

INTRODUCTION

Chapter - I

INTRODUCTION

“Most poor people are women and most women are poor. Almost all low income women are economically active. Most are micro entrepreneurs and self-employed in the informal sector, with major economic roles in farming, commerce, transport and small industry. These roles- and the women in these roles – are often undervalued”

-World Bank Report, 1995.

India, a developing economy, even after various decades of planning, still has a long way to go, to catch up with the leading developed economies of the world. The goal may be distant but surely, the time required to reach it can be cut down by accelerating the pace of development. One way of doing this, is by the promotion of industrial and business ventures created by the initiative and enterprise of entrepreneur class. There is a positive linkage between an economy's prosperity and the growth of entrepreneurship. The role of women in the field of entrepreneurship in this aspect merits attention and encouragement.

Women are often described as the better half of man. But the actual condition of women in the world does not tally with this description. In no country have women achieved equality with men. Of the world's 1.4 billion poor people, it was estimated that nearly 70 percent are women. Between 75 and 80 percent of the world's 30 million refugees are women and children. (Bhandari, 2000).

Debates and discussions held in view of the emancipation of women claim that women in every society and culture are a deprived section of people. The prevailing exploitative and discriminative situation of women in the world is explained in the United Nation's Report (1980) which stated that women constitute fifty percent of the world's population, perform nearly two-thirds of its work, receive one-tenth of the world's income and own less than one percent of the world's property.

Studies on women (James and Paul, 1979; Robert and Marie, 1981; Eric and Bary, 1982) revealed that illiteracy, ignorance, lack of economic holdings, and social sanctions

are at the root of entrepreneurial slackness among women. These in turn influence their individual and social attitudes and suppress the traits which are a pre-requisite to entrepreneurship such as risk taking tendency, self-assurance, need for achievement, etc.

Lack of self-esteem in rural women makes them accept the implicit judgement of those who have status even when it is directed against their welfare. A woman's whole socialization process makes her fearful of failure, doubtful of success, and reluctant to take risks. Santamaria (1985) explained such problems as self imposed or imposed by the environment. She stated that the attitudes and motivations underlying the career aspirations, plans and decision making of women are the products of social norms and socialization process. Therefore, faulty social learning tends to nurture in rural women a personality type which is not suitable for entrepreneurship.

According to the age-old sexual division of labour, the main tasks of women are to bear and rear children and do other household duties within the four walls. In 1974, Gary Becker has remarked that men marry women, 'to bear and rear children as women have superior skills for this task'.

The World Bank (1986) while studying the hunger and poverty in developing countries, especially in rural Africa and in the urban slums of Latin America, reported that female members of a poor household are often worse off than the male members because of gender biased differences in the distribution of food and other entitlements within the family.

Studies conducted showed that most of the developmental activities in developing countries hardly benefited women, more particularly the rural women (Chakravarti, 1975; Marilyn Carr, 1978; Kasturi, 1978; Dinesh, 1985; Chakravarti, 1986; Rao, 1986).

In a Survey conducted by Sharma (1985), it was found that nearly 85 percent of the female population in the country, for one reason or the other, was not able to participate adequately in the economic reconstruction of the nation. According to an estimate (Raghuvanshi, 1982), in rural areas, women are not engaged in any remunerative work for 247 days in a year and they are in need of gainful employment. In Sundergarh district of Orissa, a large number of women reported that they have nine hours free time per day at their disposal (Chakravorty, 1975). On the basis of these findings it was

concluded that there is a colossal waste of manpower, and no country can achieve economic progress with such wastage of human energy. By denying equitable opportunities to women, the society also deprives itself of the benefits of talents, skills and creative genius of half of its members.

The Shram Shakthi Report (1988) had highlighted the position of women in India stating that in India, women work for longer hours and contribute more than men in terms of total labour energy spent with a work day of 10 -12 hours of unpaid labour outside the home.

The status of women and their role in the development process are issues, which have attracted global concern. Gender equality and justice are focal points of debates in planning for the development of women.

Since 1990, empowerment of women has become a slogan, in every literature and reference to women's issues and in women's development programmes. India has a long history of activism for women's welfare and rights, which has increasingly focused on women's economic rights. A range of government programmes (vide discussion in Chapter II) have been launched to increase economic opportunity for women (Bagchi, Jasodhara, 1999).

Gandhiji wrote as early as 1918 in his journal 'Young India', "Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in minute details of activities of man and has the same right to freedom and liberty. By sheer custom even the most ignorant and worthless men have been enjoying superiority over women which they do not deserve and ought not to have".

Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru (1954), the first Prime Minister of India once observed, "Freedom depends on economic condition, even more than political. If a woman is not economically free and self earning, she will have to depend on her husband or some one else, and dependents are never free". To improve the status and position of women at home and in society at large, it is necessary to achieve economic independence for women. An opportunity of productive work for women is not merely a means to higher income, but it is a means to self-respect, to the development of her personality and a sense of participation in the common purposes of the society.

The Nobel Laureate Prof. Amartya Sen (1999) opined, "The inequality among human beings (gender) proved to be hydra headed monster and its description could not be reduced to its measures usually deployed by economists. Human beings need food, shelter and clothing. They also need education, freedom to choose and access to all facilities provided by society for self-improvement. On the other hand, most existing societies have fostered institutions, which systematically deny such facilities to a particular gender in order to make them as the weaker gender of the society".

Mr. Kofi Annan (2004), the then UN Secretary General, has stated, "Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenges of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance".

Kiran Bedi, the first Indian woman IPS opined, "women must learn to recognize their potential. They must realize their strength and contribute to nation building. They should strive to improve their lives from whichever stage of development, progress, education or abilities they find they have now, to become mothers of as many children as they can expect to groom properly and teach to become worthy citizens of India".

Like men, women too are endowed with psychological qualities and managerial abilities that matter in successful entrepreneurship. Several studies have suggested that entrepreneurial qualities can be acquired and developed in individuals through proper training (McClelland, 1971; Rao, 1975; Vinze, 1986; Singh, 1986). Hence entrepreneurship development among women is not only possible but is of vital importance. If proper facilities and environment are provided and women are exposed to new skills, with their natural instinct and aptitude they will do much better than men in entrepreneurial activities.

Under the Five Year Plans, several efforts have been made to enhance the status of women in India. The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) envisaged welfare measures for women. The Central Social Welfare Board was established in 1952, which symbolized the welfare approach to women's problem. Under the Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) the need for organization for women was recognized. Further, to enable women to compete for higher jobs, it suggested provisions for their training also. Female education, as a major welfare strategy was emphasized in the Third (1961-66) and Fourth Five Year (1969-74) Plans. The Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79) coincided with the International

Women's Decade (1975-85) and the submission of the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India. United Nations declared 1985, as International Year of Women all over the world. All these initiatives help to focus attention on the problems specific to women. In the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85), for the first time a shift was perceived from welfare to development approach for women. This plan devoted a whole chapter on 'Women and Development'. The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90) envisaged operational concern for equality and empowerment articulated by the International Decade for Women. During 1990's which was the beginning of the era of structural reforms, it appears that the issue of employment, which had been accorded a high priority during the four decades preceding the 1990's, has become far less an important issue. Many experts and economists feel that the new economic policies are increasingly marginalizing women from their traditional occupation and very little has been done to prepare women for alternative, newer or better avenues of employment. In a developing economy like India where every year a large number of people enter the labour market, employment happens to be the basic issue to be tackled.

In the National Income Accounting, the earnings of the individuals who have chosen or being assigned a given wage employment is considered. It is impossible to take into account the earnings of the individuals who have not joined wage employment but earn their living on par with or at a greater or lesser measure as wage employed. Not many researches are being done on small enterprising women who have very little asset for investment, but have lots of courage, foresight, natural skill and assertiveness to start a new occupation (Thresia, 2000).

A woman's labour is her single most important resource. Yet she often does not have the necessary skills to raise her productivity in both household based and market based production. The returns on her labour are lower than that of men, partly because she has acquired fewer marketable skills and partly because of imperfections in the market forces. As a result, women are frequently confined to less-paid and casual segments of the labour market (UN Report, 1995).

It is estimated that women entrepreneurs presently comprise about 10% of the total number of entrepreneurs in India, with the percentage growing every year (India, 2004). If the prevailing trend continues, it is likely that in another five years, women will comprise 20% of the entrepreneurial force. With corporates eager to associate and work

with women-owned businesses, and a host of banks and non-governmental organizations keen to help them get going, there has rarely been a better time for women with zeal and creativity to start their own business (Bindu, 2005).

Women's empowerment is a global issue, and discussions on women's political rights are at the forefront of many formal and informal campaigns worldwide. One does not get empowerment just by being given powers and by receiving them. Until women have an inner realization, until they believe in their strength and exert it, they cannot be truly empowered (Parthasarathi, 2002).

Economic status of women plays a key role in determining their social status as well as their psychological relationship with others. A study by Mies Maria (1936) on Women's Sangham of CROSS (Comprehensive Rural Operations Service Society) in Bhongir (Andhra Pradesh) revealed that women first need economic independence and only subsequently think of 'emancipation'. The women from Bhongir have shown that their struggle for better economic conditions is linked inseparably to their struggle for human dignity and self-respect.

Women's employment in India

In countries, which are marked by labour surplus, the need of providing employment for women when men are available for work poses threat to both men and women. It is in these developing countries that incomes by and large are low and the family requires the assistance of additional earners. Where social conventions do not weigh oppressively against bringing women to paid employment, the family income can best be supplemented by the female population in the working age group.

Women work roughly twice as many hours as men. Not only do women perform more tasks, their work is also more arduous than that undertaken by men. Both transplantation and weeding require women to spend the whole day and work in muddy soil with their hands. Moreover, they work the entire day under the intensely hot sun while men's work, such as ploughing and watering the fields, is invariably carried out early in the morning before the sun gets too hot. Mies Maria (1936) argues that because women's work, unlike men's, does not involve implements and is based largely on human energy, it is considered to be unskilled and hence less productive. On this basis, women

are invariably paid lower wages, despite the fact that they work harder and for longer hours than do men.

The work force participation rate in a country (i.e.) the proportion of working population to total population depends upon factors such as age and sex composite, attitude to work, availability of work etc. All these factors differ in different countries and may differ even within the same country in different periods. In India, work participation rate had been around 59 percent for males and 31 percent for females (Census India, 2001). Women's participation in the work force is an indicator of their access to work that has an economic value. The proportion of women above 15 years of age who were economically active in 1997 was around 59 percent in Thailand, followed by Myanmar and Bangladesh. India had the lowest female economic activity rate of 29 percent. Studies on labour have revealed that the survival of the poorest household in India is dependent on female earnings (Dhameja, 2004).

The degree of empowerment of women in India can be seen through work participation rate, which is given in the following table-1.

Table - 1
WORK PARTICIAPTION RATES AND NUMBER OF WORKERS

Area	Year Sex	WPR(%)			Workers (in lakhs)		
		1981	1991	2001	1981	1991	2001
Rural	Male	59.24	58.28	59.38	96.7	108.2	104.0
	Female	33.55	38.50	41.33	54.1	70.1	71.8
	Persons	46.48	48.49	50.39	150.8	178.3	175.8
Urban	Male	51.25	52.78	56.37	41.8	51.4	77.6
	Female	11.97	13.10	18.42	9.3	12.2	24.8
	Persons	32.05	33.34	37.59	51.3	63.6	102.4
Total	Male	56.58	56.39	58.96	138.5	159.6	181.6
	Female	26.52	29.89	31.32	63.4	82.4	96.6
	Persons	41.73	43.31	44.78	201.9	241.9	278.2

Source: India Census 1981, 1991 and 2001.

The work participation rate for the females had increased from 33.55% in 1981 to 38.50% in 1991 and further to 41.33% in 2001 against 59.24%, 58.28% and 59.38% respectively during the above periods for males in rural areas. In urban areas, it rose from

11.97% to 13.10% and to 18.42% respectively for females during the same period and 51.25% to 52.78 % and to 56.37% respectively for males in urban areas.

In a survey conducted by Sharma (1985) it was found that nearly 85% of the female population in the country, for one reason or the other, were not able to participate adequately in the economic reconstruction of the nation.

In India, from the very beginning women have been managers of kitchen and have solely dominated the area of household activities. So deep has been the impact of this, that the general attitude of the people about women entrepreneurs is that they are makers of pickles, pappads, powders (3 P's) and other household goods. Today, non-traditional enterprises are easily managed by women and are done so excellently with them as the decision-makers. They are flourishing well as leading consultants, publishers, exporters of machineries, manufacturers of electric goods, exporters of garments, designers, interior decorators and the like (Wilson, 1998).

The importance of involving women in gainful economic activities and making them participators in production process have been stressed by John Stuart Mill (1869) and Engels (1884). Mill argued strongly for women's right to enter in any sphere of activity she should choose, because according to him, if women are given the free use of their faculties and the free choice of their employment and open to them the same field of occupation and the same encouragement as their male counterparts, the mass of mental capacities available for the higher service of humanity would be doubled (Singla & Syal, 1997).

Notwithstanding the progress made during the last two decades towards the uplift of women, a considerable gap still persists all over the world in the social, economic, political and cultural life of women and it is being increasingly realized that discrimination against women is incompatible with human dignity and with the welfare of the family and society (ILO, 1985).

Distribution of the world's resources in favour of women and making them equal share holders in the wealth and resources of the society are the direct way of restoring women to the desired status in the society. As remarked by Patel (1981), the status of women as well as of men, to a large extent, is determined by the amount of resources at

their command. Women's economic participation is of great significance from the welfare point of view as well. The basis of economic welfare is the extent to which the available resources are utilized, as individual's desires are satisfied from the use of exchangeable goods and services (Pigou, 1932). The welfare principle of the greatest happiness of the greatest number can be achieved only through efficient utilization and optimum allocation of a country's human and material resources.

The 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination amongst women, often described as the Bill of Rights for women, has now been ratified by 154 countries. The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, resulted in agreement by 189 delegations on a five year plan to enhance the social, economic and political empowerment of women, improve their health, advance their education and promote their reproductive rights. Over 100 countries have announced new initiatives to further the advancement of women as a result of Beijing conference.

Economically, women have been making progress, but still men enjoy a larger share of the cake. Majority of women earn on an average, about three-fourth of the pay of males for the same work, outside the agricultural sector, in both developed and developing countries. In most countries, women work approximately twice the unpaid time men do. Women make up 31 percent of the official labour force in developing countries and 47 percent world-wide. Rural women produce more than 55 percent of all food grown in developing countries. The value of women's unpaid housework and community work is estimated at between 10 percent and 35 percent of the gross domestic product world-wide, amounting to \$12 trillion in 1996. Women hold 11 percent of the seats in world's parliaments. The percentage of female cabinet ministers world-wide has more than doubled in the last decade, from 3.4 in 1988 to 7 in 1998. Women hold 35 percent of professional posts in the United Nations Secretariate including 18 percent in senior management positions (Arvind, 2000).

Women perform important roles in building the backbone of the nation's economy, especially the small and medium-scale enterprise, as well as the cottage industries (Epstein, 1983). It has been recognized that women have important roles to play in synthesizing social progress with economic growth of developing countries. With the socio-psycho-cultural and economic changes taking place in India, women are slowly entering the field of entrepreneurship. It is increasingly recongnized that women have

vast entrepreneurial talents that could be harnessed. In India, women entrepreneurship is slowly gaining credibility as an important activity in contributing to national economy, helping to foster economic independence of women by letting them hold the reins of their destiny, thus leading to empowerment (UNIFEM, 1995). Running a business is never easy, especially for women in a society like India where definitions are not always consistent with the notions of women having economic roles involving risk-taking, initiating planning and coordinating market-oriented activities. Words like capability, credibility and confidence are the terms used while evaluating women entrepreneurs and which pose problems for them (Cannon, et al. 1988).

Mohuiddin (1987) stated that “Women entrepreneurship as an opportunity of productive work for women is not merely a means of higher income, but as a means of self respect, to the development of their personality and to a sense of participation in the common purposes of the society”. Women entrepreneurs in India represent a small group who have broken away from the beaten track and are exploring new vistas of economic participation. They have long stories of trials and hardships; their task has been full of challenges. They have even encountered public prejudice and criticism. Family opposition and social constraints have to be overcome before establishing themselves as independent entrepreneurs. The most serious barrier to women entrepreneurs undoubtedly continues to be the persistence of the belief held by both men and women, that entrepreneurship is a male domain. The resistance, apathy, shyness, inhibition, conservatism, poor response are all governed and generated by cultural traditions, value systems and social sanctions.

Rathore and Chabra (1991) also describe that the psychosocial barriers of Indian women entrepreneurship are poor self-image of women, discriminating treatment, faulty socialization, role conflict and cultural values. Iyer (1991) pointed out that women’s own personality traits such as shyness, lack of articulation, inability to communicate and attitude towards money matters inhibit and limit their growth as entrepreneurs. Shalini (1992) stresses that many women entrepreneurs feel that they have to overcome the belief that women are not as serious in business as men are, lack of respect for women and lack of confidence to start a business.

The hidden entrepreneurial potentials of women have gradually been changing with the growing sensitivity to the role and the economic status in society. Women are

increasingly being conscious of their existence, their rights and their work situation. Today, women entrepreneurs represent a group of women who have broken away from the beaten track and are exploring new avenues of economic participation. Among the reasons for women to run organized enterprises are their skill and knowledge, their talents and abilities in business and a compelling desire of wanting to do something positive.

The advent of the media and the increasing awareness among a big chunk of women in particular and the society in general is providing a boost to their understanding of the changing concepts of life (Khan, 1998).

Women's participation in economic development as entrepreneurs

Woman entrepreneurs are regarded as persons who accept challenging roles to quench their personality needs and to become economically independent by making suitable adjustments in both family and social life. They are constantly on the look-out for new and innovative ways which lead to strong economic participation. Their adaptness, skill and knowledge, their acumen in business and a pushing desire to do something positive are among the reasons for women to establish and manage organized industries and take up challenging ventures (Kaur, 2000).

Women and men as equal members of the society have the right to the equality of opportunities and treatment. The right to support and to contribute to the economic well-being of one's family is as important for women as men. In fact, majority of women want and need to work and their income earning capacity is essential for their own survival and that of their families.

Over the last few decades, while women have come forward to establish their own enterprises, their numbers remain few and far between. The entrepreneurial world is still male dominated. Only less than 7 percent of the enterprises have been set-up by women in the small scale sector (AITUC Publication, 1992). But probably what is noteworthy is that women have plunged, into the field of entrepreneurship and have been found effective in the emerging social and economic roles. Women had been managers since long, from the time the concept of living in a family emerged. She had been an entrepreneur within the four walls where she was innovative in terms of budgeting with the limited income resources, used the waste materials for making some useful products.

With the changing role that women accepted ever since mid-eighties, the role of entrepreneurship amongst women has gained a considerable importance (Mariea, 1993).

Women owned businesses are becoming increasingly important in the economies of almost all countries. To the US economy, they contribute more than \$250 billion annually and create new businesses at two to three times the rate of their male counterparts. Since 1970, the share of women owned businesses has grown from only 5% to more than 30%, representing nearly 6 million of the nation's 16.5 million non-formal sole proprietorship. Women-owned businesses can today be found in every sector of the economy and in every region of the US (Zhang, et al, 1995).

The surge in entrepreneurship activity in Britain between 1982 and 1987 saw male self-employment increase by 30%, but at the same time female self-employment increased by 70%. Women now account for one quarter of the self-employed in Britain. In Central European countries, women represent between 46 and 48 %of the labour force, but often less than one-fourth are employers (Carter & Cannon, 1992).

In India, women account for 10% of the total business enterprises in the country. The policies of the Central and State governments have undergone sweeping changes, with special concessions, subsidies, incentives and rebates being announced. According to the Report submitted by the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI, 1993), the 1991 Industrial Policy in India has envisaged special training programmes to support women entrepreneurs. Accordingly, women entrepreneurs are receiving training through Entrepreneurship Development Programmes (EDPs) conducted by various institutions and organizations such as District Industrial Centre (DIC), State Industries Development Board of India(SIDBI), etc., both at central and state levels. The Small Industries Development Organisation (SIDO), with its field offices all over the country has been carrying out development programmes for women entrepreneurs and is providing technical schemes for setting up of the Small Scale Industries (SSI) units. In view of the changing outlook for the promotion of women enterprises, the SSI board in 1991 revised the definition of women enterprises by omitting the condition of employing 50 percent of women workers. This provided a boost to women entrepreneurs to take up businesses and avail of facilities/concessions as are applicable to all the small scale industries. These benefits have to trickle down to the common woman. The society also needs to bring about an attitudinal change in regard to the role of woman as an entrepreneur. This will

lead to the development of an appropriate environment in which women will come forth and give vent to their latent entrepreneurial talents.

However, woman entrepreneurship must be recognized for what it is. Nationally, it has great importance for future economic prosperity. Individually, business ownership provides women with independence they crave for and with economic social satisfaction.

The Government of India defines women entrepreneur as 'an enterprise owned and controlled by a woman, having a minimum financial investment of 51 % of the capital' (Lalith Rani, 1996).

Though the Central and State Governments have launched many entrepreneurial development programmes especially for women, there is no remarkable achievement in rural area (Kamaraju, 2002).

Rural women are more vulnerable in comparison to urban women, because the urban women have wide scope of activities around them to explore but rural women do not get enough opportunity to make use of their economic potential (Jothimani, 2002).

As rural women lacked appropriate corporate vision in fixing targets, priorities criteria and identification of appropriate beneficiaries, from 1981 onwards, the Government has started Skill Development Programme (SDP) in interior villages for women living below poverty line. By 1984, they felt that lack of proper education is one of the reasons for their poverty. Hence, the Government started Adult Education Programme (AEP) for women to create proper social environment, which was later expanded further. From 1990 onwards, the Government involved District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) to conduct Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment Programme (TRYSEM) for Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) beneficiaries. By the end of 1998-99 women formed 210 autonomous women groups. They have also started Entrepreneur Development Programmes exclusively for women having some educational background or skill.

About two thirds of India's more than 1 billion people live in rural areas, and almost 170 million of them are poor. Although many rural people are migrating to cities, three out of four of India's poor people live in the vast rural parts of the country. For more than 21 percent of them, poverty is a chronic condition. A major cause of poverty

among rural people in India is lack of access for both individuals and communities to productive assets and financial resources. High levels of illiteracy, inadequate health care and extremely limited access to social services are common among poor rural people. Micro enterprise development, which could generate income and enable them to improve their living conditions, has only recently become a focus of the government (IFAD, 2007).

To advance economic empowerment of rural households, including women, a National Rural Empowerment Guarantee programme was launched in 2006. It provides 100 days assured wage employment annually to every rural household with at least one-third of the beneficiaries required to be women. Self-help women's groups in India have also made significant impacts on the economic empowerment of rural women, benefiting nearly 10 million rural families. New schemes are being implemented to widen the base of women entrepreneurs, including special schemes promoted by financial institutions/banks (vide discussion in chapter II). As a result, the number of women entrepreneurs in India has risen. (Ajai Malhotra, 2007).

The earlier theories differ in their explanations on issues related to entrepreneurship (vide discussion in Chapter II) while some stated that the demand for entrepreneurship stems from the need to adjust to change, some others considered entrepreneurship as 'decision making under uncertainty' to develop a profit oriented business in interaction with the internal situation of the business or with the economic, political and social circumstances surrounding the business.

In the context of the above discussions, the present study on, "An analysis on the performance of Women entrepreneurs in Coimbatore district" aims to analyse the different characteristics of women entrepreneurs in Coimbatore district with the following objectives. To carry out the study 400 women entrepreneurs, 200 from rural and 200 from urban areas in Coimbatore city were selected.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the social, economic and demographic profile of the selected women entrepreneurs.
2. To bring out the factors that prompted women to start their own business.

3. To analyse the major strengths and the environmental opportunities which promote entrepreneurship and the major weaknesses and threats faced by the women entrepreneurs.
4. To estimate the capital, cost, sales and net profit earned by the women entrepreneurs.
5. To evaluate the entrepreneurial performance of the selected women respondents and
6. To study the level of job satisfaction among the women entrepreneurs.

Need for the study:

India is a developing economy. It is passing through a transitional stage. The attitude towards women is not as rigidly unfavourable as it was in the past. Women are trying hard to establish themselves as entrepreneurs. Before independence women were engaged mostly in agriculture, house hold duties or at the most in the family's trade activities. The social constraints and attitudes that inhibit the development of women entrepreneurs, the atmosphere in which they have to live together were keeping them away from the active work of entrepreneurship. Today, much is talked about the development of women entrepreneurship in India, because time has changed and is changing very fast.

The changing attitudes, out look and attributes of women and the ever rising economic needs have let women to work outside the families and to financially support their families. Under these circumstances, women are also venturing out into their own business and industry. Growing women's entrepreneurship is emerging as an alternative to the male-dominated corporate culture and patriarchal social structure; the economic and political contribution made by women entrepreneurs is expected to exert significant influence in shaping a new business model in the 21st century. Hence the current study aims to throw light on the various opportunities available to women entrepreneurs in rural and urban areas and the measures to strengthen them. Therefore there is a need to study the causes for women under taking entrepreneurship, their performance and also the problems associated with their businesses, to make suitable suggestions for the promotion of women entrepreneurs.

Hypotheses

In the course of the study the following hypotheses were tested.

- (i) Economic incentives were the main drive for entrepreneurial activities.
- (ii) The entrepreneurial economic success status of the women entrepreneurs is dependent on social, economic and demographic factors.
- (iii) The various null hypotheses tested were - The women entrepreneurs of rural and urban areas did not differ significantly
 - ❖ in their monthly income and expenditure,
 - ❖ in their motivational factors which made them to enter work force,
 - ❖ in the ranks assigned by them on the various items of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats,
 - ❖ in operating cost, sales and net profit made by them.
 - ❖ in their success status and
 - ❖ in their level of job satisfaction.

This study makes a variety of conceptual and methodological improvisations over the earlier studies. It assumes a greater significance in view of the current and rapid changes in the society. In this era of globalization women are entering into entrepreneurial avenues in large numbers. The study will be of immense importance to the policy makers, academicians and entrepreneurial agencies involved in the promotion of women entrepreneurship. It also assumes significance as it highlights the drawbacks and difficulties of rural women compared to urban women. This will enable the policy makers and village development officers to provide the necessities for rural women and to bridge the gap between the rural and urban women entrepreneurs.