

**WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE INDIAN SCENARIO**

*Are they an outcome of women who are not allowed to work?*

**Tanya Soin Gaurav**

**Doctoral Researcher**

**Banasthali Vidyapith**

**ABSTRACT**

Starting one's own venture of any kind might seem exciting and also impart a feel of authority and autonomy. But the deeper one goes, the deeper it gets. The kinds of challenges that come one are much higher than what can be anticipated at the inception. To the extent that maybe a stage comes that one feels like giving it all up and settle for a routine job/career. But still people keep up with it, pursue it and travel with it all the way to success. All this gets a little more challenging when the entrepreneur in context is a woman and to make it better or worse we talk about the Indian scenario where the social fabric is extremely sensitive when any gender centric concept is in picture. Amidst all this there are women who take up entrepreneurship as a career and pursue it well with all its pros and cons, embrace it with all its challenges. The question is WHY? What makes an Indian woman take up entrepreneurship as a career? When she knows that usually her professional pursuits cannot be fulfilled without unconditional support from people around her. Does she think it's an easy way out – Just sit at home and do something types? Does she give herself the option of giving up whenever and wherever she wants – after all she is an Indian woman and has other “important matters” to look into !!

The researcher makes an attempt to answer these questions and understand what goes inside the head of a woman who has taken up entrepreneurship as a career and faced it full and forth, tasted success and failure but kept up with it and still don't regret taking it up; and all this with special reference to the Indian social fabric.

**KEYWORDS:** Women entrepreneurs, work – life balance, experience, expertise, social fabric

## **INTRODUCTION**

Women in India have little to choose from where work is concerned. Before finalizing a particular career, she has to weigh it against a lot of factors which might define her life eventually. Random decisions or simply following one's own passion/interest might have a possibility of fizzling out over a passage of time. Depending on the kind of social set-up one hails from and the school of thought one has followed all her life, any particular girl decides her respective course of action where her career is concerned. Marriage and children also decide to a large extent the nature and continuity of a particular job. A certain section of women don't believe in or are not allowed to pursue a career after either marriage or kids, some change the nature of their job, and a larger section gives up working entirely. Changes are coming where women have started understanding the need of working all throughout their lives but still major work has to be done on the same. Women who are enterprising and ambitious try and customize their jobs as per their lives and culture. But this depends on a large extent on the employer and the opportunities available at that particular point of time. Customizing might not always be possible and one would end up in a confused state of mind at the end of it. Amidst the different kinds of women who try several permutations and combinations to ensure that they don't give up working at any point in their lives, are those who make an attempt to take total control of their work lives, become their own bosses, define their own terms and yield results accordingly. These women are those who decide to become entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurship is one very challenging school of thought. Women who decide to take it up and pursue it have to accept it as a whole. Sometimes people take it up in order to ensure that they work on their own terms and end up sloging even more than they would have had they chosen traditional careers. One has to be very clear why one wants to become an entrepreneur!! Some women also take up this particular way of working because they have a strong support system and don't have to worry about family expenses since they are met by the other members of the family. But if it's a woman whose earnings contribute to the family's regular expenses, the researcher wonders if starting one's own venture is something a woman would venture into.

This research paper would probe into the reasons why women choose to become entrepreneurs. An attempt would also be made to understand the concept of "career" for this particular section of

working women and analyze how it is different from the conventional school of thought. An attempt would also be made to understand why women choose entrepreneurship and how much do they connect it to relevance education and experience or is passion for a particular kind of work enough for an individual to pursue it as a career?

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

As per a research conducted by Dr. Vijya kumar,A. and Jayachitra,s. (2013), “Women Entrepreneurs may be defined as the woman or group of women who initiate, organize and co-operate a business enterprise. Government of India has defined women entrepreneurs as an enterprise owned and controlled by a woman having a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and giving at least 51% of employment generated in the enterprise to women. The Indian women are no longer treated as show pieces to be kept at home. They are also enjoying the impact of globalization and making an influence not only on domestic but also on international sphere. Women are doing a wonderful job striking a balance between their house and career. Women entrepreneurs are key players in any developing country particularly in terms of their contribution to economic development. In recent years, even among the developed countries like USA and Canada, Women's role in terms of their share in small business has been increasing.”

Also, “The woman entrepreneur in India has various qualities. A woman or a group of women manages the whole business of enterprise. She prepares various plans and executes them under her own supervision and control. There may be some persons to help her but ultimate control lies with the woman. A woman entrepreneur must provide at least 51 percent of the employment generated in her enterprise to women. A woman entrepreneur takes calculated risk. She faces uncertainty confidently and assumes risk. She has to tie up capital and wait for good returns. A woman entrepreneur likes to take realistic risks because she wants to be a successful entrepreneur. The most critical skill required for industrial development is the ability of building a sound organization. A woman entrepreneur assembles, co-ordinates, organizes and manages the other factors namely land, labour and capital. It is essential to be a self confident for a woman entrepreneur. She should have faith in herself and in her abilities. She should have the confidence to implement the change and overcome any resistance to change. A woman entrepreneur should have courage to own the

mistakes and correct them. The mainfunction of a woman entrepreneur is to make decision. Shetakes various decisions regarding the activities of herenterprise. She decides about the type of business to be doneand the way of doing it. A woman entrepreneur must be clearand creative in decision making process. A womanentrepreneur is one who incubates new ideas, starts herenterprise with these ideas and provides added value to societybased on their independent initiative.A distinguishing feature of a woman entrepreneur is thewillingness to work hard. She has to follow the principle,“Hard-work is the key to success A woman entrepreneur is anachievement oriented lady, not money hungry. She works forchallenge, accomplishment and service to others. Achievementorientation is a derive to overcome challenges, to advance andto grow. A woman entrepreneur must be optimistic. Sheshould approach her venture with a hope of success andattitude for success rather than with a fear of failure. Thepositive thinking of woman entrepreneur can turn the situationfavorable to her. The success of an enterprise largely dependsupon the ability of woman entrepreneur to cope with latesttechnology. Technical competency refers to the ability todevise and use the better ways of producing and marketinggoods and services. Women entrepreneurs face the adversitiesboldly and bravery. She has faith in herself and attempts tosolve the problems even under great pressure. A womanentrepreneur is energetic, single-minded, having a mission anda clear vision. She should be a lady of creative thinking andanalytical thinking. She must be intelligent, adaptable andproblem solver. Leadership quality is one of the mostimportant characteristic of a woman entrepreneur. It is theprocess of influencing and supporting others to workenthusiastically towards achieving objectives.”

“According to World Bank (2007), Fox (2001) and Hisrich (2005)entrepreneurship has the following benefits:

1. Entrepreneurs are their own bosses. They make the decisions. They choose whomto do business with and what work they will do. They decide what hours to work,as well as what to pay and whether to take vacations.
2. Entrepreneurship offers a greater possibility of achieving significant financialrewards than working for someone else.

3. It provides the ability to be involved in the total operation of the business, from concept to design and creation, from sales to business operations and customer response.

4. It offers the prestige of being the person in charge.

5. It gives an individual the opportunity to build equity, which can be kept, sold, or passed on to the next generation.

6. Entrepreneurship creates an opportunity for a person to make a contribution. Most new entrepreneurs help the local economy. A few—through their innovations—contribute to society as a whole.

7. It is a catalyst for economic change and growth. Entrepreneurship increases per capita output and income. By doing so it involves initiating and constituting change in the structure of business and society. As a result, entrepreneurship contributes a lot in increasing countries' output and productivity.

8. Entrepreneurship encourages innovation and creativity. It develops new products or services for the market to fulfill human needs. It also stimulates investment interest in the new ventures being created. Entrepreneurship through its process of innovation creates new investment in new ventures. More ventures being created, new jobs will be produced, thus reducing the unemployment rate. That will create and promote wealth distribution.”

“Women’s productive activities, particularly in industry, empower them economically and enable them to contribute more to overall development. Whether they are involved in small or medium scale production activities, or in the informal or formal sectors, women’s entrepreneurial activities are not only a means for economic survival but also have positive social repercussions for the women themselves and their social environment. United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO, 2001).”

“In many societies women do not enjoy the same opportunities as men. In many transitional economies progress has been achieved in opening doors to education and health protection for women but political and economic opportunities for female entrepreneurs have remained limited. Concerted efforts are needed to enable female entrepreneurs to make better economic choices and to

transform their businesses into competitive enterprises, generating income and employment through improved production (OECD, 1997).”

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The objective of this research is to understand why women take up entrepreneurship as their career. The aim is to understand the factors which push a woman towards creating their own work life and also to understand the factors which pull a woman away from traditional main stream careers. After all, it's a little difficult to be totally convinced to become an entrepreneur from day one of one's professional life. The researcher also attempts to understand the impact of education & experience vs. passion in a particular stream.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The target pool for this research would be female entrepreneurs. The size of the venture would not be given much importance. It could be any venture started and run by a woman. Also, the target pool would be spread across various age groups and social set-ups.

Primary and Secondary research would be carried out. Secondary research would include going through journals, websites, blogs, books and magazines. Primary research would be carried out through one-to-one interaction/interviews, though the questions would be drafted in order to keep the interaction focused. This research would be qualitative in nature. The researcher would carry out in-depth interviews of the respective women entrepreneurs. The focus however shall remain on one in-depth interview which shall be converted into a case study. All the other interviews shall contribute contextually to the main case study and form a part of the findings.

### **Case Study**

#### **“OJJAS” by RAJ KANWAR**

“I call myself a craftswoman and I strive to keep craftsmanship alive”, says Raj Kanwar (62) who with utmost clarity of purpose gave her professional and career interests to crafts.

### **GETTING STARTED**

Raj Kanwar finished her education in 1974. She gained expertise in textile designing and specialized in Sanganeri Printing. She was always a free-spirited and independent woman who wanted to do something of her own and was absolutely passionate about crafts. She got married in 1975 and founded “Marusthal” in 1976. This unit was a hand-block printing unit which specialized in sarees and quilts. She ran this unit for five years during which they took care of all activities related to crafts, organized exhibitions pan-India, sold products to CCI (Central Cottage Industries), RSIC (Rajasthan Small Industries Corporation) and others. But during this venture, she had no experience, no technical know-how and she also lacked conviction on where to start from and where to lead it to. All she truly had was her education and her strong will to create something of her own. Somehow, “Marusthal” could not be continued.

#### ADDRESSING THE “NEED OF THE HOUR”

She was in that phase of her life wherein her personal front was extremely demanding. Therefore, she thought of taking up a government job and do full justice to her personal front as well. She also thought that this decision would give her the experience and the technical and strategic know-how which she lacked when she started off with “Marusthal”. So, in 1981 she joined the government services as a designer with RSIC in their Handicrafts Cell and was in-charge of the projects of their Design Development Research Center. She continued working for 18 years. From 1997-99, she went on deputation to set up the “Indian Institute of Crafts and Design” and from 1999-2000 she was an associate professor there itself. During her tenure she made designs which became style statements.

#### TURNING DREAMS INTO REALITY

But, Marusthal was still breathing within her and the thought of leaving it incomplete was irking her somewhere. So, finally in 2000-01 she came up with “Ojjas” in Jaipur. Her journey as an entrepreneur actually began from this point in her life. “Ojjas” was born out of the idea that silk printing was not inherent to Rajasthan. “Ojjas” introduced brass blocks for fine outlines in silk printing. They used traditional to contemporary – all kinds of dyes (Dabu – vegetable dyes). They participated and conducted exhibitions, supplied to the best saree shops across India and also wholesale pan-India. Raj Kanwar created a market for silk printing which Jaipur did not have before and

was brought in from Calcutta and Delhi to Jaipur. During this part of the journey, she got associated with Pratapsons. During a functions on seeing her in one of her own designs, they asked her to print many more sarees for them as they felt that there was a large market waiting for silk sarees from Jaipur in block printing.

Later, when the government became stricter with pollution and environmental laws, some like-minded people with similar career interests got together and formed a company called JITP – Jaipur Integrated Textile Park marketed as Jaipur Block. The Central Government was providing subsidy to textile parks with the condition for water harvesting and recycling. JITP turned to RIICO (Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation Limited) for assistance and RIICO helped JITP to look for land. Finally, 43 acres of land was allotted to 22 people. The shareholders of JITP had their shares as per the land purchased. Following the norms of the central government, the Jaipur Block sought and received help from “European Union” to set up the water recycling plant. Jaipur Block was one of its kinds in North India to set up an environmental friendly textile park and encash solar energy. Resource Management (Finance, HR and natural) were taken care of by individual units and Jaipur Block together. All legal standards were also maintained as far as labour laws and other environmental/pollution laws were concerned.

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

But for Raj Kanwar it was not just about business. After agriculture, textile and weaving is the second largest industry in terms of providing employment. She, as a person, gives a lot of importance to handicrafts, heritage and culture and wanted to make every possible effort to keep it alive.

One major challenge that came up was screen printing which used big machines and also the end product was priced lower than those made through block printing. But Raj Kanwar stuck to block printing. She opined that crafts are seeped deep into the rural society of India and if care is taken for it to be brought back into main stream; it can generate much more employment. The craftswoman in her was convinced that the value of her product was the value of the effort put in by her people. Where in machine printing, large quantum could be printed by fewer people, Block printing is a



specialized craft requiring great skill and effort and many more people to print. Hence, block printing generated higher employment, fed more mouths and above all kept the heritage and craft alive.

She was also of the opinion that there were not enough design entrepreneurs with strong technical background who could play role models for traditional printers. Block printing was diminishing and she felt the utmost need to bring it back to life. She was so focused and determined that she never felt the need to diversify. As per her, there was always a lot to do in her venture and nature of work.

### WORK DYNAMICS

When it came to access to finance, markets, training, networks and policy makers – she had been there and done it all during her government service. Her 20 years experience came in handy here. She possessed very strong technical know-how, so she conducted her trainings in-house only and at regular intervals of time.

Organizational dynamics have to be faced by all, whether one follows the traditional employer-employee pattern of work or follows his/her path to entrepreneurship. Raj Kanwar too had to face discrimination, workplace politics, slow pace or lack of career advancement and challenges in getting to the right place. But she faced it squarely and never let anyone put her down. As per her, sincerity and consistency is the key to getting to the right place.

### SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS

To elaborate a little on the kind of person Raj Kanwar is, its important to throw some light on her personal front. Born into a defense family, she was raised in a very open environment free of pre-conceived notions and biases but was married off into a very traditional Rajput family. The difference between the two environments was drastic but she gave full regard to the two and accepted them for what they were. She believed in the fact that first one has to make a place for oneself in a manner that he/she is heard to and respected for what they are especially in context to Indian women. She says, “Indian women cannot break away from the society and its values and be happy. We are raised with them, they are inside us and somewhere they have a major role in making

us the individuals we are. The pattern of the society might change over time , but the values remain the same.”

Even as a female entrepreneur, a woman has to first give full regard to all her roles as a care-taker, wife, mother etc., she cannot let go of them. She has to take pride in it and balance them all since it will lead to her own self-satisfaction.

“Man lives in a cocoon while woman has the capacity to grow into a family. If she can produce life, she can produce anything and everything else” says Raj Kanwar. Even to change something, one has to first accept it wholeheartedly and take it as one’s own. Driven by these kinds of thoughts she brought about major changes in the society she belonged to. She broke the taboos of a traditional family gradually – not only for herself but also for those who looked upto her family as an example.

#### CONCLUDING WORDS

Nothing comes easy to a woman. Never has and given the current scenario, never will for a long period of time. But with a clarity of purpose, determination, perseverance, consistency and time, she can create a world around her which she wants to pass on to the generations to come. Woman can not mentally segregate her personal and professional lives. In each is the reflection of the other. If one is sorted so is the other, and if one is chaotic so is the other. Therefore, it becomes important for everyone around a woman with professional interests to accept and support her thoughts and break the stereotypes in order to build a progressive society. It is not about a particular gender or a particular individual; it is about mankind, society and the nation at large.

#### CONCLUSION

On the basis of the research carried out, the researcher concludes that there are various schools of thought that govern the decisions pertaining to the choice of being an entrepreneur and specially so in the case of Indian women. Some opine that having a strong hold on the technical know-how is important to excel in a particular field, while a few are of the opinion that passion for a particular interest is enough not only to start one’s own venture but also to take it to the pinnacle of success and glory. Younger current generation woman entrepreneurs opine that strong strategic intentions

and the sense of running a business is enough and the tactical and operational aspects can be taken care of by SMEs by collaboration or any other means of association as per the vision of the enterprise.

Also, the reasons why a female turns to entrepreneurship may also vary. While some always had a desire to own their own enterprise, others wanted a platform to utilize their skills, some wanted to break the monotony of their mundane routines while some are seeking recognition and acknowledgement. Whatever be the case, it doesn't come easy to women. Starting from workplace dynamics to politics, in some way or the other, they all have to face it. Challenges are at their peak and the responsibility rests solely on their shoulders when they decide to do their own stuff. Support from immediate and extended families are a must in whatever big or small way possible. Families where the women contribute to the family earning, they cannot think of taking a risk of a new start-up. In traditional families, a lot of people contribute to the decision of starting up a new venture and running it as well. Some women with the best of ideas and intentions can't venture out owing to lack of say and confidence in the social set-up they belong to.

Amidst all that has been discussed, the fact remains that women who have internal strength and mental robustness to pursue their dreams do so sooner or later with a balanced approach, determination, conviction and a high emotional quotient. An Indian woman cannot segregate their professional and personal lives. They are intertwined and therefore success in one reflects on the other. Not only that, the kind of satisfaction that comes in doing so helps a woman deliver better on either front. This particular ability gives rise to a holistic woman who respects all her roles and does not make mess of her life between role-ambiguity and role-conflict. And, this kind of a woman passes on this balance and sense of prioritization to her future generations and the society at large.

## **REFERENCES**

1. Arora, R. & Sood, S.K., "Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship and Small Business", Kalyani Publishers, Pp. 60-69.

2. Bruni, A. Gherardi, S, &Poggio, B. (2004). Entrepreneur-Mentality, Gender and the Study of Women Entrepreneurs. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*.Vol. 17 No. 3. (pp. 256-268). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
3. Dr. Vijayakumar,A and Jayachitra,S (2013) , “Women Entrepreneurs In India - Emerging Issues And Challenges”,*International Journal of Development Research*, Vol. 3, Issue, 04, pp.012-017.
4. Green, E., & Cohen, L. (1995). Women’s businesses: Are women entrepreneurs breaking new ground or simply balancing the demands of ‘women’s work’ in a new way?,*Journal of Gender Studies*, 4 (3), 297-314.
5. Jamali, D (2009), “Constraints and Opportunities facing women entrepreneurs in Developing Countries – A relational perspective”, *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, Vol24 No.4, pp232-251.
6. McManus, P.A. (2001), “Women’s participation in self-employment in western industrialized nations” , *International Journal of Sociology*, Vol 31 No. 2, pp. 70-97
7. Mahalingam, T.V.& Narayan Kumar, K.P.(2013), “Why women entrepreneurs are rare in India and what challenges they face.”, ET Bureau
8. Marlow, S & Patton, D. (2005),” All credit to men? Entrepreneurship, finance and gender”, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 29 No. 6, pp. 717-35.
9. Wube, MC (2010), “ Factors affecting the performance of Women Entrepreneurs in Micro and Small Enterprises (The Case of Dessie Town)”, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia.
10. [www.shebusiness.com](http://www.shebusiness.com)