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## Evolution and significance of women entrepreneurs in India

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### Abstract

Women entrepreneurship has emerged as a significant contributor to India's economic growth and development. The presence and significance of women entrepreneurs in India have witnessed a remarkable evolution over the past few decades. Historically constrained by societal norms and gender biases, women in India faced numerous challenges in pursuing entrepreneurial ventures. Over the years, women entrepreneurs in India have shattered barriers and made remarkable strides in various sectors. However, despite these achievements, women continue to face unique challenges in their entrepreneurial journey, changing social attitudes and policy support, women have emerged as a driving force in the country's entrepreneurial landscape. This research paper aims to examine the evolution of women entrepreneurship in India and its growing significance for the economy and society. It begins by delving into the historical context, highlighting the traditional roles assigned to women and the barriers they encountered in becoming entrepreneurs. The study then proceeds to explore key socio-economic and policy developments that have fostered the empowerment and growth of women entrepreneurs in recent times. The methodology involves a comprehensive review of existing literature, reports, and statistical data related to women entrepreneurship in India. Additionally, the paper addresses the economic impact of women entrepreneurs in terms of job creation, GDP contribution, and empowerment of women in the workforce. It also discusses the societal significance of women entrepreneurs as role models, fostering a culture of gender equality and women empowerment. Ultimately, the research emphasizes the need for continued support and targeted policies to further promote and nurture women entrepreneurship in India.

**Keywords:** Women Entrepreneurs; Employment; Empowerment; Gender Equality; Challenges and Opportunities

### 1. Introduction

In recent years, the role of women in entrepreneurship has gained significant recognition worldwide. Women entrepreneurs are catalysts for economic growth, social empowerment, and innovation in various industries. Their unique perspectives, resilience, and determination have shattered barriers and transformed the business landscape.

Women entrepreneurship refers to the process of identifying opportunities, organizing and managing resources, and taking risks to create and run a business venture, led and operated by women (Brush, 1992). It involves women initiating, innovating, and growing businesses, as well as assuming the associated risks and rewards.

Women entrepreneurship goes beyond mere business ownership and encompasses the unique experiences, challenges, and opportunities faced by women entrepreneurs in various socio-cultural contexts. It involves breaking barriers, challenging gender norms, and contributing to the economic development and empowerment of women (Dhewanto, 2015).

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## **2. Historical perspective of entrepreneurship in India**

Entrepreneurship has a rich historical legacy in India, with a long-standing tradition of business and trade. Throughout different periods, entrepreneurship in India has played a significant role in shaping the economy and society.

During ancient times, India was a hub of trade and commerce, with the Indus Valley Civilization being one of the earliest known entrepreneurial civilizations. The Mauryan and Gupta empires witnessed a flourishing trade network and entrepreneurial activities, with merchants and traders traversing vast regions. (Lakshmi, 2015)

The medieval period saw the rise of entrepreneurial communities such as the Marwaris, Chettiars, and Gujaratis. These communities engaged in trade, finance, and money lending, and played a crucial role in building economic networks within India and beyond. (Roy, 2017)

The colonial era, marked by British rule, brought significant changes to India's entrepreneurial landscape. The British East India Company, initially established for trade, gradually gained control over India's economy. The Indian business class, including the Tatas, Birlas, and Ambanis, emerged during this period and played a pivotal role in industrialization and nation-building. (Nayyar, 2012)

Post-independence, India witnessed a mix of state-controlled and private entrepreneurship. The government's policy of economic planning and regulation limited the scope for private entrepreneurship, but notable entrepreneurs like J.R.D. Tata and Dhirubhai Ambani emerged as pioneers in their respective industries. (Bose, 2017)

In the 1990s, India underwent economic liberalization, opening doors for private enterprise and foreign investment. This period witnessed the rise of a new breed of entrepreneurs across sectors, including information technology, e-commerce, and services (Mishra, 2018).

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## **3. Statistical perspective of women entrepreneurship in India**

Women entrepreneurship in India has witnessed significant growth and transformation in recent years. Statistical data provides insights into the current state of women entrepreneurship in the country.

### **3.1. Increasing Number of Women Entrepreneurs**

According to the Sixth Economic Census by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, women constitute approximately 14% of the total entrepreneurship in India (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2018). This indicates a steady increase in the number of women entrepreneurs.

### **3.2. Contribution to Employment**

Women-led businesses in India have been instrumental in generating employment opportunities. According to the National Sample Survey (NSS) data, women-owned enterprises provide employment to more than 13 million people in India (National Sample Survey Office, 2013). This demonstrates the significant role of women entrepreneurs in job creation.

### **3.3. Sectoral Distribution**

Women entrepreneurs in India are involved in various sectors. According to the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), women-owned enterprises are prevalent in sectors such as textiles, handicrafts, food processing, education, healthcare, and information technology (Ministry of MSME, 2020). This highlights the diversity of sectors where women entrepreneurs are making their mark.

### **3.4. Access to Finance**

Access to finance is crucial for the growth and sustainability of women-owned enterprises. The MSME Pulse Report 2020 reveals that women entrepreneurs face challenges in accessing formal credit facilities, with only a small percentage of women-owned enterprises availing bank loans (SIDBI & CRISIL, 2020). This indicates the need for increased financial support and inclusive lending practices.

### **3.5. Global Recognition**

Indian women entrepreneurs have gained global recognition for their achievements. According to the MasterCard Index of Women Entrepreneurs 2020, India ranked 52nd out of 58 countries in terms of women's ability to thrive as entrepreneurs (MasterCard, 2020). This indicates the potential for further growth and support for women entrepreneurs in India.

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## **4. Role of governments and private organizations in supporting women entrepreneurs in India**

The support and initiatives by both governments and private organizations play a crucial role in empowering and promoting women entrepreneurship in India. These efforts aim to address the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs and provide them with the necessary resources, mentorship, and opportunities for growth.

### **4.1. Government Initiatives**

The Indian government has launched various programs and policies to support women entrepreneurs. Initiatives like Stand-Up India, MUDRA Yojana, and Atal Innovation Mission provide financial assistance, collateral-free loans, skill development training, and mentoring support to women entrepreneurs (Ministry of MSME, 2021; Department of Financial Services, 2021).

### **4.2. Incubation Centers and Skill Development**

Governments and private organizations have established incubation centers and skill development programs specifically for women entrepreneurs. These centers provide access to infrastructure, networking opportunities, training programs, and mentoring to help women develop their entrepreneurial skills and scale their businesses (NITI Aayog, 2020; Tiwari, 2019).

### **4.3. Women Entrepreneurship Cells**

Several educational institutions and organizations have set up Women Entrepreneurship Cells (WECs) to promote and support women entrepreneurs. These cells provide guidance, mentorship, networking platforms, and business development support to aspiring and existing women entrepreneurs (Bhatnagar et al., 2020; Panigrahi, 2020).

### **4.4. Financial Institutions and Venture Capital**

Financial institutions and venture capital firms are increasingly recognizing the potential of women entrepreneurs in India. They are launching specialized funds and programs to provide financial support, investment opportunities, and access to markets for women-led businesses (Das & Mukherjee, 2018; Women's Entrepreneurship Platform, n.d.).

### **4.5. Networking and Collaboration**

Private organizations and industry associations play a vital role in fostering networking and collaboration among women entrepreneurs. They organize events, workshops, and platforms for women entrepreneurs to connect, learn from each other, and access new markets and opportunities (FICCI, 2021; CII, n.d.).

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## **5. Indian women entrepreneurs' economic contribution**

The economic contribution of women entrepreneurs in India has been steadily increasing over the years, making a significant impact on the country's economy. Despite facing various challenges, women-led enterprises have proven to be resilient, innovative, and instrumental in driving economic growth and social development.

### **5.1. Job Creation**

Women entrepreneurs have been active in a wide range of sectors, including manufacturing, services, technology, and agriculture. Their ventures have contributed to job creation, both directly and indirectly, providing employment opportunities to a diverse workforce. By empowering women to become job creators, women-led enterprises help in reducing unemployment rates and fostering economic stability.

### **5.2. GDP Contribution**

Women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in contributing to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). As their businesses grow and expand, they generate revenue and contribute to the overall economic output of the country. The cumulative

impact of women-owned businesses on GDP is substantial and continues to grow as more women enter the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

### **5.3. Sectoral Diversity**

Women entrepreneurs have been instrumental in diversifying the business landscape in India. Traditionally, certain sectors were dominated by men, but women-led businesses have penetrated these areas and expanded into new industries. This diversification fosters healthy competition, encourages innovation, and boosts economic resilience.

### **5.4. Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**

A significant portion of women entrepreneurs operate in the MSME sector, which is a vital component of India's economy. These enterprises contribute to exports, provide goods and services to domestic and international markets, and contribute to regional development.

### **5.5. Empowerment and Financial Inclusion**

Women entrepreneurs not only contribute to the economy but also play a pivotal role in women's empowerment and financial inclusion. By running successful businesses, they challenge societal norms and stereotypes, inspiring other women to pursue entrepreneurial ventures. Moreover, financial institutions are increasingly recognizing the potential of women entrepreneurs and providing them with better access to credit and resources.

### **5.6. Innovation and Creativity**

Women-led businesses often bring unique perspectives and innovative solutions to the market. Their creativity and problem-solving skills drive product and service innovations, contributing to the overall economic growth and competitiveness of the nation.

### **5.7. Social Impact**

Beyond their economic contribution, women entrepreneurs positively impact their communities by supporting social initiatives, promoting sustainable practices, and addressing societal challenges. Many women-led enterprises have a strong focus on corporate social responsibility, making a difference in areas such as education, healthcare, and environmental conservation.

### **5.8. Export Promotion**

Women entrepreneurs have been increasingly involved in export-oriented businesses, contributing to India's international trade. Their ventures expand market reach and create opportunities for cross-border collaborations, boosting India's global presence and competitiveness.

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## **6. Indian women entrepreneurs' social contribution**

Women entrepreneurs in India have made significant social contributions that go beyond economic growth. Their ventures have positively impacted society in various ways, promoting inclusivity, empowerment, and social progress.

### **6.1. Women Empowerment**

Women-led enterprises serve as role models, inspiring other women to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations. By breaking traditional gender norms and challenging societal expectations, women entrepreneurs empower women to take charge of their lives and careers, fostering a sense of independence and self-reliance.

### **6.2. Employment and Skill Development**

Women entrepreneurs actively hire and empower other women in their businesses. Through job creation, skill development, and training opportunities, they contribute to reducing gender disparities in the workforce and uplifting the economic status of women.

### **6.3. Education and Awareness**

Many women entrepreneurs are actively involved in educational initiatives and awareness campaigns. They contribute to educational programs for girls and women, promoting literacy and encouraging access to quality education, particularly in rural areas.

#### **6.4. Community Development**

Women-led businesses often have a strong sense of community engagement. They invest in community development projects, support local artisans, and contribute to the welfare of marginalized groups. By addressing local needs and concerns, women entrepreneurs play a crucial role in fostering social cohesion and inclusivity.

#### **6.5. Women's Health and Well-being**

Women entrepreneurs have contributed to businesses in the healthcare and wellness sectors, addressing women-specific health issues and promoting overall well-being. They have been instrumental in creating innovative healthcare solutions and spreading awareness about women's health concerns.

#### **6.6. Environmental Sustainability**

Many women entrepreneurs focus on eco-friendly and sustainable business practices. Through their enterprises, they promote environmental conservation, resource efficiency, and green technologies, contributing to a more sustainable future.

#### **6.7. Women in Non-Traditional Sectors**

Women entrepreneurs have ventured into non-traditional sectors, challenging gender stereotypes and promoting inclusivity in fields that were previously dominated by men. Their success in these sectors encourages other women to explore unconventional career paths.

#### **6.8. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**

Women-led businesses often integrate social responsibility into their operations. They actively participate in CSR initiatives, supporting various social causes, and making a positive impact on the communities they operate in.

#### **6.9. Cultural Preservation**

Women entrepreneurs in India have also played a role in preserving and promoting traditional arts, crafts, and cultural heritage. By supporting traditional artisans and handicrafts, they contribute to the preservation of India's rich cultural diversity.

#### **6.10. Networking and Mentorship**

Women entrepreneurs often engage in networking and mentorship programs to support and uplift other aspiring women entrepreneurs. They provide guidance, share experiences, and foster a supportive ecosystem that encourages more women to enter the entrepreneurial space.

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### **7. Other contributions of Indian women entrepreneurs**

In addition to their economic and social contributions, women entrepreneurs in India have made diverse and impactful contributions in various spheres. These contributions showcase their resilience, creativity, and commitment to driving positive change in society.

#### **7.1. Innovation and Technology**

Women entrepreneurs have been at the forefront of innovation and technology-driven ventures. They have founded startups and businesses that leverage cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, block chain, and data analytics, contributing to India's position as a global tech hub.

#### **7.2. Digital Inclusion**

Women entrepreneurs have played a crucial role in bridging the digital divide. Through their businesses, they have promoted digital literacy and inclusion, particularly in rural and underserved areas, empowering communities to access information, services, and markets.

#### **7.3. Art and Culture Promotion**

Many women entrepreneurs have ventured into the creative industry, supporting and promoting art, culture, and traditional crafts. Their initiatives contribute to the preservation and promotion of India's rich cultural heritage.

#### **7.4. Women's Safety and Empowerment**

Some women entrepreneurs have launched startups and businesses that focus on women's safety and empowerment. They have developed innovative solutions like safety apps, self-defense training programs, and awareness campaigns to address women's safety concerns.

#### **7.5. Impact Investing**

Women entrepreneurs have also been active in the impact investing space, launching businesses with a strong focus on social and environmental impact. These ventures attract investments that prioritize positive social outcomes alongside financial returns.

#### **7.6. Health and Wellness**

Women entrepreneurs have made significant contributions to the health and wellness industry, developing products and services that cater to women's specific health needs and well-being.

#### **7.7. Education Technology (EdTech)**

Women entrepreneurs have established EdTech startups and platforms, providing online educational resources and e-learning solutions to students across India, making education more accessible and affordable.

#### **7.8. Advocacy and Policy Influence**

Women entrepreneurs often become advocates for policy changes that support and empower women in business. They actively engage in discussions with policymakers to create a more conducive and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

#### **7.9. Philanthropy and Giving Back**

Many women entrepreneurs actively engage in philanthropy and giving back to society. They contribute to various charitable causes, donate to NGOs, and support community development projects.

#### **7.10. Cultural Shift in Entrepreneurship**

Women entrepreneurs have contributed to a cultural shift in entrepreneurship, challenging traditional business norms and fostering a more diverse and inclusive startup culture in India.

#### **7.11. Social Impact Startups**

Women entrepreneurs have founded startups explicitly focused on addressing pressing social issues such as poverty, healthcare, and education, creating lasting and meaningful changes in the lives of many.

These contributions highlight the multifaceted impact of women entrepreneurs in India. Their endeavors extend beyond the business realm, touching various aspects of society and making a positive difference in the lives of individuals and communities. Encouraging and supporting women entrepreneurs to thrive will continue to be essential for fostering a progressive and equitable society in India.

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### **8. Review of literature**

"Barriers to Women's Entrepreneurship in India: Mindsets, Norms, and Networks" (Published in the Gender and Development Journal, 2019) - This study examines the cultural, societal, and structural barriers that hinder women's entrepreneurship in India, with a focus on mindsets, norms, and social networks. The study highlights the need for interventions that challenge traditional mindsets and norms surrounding women's roles in society. It also underscores the significance of supportive networks and policies to promote women entrepreneurship in India.

"Women Entrepreneurship in Rural India: Understanding Success Enablers" (Published in the Journal of Entrepreneurship, 2018) - This research investigates the factors that contribute to the success of women entrepreneurs in rural India. The study emphasizes the importance of context-specific approaches to support rural women entrepreneurs. It suggests that tailored policies and programs considering the unique challenges of rural settings can enhance women's entrepreneurial success.

"Women's Entrepreneurship and Empowerment in India: A Study of the Microfinance Sector" (Published in the Journal of Development Studies, 2020) - This study explores the role of microfinance in promoting women's entrepreneurship and empowerment in India. The research suggests that microfinance can positively impact women's entrepreneurship and empowerment by providing them with access to financial resources and promoting economic independence.

"Women Entrepreneurship in India: Challenges and Opportunities in the Digital Era" (Published in the International Journal of Advanced Research and Publications, 2021) - This study investigates the challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs in the digital age in India. The study underscores the need for digital literacy and skills development among women entrepreneurs to harness the potential of the digital era for business growth and expansion.

### **8.1. Statement of the problem**

Women's empowerment and gender equality are advanced by encouraging female entrepreneurship. Indian women have long faced societal and cultural restrictions that have restricted their access to economic possibilities. Policymakers, researchers, and society as a whole can identify these obstacles through researching women's entrepreneurship and seek to improve the environment for women entrepreneurs by making it more inclusive and equal. Women-owned enterprises have the ability to create job opportunities for other women, so advancing the nation's economy as a whole. Studying women entrepreneurs can reveal novel methods for tackling issues and increase the availability of original concepts across a range of industries. Especially among women, entrepreneurship can be a potent instrument for eradicating poverty. Women's entrepreneurship should be supported and encouraged as part of the worldwide trend towards gender-inclusive economic development. Sustainable business practices and social impact are frequently given top priority by female entrepreneurs. India can achieve its sustainable development objectives and tackle its social and environmental problems by promoting women-owned companies.

### **8.2. Objective of the study**

- To research an overview of Indian women business owners.
- To research how significant women's entrepreneurship is in India.
- To draw attention to India's expanding female entrepreneurial community.
- To draw attention to the potential and difficulties Indian women entrepreneurs now face.

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## **9. Research methodology**

The methodology entails an extensive analysis of the papers and literature already in existence, revealing trends, patterns, and knowledge gaps on women's entrepreneurship in India. The study's stated aims as well as the research study based on an internet poll have been held as relevant to the methodology, which includes a thorough literature evaluation of secondary data from many sources.

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## **10. Overview of women entrepreneurship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of India**

Women entrepreneurship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century of India has witnessed significant growth and transformation. Women are increasingly taking on entrepreneurial ventures, contributing to economic development and societal change.

### **10.1. Increasing Participation**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen a rise in the number of women entrepreneurs in India. Women are breaking traditional barriers, pursuing diverse business opportunities, and making significant contributions to various sectors of the economy (Sarasvathy et al., 2018).

### **10.2. Technology and Digital Platforms**

Advancements in technology and the rise of digital platforms have opened new avenues for women entrepreneurs. They leverage e-commerce, social media, and digital marketing to reach a wider customer base, expand their businesses, and overcome traditional constraints (Ghosh & Vyas, 2019).

### **10.3. Government Support and Initiatives**

For the purpose of encouraging women's entrepreneurship, the Indian government has introduced numerous programmes and policies. For women entrepreneurs, financial assistance, chances for skill development and

mentorship are provided by initiatives like Stand-Up India, MUDRA Yojana, and Atal Innovation Mission. (Nanda & Bhatnagar, 2018).

#### **10.4. Women-Led Startups**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed a rise in women-led startups in India. These startups focus on innovation, technology, and social impact, addressing various sectors such as healthcare, education, sustainable development, and technology-driven solutions (Bhatnagar et al., 2020).

#### **10.5. Challenges and Opportunities**

While progress has been made, women entrepreneurs in India still face challenges such as access to finance, societal norms and biases, work-life balance, and limited networking opportunities. However, they also have opportunities to tap into growing markets, leverage digital platforms, and participate in a supportive ecosystem (Vinnicombe et al., 2021).

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### **11. Importance of women entrepreneurship in India**

Women entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in the economic and social development of India. It brings several benefits and contributes to various aspects of society.

#### **11.1. Economic Growth**

Women entrepreneurship is a significant driver of economic growth and development. Women-led businesses contribute to job creation, income generation, and overall economic prosperity (Dutta, 2016).

#### **11.2. Empowerment and Gender Equality**

Women entrepreneurship promotes gender equality by providing women with opportunities for economic independence, decision-making power, and leadership roles (Kaur & Dhawan, 2015). It helps challenge traditional gender roles and societal norms, leading to greater empowerment of women.

#### **11.3. Innovation and Diversity**

Women entrepreneurs bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and diversity to the business ecosystem. Their unique experiences and insights contribute to the creation of new products, services, and solutions (Klyver, 2016).

#### **11.4. Social Impact**

Women entrepreneurs often prioritize social issues and contribute to social causes through their businesses. They address societal challenges, promote inclusivity, and support sustainable development (Vinnicombe et al., 2019).

#### **11.5. Role Models and Inspiration**

Successful women entrepreneurs serve as role models and sources of inspiration for other women. Their achievements inspire and motivate aspiring women entrepreneurs to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams (Sparrow et al., 2016).

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### **12. Growth of female entrepreneurship in India**

The growth of female entrepreneurship in India has been a notable trend in recent years, as more women are breaking barriers, embracing entrepreneurship, and making significant contributions to the economy.

#### **12.1. Increasing Number of Women-Led Startups**

The number of women-led startups in India has been steadily rising. According to the "Startup India" initiative, as of March 2021, around 20% of registered startups had at least one female founder or co-founder (source: Startup India Hub - Annual Report 2020-21). This represents a significant increase compared to previous years, highlighting the growing presence of women entrepreneurs in the Indian startup ecosystem.

#### **12.2. Rise in Funding for Women-Led Startups**

There has been an increase in funding opportunities for women-led startups in India. Venture capital firms, angel investors, and government-backed initiatives are actively supporting women entrepreneurs. For example, the "Fund of

Funds for Startups" launched by the Indian government aims to provide financial support to startups with a focus on women entrepreneurs.

### **12.3. Recognition and Awards for Women Entrepreneurs**

Numerous programmes and awards have been created to honour and honour the accomplishments of women business owners in India. For instance, the NITI Aayog's "Women Transforming India Awards" recognize female business owners who have had a significant influence in their specialized industries.

### **12.4. Government Initiatives to Promote Women Entrepreneurship**

The Indian government has put in place a number of programmes to encourage and support female entrepreneurs. For instance, the "Stand-Up India" initiative, introduced by the Ministry of Finance, seeks to make bank loans between 10 lakh and 1 crore available to women business owners. The "Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana" also offers loans to female company owners so they can launch and grow their enterprises.

### **12.5. Entrepreneurial Education and Skill Development**

There are initiatives underway to offer programmes for women just that specialize in entrepreneurship education and skill development. The required training programmes, workshops, and mentorship opportunities are made available by institutions, organizations, and colleges to empower female entrepreneurs.

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## **13. Women entrepreneurship and economic growth in India**

Women entrepreneurship plays a significant role in driving economic growth and development in India. It contributes to job creation, innovation, and the overall prosperity of the country.

### **13.1. Job Creation and Employment**

Women-led businesses have a positive impact on employment generation in India. Studies have shown that women entrepreneurs create employment opportunities not only for themselves but also for others, thereby contributing to overall job creation and reducing unemployment rates (Chaganti & Greene, 2002; Kaur & Dhawan, 2015).

### **13.2. Economic Contribution**

Women entrepreneurs contribute to the country's economic growth through increased productivity and revenue generation. Their businesses generate income, contribute to tax revenues, and enhance the overall GDP of the nation (Brush et al., 2019; Dhewanto, 2015).

### **13.3. Innovation and Technological Advancement**

Women entrepreneurs in India have demonstrated their potential for innovation and technological advancement. Their businesses bring new ideas, products, and services to the market, fostering innovation and driving economic growth (Klyver, 2016; Dutta, 2016).

### **13.4. Inclusive Growth and Poverty Alleviation**

Women entrepreneurship promotes inclusive growth and poverty alleviation in India. By providing economic opportunities to women, it empowers them economically, enhances their standard of living, and contributes to reducing gender disparities and poverty levels (Narayanasamy & Rao, 2017; Tandon & Sahu, 2019).

### **13.5. Regional Development**

Women entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in the development of rural and underdeveloped regions in India. It facilitates economic diversification, strengthens local economies, and helps in reducing regional disparities by fostering entrepreneurship in these areas (Kaur & Dhawan, 2015; Das, 2019).

## **14. Opportunities for women entrepreneurs in India**

### **14.1. Growing Market Potential**

The Indian market offers immense opportunities for women entrepreneurs. With a large population and increasing consumer spending, there is a demand for innovative products and services across various sectors such as technology, e-commerce, healthcare, fashion, and education.

### **14.2. Supportive Government Initiatives**

The Indian government has launched several initiatives to promote women entrepreneurship. Programs like Stand-Up India, MUDRA Yojana, and Bharatiya Mahila Bank provide financial support, skill development, and mentoring opportunities to women entrepreneurs (Ministry of Finance, Government of India).

### **14.3. Digital Transformation and E-commerce**

The rapid expansion of digital infrastructure and e-commerce platforms has created a level playing field for women entrepreneurs. Online marketplaces, social media, and digital marketing provide affordable and accessible avenues to reach a wider customer base and scale businesses.

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## **15. Challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in India**

### **15.1. Socio-cultural Barriers**

Deep-rooted gender biases, cultural norms, and societal expectations pose significant challenges for women entrepreneurs in India. They often face resistance and lack of support from families and communities, limiting their access to resources, networks, and mentorship opportunities.

### **15.2. Limited Access to Finance**

Women entrepreneurs in India face challenges in accessing financial resources. Traditional lenders often perceive them as higher-risk borrowers, leading to limited access to loans and funding. Collateral requirements, lack of financial literacy, and gender-based biases in the financial system further exacerbate the issue.

### **15.3. Work-Life Balance**

Balancing business responsibilities with familial duties is a constant challenge for women entrepreneurs. Societal expectations of caregiving and limited support systems, such as affordable childcare facilities, can hinder their ability to manage and grow their businesses effectively.

### **15.4. Networking and Mentorship**

Building networks and accessing mentorship opportunities are crucial for entrepreneurial success. However, women entrepreneurs face challenges in networking due to gender-based exclusions, limited representation in professional circles, and lack of access to supportive networks and mentorship programs.

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## **16. Conclusion**

Women entrepreneurs in India are making substantial economic contributions that go beyond traditional gender roles. Their participation in the entrepreneurial ecosystem strengthens the economy, promotes gender equality, and fosters overall social development. Recognizing and supporting the potential of women entrepreneurs is crucial for sustaining India's economic growth and building a more inclusive and prosperous society. The social contributions of women entrepreneurs in India are far-reaching and multi-faceted. Their efforts in empowering women, supporting communities, promoting education, and addressing social and environmental challenges contribute to building a more inclusive, equitable, and progressive society. Encouraging and supporting women entrepreneurs will continue to have a transformative impact on India's social fabric and pave the way for a more gender-equal and socially conscious nation.

However, there are also significant opportunities for women entrepreneurs in India. The evolving socio-economic landscape, government initiatives, increasing focus on gender equality, and changing perceptions about women's roles in society provide a conducive environment for women to embark on entrepreneurial ventures. Women entrepreneurs

are leveraging their skills, creativity, and resilience to overcome challenges and make a positive impact on the Indian economy. Moreover, women entrepreneurs have the potential to drive economic growth, create employment opportunities, foster innovation, and contribute to inclusive development. Their businesses are not only generating revenue but also addressing social issues, empowering women, and promoting sustainable practices.

Women entrepreneurs in India face a combination of challenges and opportunities in their entrepreneurial journey. The challenges include social and cultural barriers, limited access to finance and resources, gender bias, lack of networking opportunities, and work-life balance issues. These challenges often hinder the growth and success of women-led businesses. To fully capitalize on the opportunities and address the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in India, it is crucial to provide them with better access to financial resources, business networks, mentorship, skill development programs, and supportive policies. Collaboration among stakeholders, including governments, private organizations, academic institutions, and civil society, is essential for creating an enabling ecosystem that promotes and supports women entrepreneurship. Recognizing and addressing the challenges while capitalizing on the opportunities, women entrepreneurs in India can play a transformative role in the economy, society, and the overall empowerment of women.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

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Each author certifies that they have no financial or other relationship with any authority figures.

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