activity is called woman entrepreneur”. 21<sup>st</sup> century is the century of telecom, IT and financial institutions. Women’s

expertise in all these industries has made them emerge as a force to reckon with.

Many of these industries are headed and guided by women as pioneers and mavericks. They have ventured to build enterprises, to discover their relevance and meaning of life in themselves. But still in relation to the women population, the trend has not been spectacular.

As per 1991 census, only 185900 women accounting for only 4.5% of the total self employed persons in the country were recorded. Majority of them are engaged in the unorganized sectors like agriculture, agro based industries, handicrafts, handlooms, and cottage-based industries.

There were more than 295680 women entrepreneurs claiming 11.2% of the total 2.64 million entrepreneurs in India during 1995-96. This is almost double the % of women (5.2%) among the total population of self employed during 1981.

The present rate of 30% success of EDP training was likely to go up to 45% with growing experience and improved techniques of training and follow up. The women were to be given training in self employment/entrepreneurship of shorter duration as well as some training in trade and skill areas.

In order to mobilize such women entrepreneurs, a number of activities such as motivational drive; preparation of information materials; conducting training; creation of women industrial estates/areas/sheds; creation of common marketing exposition centres, training of trainers/promoters; use of mass media, etc are required. Combined effect of all these is bound to accelerate the process of women entrepreneurship development.

There is immense scope for women to become entrepreneurs... all they need is an

opportunity, said Arati Ahuja, Commissioner of Women & Child Development Department. Addressing women entrepreneurs at an event by the Google Business Group, Bhubaneswar, (GBG-Bhubaneswar), Smt. Ahuja said there are many women who have excelled in their chosen fields. "Women should use the right opportunity to make a difference," she said while speaking about the various schemes introduced by the Government of Odisha for welfare of women.

On the occasion, Founder-Director of Ortel Communication Jagi Mangat Panda shared her success story and the start-up problems she had to overcome using technology. "Web technologies like Google can help women entrepreneurs increase their productivity, both professionally and personally," she said.

Odisha is home to many women who have turned out to be successful entrepreneurs in the last few years, dealing with commodities starting from 'Arisha Pitha' to cosmetics.

The GBG-Bhubaneswar, a community of business professionals sharing knowledge about Google web technologies for business success, was launched in Bhubaneswar one year back. As a part of its various initiatives, GBG-Bhubaneswar has also launched its Women Entrepreneurs on the Web (WeOW) initiative to help women entrepreneurs connect, grow their online presence and utilise Google products to launch and scale their businesses.

Ananda Mishra, GBG-Bhubaneswar, said Google technologies will help the women entrepreneurs in getting them potential customers for their businesses sitting at home. "We are here to change their vision of how business operates. GBG-Bhubaneswar will continue to organize free events, workshops, discussions. The focus is how the internet can empower women, how these entrepreneurs can sell online, and how they can

connect with the customers. So, there is education, training and creating a community where they can support each other," he said.

Ms. Supreety Mishra is a young entrepreneur and an emerging leader. A Management Graduate from Cardiff University in the UK, Supreety left her job at the UK Government with a dream to contribute to the future of Odisha. She established North Odisha Farmers Multipurpose Cooperative Limited (NOFMCL) to uplift the socio-economic condition of the farmers through particular focus on agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry. In last three years she has created higher level of awareness and has made significant impact on the minds of farmers by changing the way they do farming and how best they can earn their livelihood in a sustainable way.

This Odisha Inc Award acknowledges Ms. Mishra's dedication to add value to business and empower marginalized sections of the society through entrepreneurship.

Women entrepreneurship has been recognized as an important source of economic growth. Women entrepreneurs create new jobs for themselves and others and also provide society with different solutions to management, organization and business problems. However, they still represent a minority of all entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs often face gender-based barriers to starting and growing their businesses, like discriminatory property, matrimonial and inheritance laws and/or cultural practices; lack of access to formal finance mechanisms; limited mobility and access to information and networks, etc.

Women's entrepreneurship can make a particularly strong contribution to the economic well-being of the family and communities, poverty reduction and women's empowerment, thus

contributing to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Thus, governments across the world as well as various developmental organizations are actively undertaking promotion of women entrepreneurs through various schemes, incentives and promotional measures.

### **Policies and Schemes for Women Entrepreneurs in India :**

In India, the Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises development organizations, various State Small Industries Development Corporations, the Nationalised Banks and even NGOs are conducting various programmes including Entrepreneurship Development Programmes (EDPs) to cater to the needs of potential women entrepreneurs, who may not have adequate educational background and skills. The Office of DC (MSME) has also opened a Women Cell to provide coordination and assistance to women entrepreneurs facing specific problems.

There are also several other schemes of the government at central and state level, which provide assistance for setting up training-cum-income generating activities for needy women to make them economically independent. Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has also been implementing special schemes for women entrepreneurs.

In addition to the special schemes for women entrepreneurs, various government schemes for MSMEs also provide certain special incentives and concessions for women entrepreneurs. For instance, under **Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY)**, preference is given to women beneficiaries. The government has also made several relaxations for women to facilitate the participation of women beneficiaries in this scheme. Similarly, under the **MSE Cluster Development Programme** by

Ministry of MSME, the contribution from the Ministry of MSME varies between 30-80% of the total project in case of hard intervention, but in the case of clusters owned and managed by women entrepreneurs, contribution of the M/o MSME could be upto 90% of the project cost. Similarly, under the **Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises**, the guarantee cover is generally available upto 75% of the loans extended; however the extent of guarantee cover is 80% for MSEs operated and/or owned by women.

In a country where women are discriminated treating them as the 'weaker sex', there are a few who have shown courage and zeal to go against the norms and make a place for themselves in the patriarchal Indian society.

Nalini Mohanty in Odisha is one such success story. A female entrepreneur from the rural milieu of Odisha, she runs a small business unit of her own providing employment to many poverty ridden women.

Coming from a conservative and rural background Nalini started her own incense sticks manufacturing unit at the age of 16 in Jagannathpur hamlet in Kendrapada district, when started as a domestic venture 14 years ago, with mere investment of 2500 rupees, is now employing over 2000 women and reaping a turnover of 25,00,000 (2.5 million) rupees.

"I am a woman. I think there are a lot of women who need to work and earn to improve their family condition. If I can work why can't they? I want to make other women also self reliant and independent," said Nalini Mohanty, woman entrepreneur.

Facing opposition and non-cooperation from every sphere, Nalini continued with her dream project.

It is her perseverance and persistence that has won her the coveted national award for 'Successful Micro-Entrepreneur' in 2006, instituted by New Delhi based City Foundation.

"When I received the award I was very happy. Since my childhood I had this dream of employing more and more women and making them self reliant," said Mohanty.

An inspiration for the other women Nalini dreams of women becoming self-reliant and feels perseverance can help gain the objective.

Women working with her are happy as they feel Mohanty has provided them a chance to be self reliant.

Today, more and more women entrepreneurs are starting businesses and they now account for a quarter to a third of all businesses in the formal economy worldwide. However, the great majority are very small or micro enterprises with little potential for growth. Otherwise, women entrepreneurs are under-represented in enterprises of all sizes, and the bigger the firm the less likely it is to be headed by a woman. Societal attitudes and social beliefs inhibit some women from even considering starting a business, while systemic barriers mean that many women entrepreneurs stay confined to very small businesses often operating in the informal economy. This not only limits their ability to earn an income for themselves and their families but restricts their full potential to contribute to socio-economic development and job creation. The World Bank's World Development Report 2011 suggests that productivity could increase by as much as 25% in some countries if discriminatory barriers against women were removed. Removing these barriers, such as discriminatory property and inheritance laws, cultural practices, lack of access to formal financial institutions, and time constraints due to family and household responsibilities, will

create greater opportunities for sustainable enterprises run by women. This in turn will contribute to women's economic empowerment and gender equality as well as helping to generate sustainable growth and jobs.

While removing barriers is essential, investment is equally vital. Investing in women is one of the most effective means of increasing equality and promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Investments in women-specific programmes can have significant knock-on effects for development, since women generally spend more of their income on the health, education and well-being of their families and communities than men do. While targeted measures can bridge the gap for women, it is also essential to remove discriminatory aspects of economic and social policies and programmes that may impede women's full participation in the economy and society.

The economic progress of India depends on the productivity of both male and female workforce. In Odisha, in early period, women were confined within the four walls of their houses and were dominated by males. Of late, there has been tremendous progress in the social and

cultural environment in Odisha. With the concept of Self Help Groups (SHGs), the women are now participating in all productive activities and are at par with men. The monthly income of the women is in the rising trend properly matching with their monthly expenditure. Women, through this SHG movement have asserted a dignified position in the family as well as in the society. Their decision making power has immensely enhanced not only in their family but also in the society.

No doubt, the SHG movement in Odisha has been moving in the right direction, but still there is a long way to go. It is necessary to empower the women more and more in social, cultural, economic, political and legal matters, for the interest of the family in particular and the nation in general.

---

Subhrata Pattnaik, "Satya Niwas", Satahat Christian Sahi, Cuttack, Email-subhratapattnaik@gmail.com.