

## Inclusive Growth through Women Entrepreneurship- Case Studies in Marketing Success from Tamilnadu

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### Abstract

Entrepreneur is a key factor of entrepreneurship. Small and medium enterprises are the back bone of the Indian economy. As they exist in large numbers and employ many people in the country, their performance is worth an investigation. If there are successful enterprises, replicating the same in similar topography elsewhere would be easy and will augur well for the economy. In Hindu scriptures, woman has been described as the embodiment of shakthi. In present time women are an emerging economic force. Women entrepreneurship is gaining importance in India in the wake of economic liberalization and globalization. The increasing presence of women in the business field as entrepreneurs has changed the demographic characteristics of business and economic growth of the country. There exist a plethora of successful business women entrepreneurs both in social and economic fields in India. They are performing well. Women-owned businesses enterprises are playing a more active role in society and the economy, inspiring academics to focus on this interesting phenomenon. Despite all the social hurdles, many women have become successful in their career. These successful women have made name and wealth for themselves with their hard work, diligence, competence and will power. This case study highlights such women entrepreneurs particularly in Tamil Nadu who have created a niche for themselves in the competitive business world. The study identified individuals and clusters focusing on specific sectors encompassing the whole of Tamil Nadu.

**Keywords:** Women Entrepreneurs, Empowerment, Entrepreneurship Development, inclusive growth, Economic Development.

### Introduction

*"Countries with more gender equality have better economic growth. Companies with more women leaders perform better. Peace agreements that include women are more durable. Parliaments with more women enact more legislation on key social issues such as health, education, anti-discrimination and child support. The evidence is clear: equality for women means progress for all"*

~ UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

“Women Entrepreneur” is a person who accepts challenging role to meet her personal needs and become economically independent. Increasing numbers of women are becoming leaders of their own businesses, and many are struggling to achieve success. Women entrepreneurship is considered an important tool in enabling women empowerment. Economic empowerment is the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways which recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth. Economic empowerment increases women’s access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information. Women’s economic participation and empowerment are fundamental to strengthening women’s rights and enabling women to have control over their lives and exert influence in society. It is about creating just and equitable societies. Women often face discrimination and persistent gender inequalities, with some women experiencing multiple discrimination and exclusion

because of factors such as ethnicity or caste. The economic empowerment of women is a prerequisite for sustainable development, pro-poor growth and the achievement of all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Gender equality and empowered women are catalysts for multiplying development efforts. Investments in gender equality yield the highest returns of all development investments. Women usually invest a higher proportion of their earnings in their families and communities than men. Increasing the role of women in the economy is part of the solution to the financial and economic crises and critical for economic resilience and growth.

This paper looks at the literature around women entrepreneurship. It is hoped that it will be useful to fellow researchers who are undertaking studies in this area. In the light of recent world events, this has become a crucial area to study and understand especially with respect to motivations, constraints and consequences. The factors that affect women’s participation roles are different across the world, changing with the dynamic nature of the environments in which they live. The efforts are on it to uplift the social and economic status of women. The development of women as an entrepreneur will generate multifaceted socioeconomic benefits for the country.

### Need For the Study

Women, in a country like India, are just seen as someone to look after the home and bear children and thus the treatment they get is below par with their male counterparts. In other words, they are treated as second-class citizens. While the men folk are involved in agriculture or unemployment, the women and girls are mostly involved in household chores, does not have any say

in the family affairs. Excluded from receiving higher education and entirely dependent on their male counterparts, they have to bear the brunt of most of the evils like dowry, domestic violence etc. Being a masculine society, women and girls are not allowed to step out of their houses which lead to lower educational status, low confidence to face the world. In view of the financial constraints that a family faces, empowering them through skill-building programs would give them more avenues to earn their living and become in the process self-reliant. Such programs will also help them to raise their voice against the ill treatment accorded to them within the family or outside. All these clearly indicate that there is an imperative need to find out some alternative ways as mentioned above to tackle this burning problem; “*Self Employment through skills-building*” seems to be one of the effective ways. It implies that women, with inherent talents and having inner urge to fine-tune them to make them sources of their livelihood, indeed need some encouragement and help from various agencies working for the very cause.

### **Literature Review**

Various studies have been conducted on women entrepreneurs worldwide, and every time researcher comes up with a different solution. For a better tomorrow, we cannot ignore the half of female populations thriving to do something challenging and productive. Various support groups are actively providing business related advice to women in business, female entrepreneurs and women. Besides above women in different areas wanting to show the support that in some cases, they never had.

VKrishnamoorthy and RBalasubramani (April 2014) identified the important women entrepreneurial motivation factors and its impact on entrepreneurial success. The study identified ambition, skills and knowledge, family support, market opportunities, independence, government subsidy and satisfaction are the important entrepreneurial motivational factors. The study also concluded that ‘ambition’, ‘knowledge and skill’, ‘independence’ dimensions of entrepreneurial motivational has significant impact on entrepreneurial success. G. Palaniappan, C. S. Ramanigopal, A. Mani (19 March 2012) in their article analyzed that women have been successful in breaking their barriers within the limits of their homes by entering into varied kinds of professionals and services. Skill, knowledge and adaptability in business are the main reasons for women to emerge into business ventures. This study had also been carried out to analyze the motivational factors and other factors that influence women to become entrepreneurs, the major strength and weakness of women entrepreneurs and the environmental opportunities and threats which promote the entrepreneurship, and to offer suggestions to promote women entrepreneurship of selected districts in Tamilnadu. This study concluded that due to lack of training and education they are not able to survive in the market. Finance is also the major problem for women entrepreneurs.

Mallika Das (2001) conducted a thorough study on Women Entrepreneurs of small scale enterprises in India and concluded in her research that the initial problems faced by the women’s in initiating a business enterprise seems to be similar to those faced by women in western countries. However, the challenges faced by Indian woman entrepreneurs seem to differ entirely from those of their counterparts and face lower levels of work

family conflicts than western countries in starting and succeeding in business.

### **Background to the Study**

This paper highlights the cases of such women entrepreneurs who have struggled and have established a mark for themselves in this male-dominated industry particularly in the state of Tamil Nadu. As the area of study is emergent, research into women entrepreneurs is necessarily exploratory in nature. The data collected were secondary in nature and the sources of data were internet, magazines and newspaper articles.

### **Scope of the Study**

This study would be of great help to the implementing agencies to bring necessary improvements in the self-help groups for attaining the overall improvement of women. The knowledge on these aspects could be used to develop strategies to motivate self-help group members for their enhanced participation in the group. Further the study would highlight the role and importance of micro enterprises in women empowerment.

### **Case Studies**

Keeping in mind the issues related to marketing by the women entrepreneurs, the inclusive growth was given to the entrepreneurs through incentives by the government, support from NGO’s, technical support from related experts and the ability to face hardships and withstand the same made these enterprises successful.

#### **Rajshree Group of Companies, Coimbatore**

Rajshree Pathy, is an eminent entrepreneur in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India. She is the Chairperson and Managing Director of the Rajshree Group of Companies and Founder of India Design Forum. The Rajshree group has varied interests – Food and Agro business, Energy, Real Estate, Travel, Health and Hospitality and Arts. She also promotes performing arts and contemporary art movement in Coimbatore through the Contemplate Art Gallery and COCCA. Rajshree Pathy is the daughter of famous industrialist Shri G. Varadaraj, of PSG Families engaged in Charities and Educational Institutions for more than a century. Her father was also a former Rajya Sabha MP. She is married to S.Pathy, Chairman & Managing director of Lakshmi Mills. Rajshree Sugars and Chemicals Ltd. is a company with interests across integrated fields such as Sugar, Distillery, Power CoGeneration and Biotechnology. The range of products includes White Crystal Sugar, Alcohol, Organic Manure, Bio products and Power. A specialty Demerara Sugar is marketed under the brand name RSCL Sugar Brown. RSCL with its Corporate office in Coimbatore, has three modern sugar manufacturing units located in Tamil Nadu one at Varadaraj Nagar, Theni District, the second at Mundiampakkam, Villupuram District and the third at Gingee, Villupuram District. RSCL also has a Sugar factory located at Zaheerabad, Medak District in Andhra Pradesh.

#### **Dream Weaver, Chennai**

To dream big is normal but to wake up and work hard to realize that dream calls for extraordinary boldness and confidence. That is why it is said that ‘the road to success runs uphill’. While history is replete with people who have achieved success in their own unique way under mottled circumstances, the success story of the mother daughter duo Cheryl and Denise of Chennai

is extraordinary. Based in Chennai, Dream Weaver produces biodegradable single use garments for hospitals and wellness clinics. Dream Weaver has entered a niche sector in a short span. It produces aprons, masks, undergarments and so on for spas and hospitals. Unusually, the company was started by a mother daughter duo with no business background and its workforce consists entirely of underprivileged women. Also, nobody else produces such garments in any of the southern states.

Denise Huffton, who founded Dream Weaver, got this idea when she was in the final year of her undergraduate course in business administration. At that time, Denise attended a friend's wedding where she noticed disposable napkins being used. She started exploring the possibility of using this nonwoven material for other purposes. She spent weeks listing products that could be used by spas, beauty salons and hospitals. Eventually, she identified aprons, caps and masks as products that would most likely be used. Denise was keen to ensure that personal hygiene did not come at the cost of pollution. The spun material that she came across at the wedding seemed the ideal choice since it was biodegradable. Today the net sales of the company from big clients are worth almost Rs. 2 lakh per month and the company has been able to have an annual turnover of Rs. 30 lakhs. It has become a leading producer of one time use disposable materials used in spas and beauty parlours such as mouth masks, disposable towels, napkins, paper bags, head caps, aprons, gowns, laundry bags etc.

So Dream Weavers had arrived on the scene and took deep roots to stay and flourish. In the last five years the company has been able to garner orders from more than 15 big companies and about 50 small companies are regular clients of Dream Weavers. The company then acquired import export license also and now has been able to sell its products beyond the frontiers of the country. The company's products are being exported to many countries like Dubai, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Australia. In Dubai Denise has been able to get clients like Chanakya which gave orders for them for manufacturing G-string panties, unisex panties etc. Denise is now based in Dubai most of the time as she is bent upon getting more clients and selling her products internationally on a wider scale.

### **Yanasoundary Manufactures, Kanchipuram**

About 70 per cent of India lives in villages with very poor or no electricity supply. Problems with electricity shortages are nothing new, but so far in 2013, Tamil Nadu has experienced the most severe shortage in all of India. Full of drive and passion, Yanasoundary in Kanchipuram engineering graduate and her friends turned their backs on career opportunities in the big city to startup a solar panel company in 2012. Mission is their alternative power to provide supply for rural towns and villages with their solar products.

So what does the quintessential college student in India envision for his/her career path? The picture often includes multi-storey buildings where workers sit beneath tube lights, staring at screens in their cubicles. Yanasoundary is not average engineering graduate. Upon completion of her course in electronic engineering, she and a friend started up a solar panel company. "There are a lot of opportunities in the solar power field," she said. "People in other fields look for work in big companies, but we thought we would do something different

and also provide a solution to the electricity crisis. So, using the latest technology, they started their own business". She was not only impressed by how innovative these young women are, but also by their decision to remain in their hometown instead of following the masses to a metropolis. And with the frequent power cuts in Tamil Nadu, people are eager to find alternative power sources.

Initially the team produces small solar panels for household/day-to-day use (like powering fans or charging phones), lamps, and inverters for storing backup power. Since this is a small-scale business, Yanasoundary manufactures her products upon request. She receives an order, assembles the products, and sells them. They expand the business in order to increase production capacity and revenue as well as to create more job opportunities. The market interest is high for solar products, especially in rural towns and villages. However, Yanasoundary and her partners face tough challenges as they seek to grow beyond a microenterprise. The path to up scaling the company requires improvements in their production capacity and processes, sourcing of materials, more funds to pay for inventory, hiring a small direct sales team, and better marketing.

What she and her team have accomplished so far has given them a good learning platform. However, they realise that they need more help, so Yanasoundary and her colleagues applied to be part of the rural small business accelerator (SBA) programme led by Chilasa and its community-based partner Action for Human Movement (AHM). The purpose of the SBA is to select the most promising micro-enterprises with capable and motivated women entrepreneurs and help them develop into small growing businesses. The programme will give the young entrepreneurs access to growth finance, business mentoring, entrepreneurship training, financial management, organisational development and marketing support— this will be critical to their success. They will also have access to Chilasa's research and development (R&D) ecosystem to help with product development and innovation. With this kind of support, Yanasoundary believes she and her co-workers have every possibility to light up Tamil Nadu towns.

### **A 2 Decade Enterprises, Tuticorin**

The mud crab farming was started in 1992 by Mrs. Sussammal Nazareen and her group at Punnakyal village 20 km South of Tuticorin town. Mrs. Sussammal Nazareen is the first woman crab farmer who has been culturing crabs. for the last 15 years. She has education up to primary level. She is a leader of the local Women Self Help Group. She supports her group members and husband in crab farming activities. Mrs. Susammal Nazareen and her husband are pioneers in mud crab culture in ponds (both short term and long term). They are perhaps the longest standing crab farmers in the state. She also encourages the local farmers to take up crab culture in the village selflessly. Crab farming is being practiced in earthen ponds. Crab species *Scylla tranquebarica* is being cultured for about 9 months in a year. The culture is being done in a water spread area of 250 acres consisting of 25 ponds of varying sizes (0.1 to 1.0 ha) each with a depth of 2-6 ft. These ponds are actually frontier ponds, where seawater is passed through one pond after another and finally reaches the salt pans for salt production. Water crabs were purchased on the daily basis from Chennai and were transported to Tuticorin by train and by road.

Availability of water crabs is restricted during the months January to March. Water crabs with a size ranging from 50g - 750 g are stocked in each pond.

**Marketing:** Partial harvest is being carried out from April. Crab with an average weight of 800g and above will be collected from ponds by hand picking and are sold live to the exporters with high profit. Mrs. Sussammal Nazareen is versatile and has good traditional knowledge in crab farming and marketing. The most important observation is that Mrs. Sussammal Nazareen is a very bold lady operating alone on her farm without any fear. Sometimes when there is no transportation facility to move the crabs to the market, she herself carries them as head load to the nearby places. She also supervises her crab farm daily. Mrs. Susammal Nazareen, is a Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy (NVA) Fellowship awardee for the year 2007. She was awarded this fellowship by MSSRF nominated by CIBA, Chennai for her expertise in crab farming. Thus Mrs. Susammal Nazareen, plays a major role as a flag bearer of mud crab fattening by women in Tamil Nadu and is a role model in the village and plays a major part in community development.

#### **Periyar Mud Crab Hatchery, Mugaiyur, Kancheepuram District**

Mrs. Tamilselvi Eraniyappan, is the manager in Periyar Mud Crab Hatchery, Mugaiyur, Cheiyur Taluk, Kancheepuram District, Tamil Nadu. Only women employees are exclusively employed in this hatchery and twenty women employees work under her supervision. She is educated only up to elementary level and possesses a strong expertise in hatchery management. She is having a strong expertise in seed production of fresh water prawns and hatchery production of mud crabs. She is having a good knowledge in brood stock maintenance, induced maturation, spawning / hatching, larval rearing, live-feed culture, post-larval rearing, maintenance of biological stock, seawater supply system, air-supply system, cleaning of brood stock and larval tanks and monitoring of water quality parameters.

She has her unique ways of establishing rapport among the poor and the rural youth and she gains their confidence by guiding them in generating reliable livelihood and income. Mrs. Tamilselvi Eraniyappan, is a Jamsetji Tata National Virtual Academy (NVA) Fellowship awardee for the year 2007. She was awarded this fellowship by MS. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) nominated by Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (CIBA), Chennai for her expertise in hatchery management. Mrs. Tamilselvi Eraniyappan, possess leadership qualities, good knowledge and experience in fresh water prawns and mud crab hatchery management.

#### **Swarnalatha Shrimp Farm Unit, Papakoil, Nagapatinam District**

Mrs. R. Swarnalatha, Papakoil, Nagapatinam district, has B.S.c (Home Science) graduate. She started shrimp farming in 1994. She has got expertise in shrimp farming and *Sea bass* farming since 1997. She also works as a consultant for other shrimp farms located in Papakoil, Nagapatinam and helps her husband as consultant for fish feed export. She basically belongs to an agricultural family. She could adapt to aquaculture without any difficulty and her aim is to support her husband in aquaculture activities. Her self interest and motivation given by family

members encouraged her to take up brackish water shrimp farming seriously. Shrimp seeds were purchased and Six lakhs seeds were stocked in her farm i.e. 1 lakh/ ha. For 6 hectares 3 tones of shrimps are harvested and therefore the total harvest / year are 6 tones. The harvested shrimps were sold to Liberty Sea Foods, Nila Sea Foods and Baby Marine Sea Foods.

There are fifteen men and three women workers working in the farm. The age group of labourers ranged from 25 – 40 years. The average experience among the labourers was more than 10 years. The work done by the women labour in the farm was scrapping, pond preparation, weeding and hand picking. Social problems like poaching, labour problems and technical problems in the farms were also experienced. Thus, Mrs. R. Swarnalatha, is a pioneer in generating local employment and income. She is also a role model for shrimp farmers to bring forth their best in income earning activities.

#### **Ornamental Fish Culture Unit, Chennai**

‘Ornamental Fish Culture’ is being practiced by 5 ‘Irrular’ WSHGs at New Perungulathur, Chennai. Smt. D. Vijaya, is a ornamental fish farmer. She is a leader of ‘Pournami’ WSHGs. The traditional occupation of Smt. D. Vijaya and her group is catching snakes and rats. She has strived hard to bring in diversification in livelihood among her group by making them understand that they need not depend on the income earned by their husbands alone. Each day she and her group members work hard and have established an ‘Ornamental Fish Culture unit’ at New Perungulathur, Kancheepuram Dst. She and her group devotes most of their time in managing this unit. Six varieties of ornamental fishes are being cultured by Mrs. D. Vijaya and her group. The size of each fish is measured as M size, S size and MN size. The breeding time is 15 days. 200 fish is stocked / tank. The rate at which these fishes are sold ranges from Rs.2.00 – Rs. 450/- Fish traders from different places around Chennai come here to purchase these fishes.

Mrs. D. Vijaya, is the leader of ‘Pournami’ Irrular’ tribal WSHGs, New Perungulathur, Kancheepuram Dt. TamilNadu. There are 15 women members in her group who are actively involved in ‘Ornamental Fish Culture’ at New Perungulathur, Kancheepuram Dist.. These WSHGs have undergone training at TANUVAS, Kattupakkam. They are being supported by TADCO, NGO. They have also received a bank loan of Rs.2,00,000/- from Swarna Jayanthi Self Employment Scheme. This group is a successful group. They have got good savings in the local commercial bank. The bank has also provided many loans to this group considering their prompt re-payment of the loan amount. They have also received 2 awards from the State Government for being a very successful WSHG. Mrs. D. Vijaya, is a ‘Irrular’ tribal woman who possesses expertise in ornamental fish culture. She has her unique way of establishing rapport among her WSHGs and ornamental fish marketing agents and gains their confidence to stock and supply ornamental fish to the retailers and wholesalers. She builds the capacity of the coastal WSHGs in ornamental fish culture. She started this WSHG with an aim to generate additional income for her and for the group members. Smt. D. Vijaya, plays as a role model to portray that, the SHG concept works as good model to improve the living standards of women and the community as a whole. She use unique for having identified ornamental fish culture since it is a new developing area of growth.

## Conclusion

The major learning from these enterprises of women entrepreneur was that there is a need for family support for women to start an enterprise and maintain the same. On the marketing front, most of the enterprises case studied mentioned that product quality and pricing were an important component. They have not undertaken any marketing plan or segmentation. However, there was clarity with respect to the local promotions and the need for word of mouth publicity. Care should be taken not to get any adverse comments from the customers. Customer relationship management forms an important aspect of the marketing strategy.

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