



THE INTERSECTION OF FEMINISM AND WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

B. Shambhu Lingappa

Associate Professor, Department of Management Studies, Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU), Centre for PG Studies, Kalaburagi.

Introduction

Interestingly enough, there is debate over the definition of an entrepreneur. Some experts have a wide definition to include anyone who works for himself. Others suggest that an entrepreneur doesn't just work independently but also, his business involves innovation and leadership. Entrepreneurship is both the study of how new businesses are created as well as the actual process of starting a new business – the term is used interchangeably. An entrepreneur is someone who has an idea and who works to create a product or service that people will buy, by building an organization to support those sales.

Increase in cost of living has prompted the Indian women to undertake economic activities in order to support their families. They are coming forward to take risks, face challenges and prove the world that their role in the society is no more limited to that of buyers but they can be also successful sellers. There are thousands of good examples where women have shown entrepreneurial talents and have succeeded. Women entrepreneurs are the key players in any developing country in terms of their contribution to economic development. Now, it is imperative to know who is a women entrepreneur. In the simplest sense, women entrepreneurs are those women who take the lead and organize the business and provide employment. It signifies that section of female population who venture out into industrial activities. It may be defined as a woman or group of women who initiate, organize and run a business enterprise. However, Government of India has given a broader definition of the term women entrepreneur. It defines women entrepreneur as "an enterprise owned and controlled by women having a minimum financial interest of 51% of the capital and giving at least 51% of the employment generated in the enterprise to women". According to J. A. Schumpeter, "Woman who innovates, imitates, or adopts a business activity is called woman entrepreneur." Thus women entrepreneur are those women who initiate, organize and operate business enterprise and want to prove their mettle in innovative and competitive jobs. She also wants to oversee and control every aspects of her business for its overall success.

Growth of Women Entrepreneurship

Almost half of India's population consists of women. But they constitute a very negligible portion of the total entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurial traits and competencies have not been well developed amongst the women entrepreneurs. They are very shy in nature and emotionally attached to the family. They are treated as weak and dependent on men. They are the neglected sections in the society. The much low literacy rate 39%, low work participation rate 28% and low urban population share 10% of women as compared to 63%: 52% and 18% respectively of their male counterpart well confirm their precarious position in the society.

In spite of the above, in sixties, women have started entrepreneurial activities as one-woman enterprises at home and from home for self-occupation and engagement. The number of women entrepreneurs was only 6000 which miserably low during the period.



Indian women started their entrepreneurial work in 1970s. Their entrepreneurship is traced out as an extension of kitchen activities mainly pickles, powder and pappad. Women are encouraged to start an occupation or venture with an urge to do something independently started to tide over their economic difficulties and responsibilities.

In the seventies, Government of India has also brought a change in its policy objective of welfare approach of women to development approach of women. Women were given priorities in all the sectors including small scale industries sector. As a result, the number of women entrepreneurs has increased over the years.

During 1980s, government and non-government bodies have paid increasing attention to women entrepreneurs through formulation of various policies and programmes and introduction of new schemes and incentives. It adopted a multi-disciplinary approach for development of women entrepreneurs. Women entrepreneurs were given top priority for implementation of programmes under agricultural and its allied activities of dairy farming, poultry, animal husbandry, handlooms, handicrafts and small scale industries, etc.

In the nineties, out of the total women population of 437.10 millions, there are 126.48 million women workforce of which only 1,85,900 women accounting for self employed in the country. This indicates a dismally low level of women participation in the entrepreneurial activities.

Further women entrepreneurs in India accounted for 9.01% of the total 1.70 million entrepreneurs during 1988-89. There were more than 2,95,680 women entrepreneurs claiming 11.2% of the total 2.64 million entrepreneurs in India during 1995-96. The number of women entrepreneurs have increased to 3,28,000 in 1996-97.

During the ninth five year plan, the government has introduced in 1998 an important scheme on Trade Related Entrepreneurship of Assistance and Development (TREAD) aiming at economic empowerment of women in rural, urban and semi-urban areas. It develops their entrepreneurial skill and eliminates the constraints faced by women entrepreneurs.

The TREAD programme was operated through Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI). SIDBI has initiated various schemes for the growth of women entrepreneurs through Mahila Udyam Nidhi (MUN), Mahila Vikash for Nidhi (MVN), Micro Credit Scheme (MSC), Women Entrepreneurial Development Programme (EDP), and Marketing Development Fund (MDF) for women entrepreneurs. In the context of the opening up of the economy and the need for up gradation of technology, the Consortium of Women Entrepreneurs of India (CWEI) is a common platform to help the very women entrepreneurs in finding innovative techniques of production and marketing and finance.

Prime-Minister Rozgar Yojna (PMRY), National Rural Employment Programme and (NREP), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) are some of the important schemes floated by the Government which encourage women to enter into work entrepreneurial activities.

With growing awareness about business and due to growth of educational level, in professional education, industrialisation, urbanisation and democratic values awareness, the tradition bound Indian society has undergone a change and women entrepreneurs have shifted their entrepreneurial activities to



engineering, electronics and energy. They made personal choices, stood up for their convictions and had the courage and strength to enter into new ventures. As a result of these efforts, number of women entrepreneurs has increased over the years.

Feminism

It is a range of political movements, ideologies, and social movements that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality of sexes. This includes seeking to establish educational and professional opportunities for women that are equal to those for men. Feminist campaigns are generally considered to be a main force behind major historical societal changes for women's rights, particularly in the West, where they are near-universally credited with achieving women's suffrage, gender neutrality. Although feminist advocacy is, and has been, mainly focused on women's rights, some feminists, including bell hooks, argue for the inclusion of men's liberation within its aims because they believe that men are also harmed by traditional gender roles. Feminist theory, which emerged from feminist movements, aims to understand the nature of gender inequality by examining women's social roles and lived experience; it has developed theories in a variety of disciplines in order to respond to issues concerning gender.

Entrepreneurial Feminism

Entrepreneurial feminism, developed from social feminism, is a theory that explains how feminist values are enacted through the venture creation process to improve the position of women in society. Coined by **Barbara Orser** and **Catherine Elliott**, entrepreneurship is viewed as a mechanism to create economic self-sufficiency and equity-based outcomes for girls and women. Entrepreneurial feminists enter commercial markets to create wealth and social change, based on the ethics of cooperation, equality, and mutual respect.

Statement of the Problem

According to Merriam-Webster, "Feminism is a collection of movements and ideologies aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, cultural, and social rights of women". Feminism seems to be a good idea, but not everything has been fine. Some feminism advantages are, the women have gain equality, the women are able to participate in elections, the women are able to speak in public and the women are able to demand their rights.

However, some women, mainly the ones who had had problems in their families, have exaggerated the situation, therefore the feminism have had some disadvantages such as **Genital difference**; some women think that a man and a woman should be equal in everything. And everything includes their physics. Therefore, to also have the same body, some women have preferred to live with a lesbian and forget the men, **Anti-male**; many women want to have children, but some of them think that a sexual relation is a violent action. To avoid this "violence" they chose for inseminate, **Readings**; according to the feminism, everything should be equal in sex. Therefore, an author should have two protagonists: a man and a woman. **Harassment**; in some countries such as Mexico, it is dangerous when a man sees a woman, because she is able to consider it as harassment. Also, it is dangerous to travel in metro, because if a man rubs a woman as an accident, the woman is able to sue the man for a sexual harassment.

Feminism is a movement that fights for equality, not only for men and women but also for people of all genders, races, sexual orientations, religions, social classes, etc. In other words, feminism fights for



everyone. The word equality is the above definition is the root cause for the problem we are discussing in this paper. The word is a manifestation of the attitude that the women are equal to or greater than men. “The woman is neither inferior to man, nor is she superior. They are two different categories of humanity – they cannot be compared. The very comparison is idiotic, and if you start comparing, then you will be in trouble” and “Men are men, women are women; there is no question of comparison. Equality is out of question. They are not unequal and neither they can be equal. They are unique” says Osho. This paper tries to bring out those aspects of feminism entrepreneurship that try to portray women greater than men. This portrayal will bring a competition between men and women that may hurdle the women entrepreneurship. Hence the statement of the problem is “**Feminism Entrepreneurship; A Threat to Women Entrepreneurship**”.

Objectives of the Study

Entrepreneurial feminism explores how feminist values and perspectives influence women's entrepreneurial activities. As more women engage in entrepreneurship, it becomes crucial to understand both the empowering and challenging aspects of feminism in this space. This study aims to delve into the concept of entrepreneurial feminism, examine the feminist elements that may unintentionally hinder women's entrepreneurial progress, analyze the key issues arising from this intersection, and propose practical strategies to overcome these challenges for fostering a more supportive environment for women entrepreneurs.

The objectives of this paper can be listed as below.

- 1 Understand the concept of Entrepreneurial feminism.
- 2 Identify the elements of feminism that are obstacles for a better women-entrepreneurship.
- 3 Make an analysis of the issues in women-entrepreneurship caused by the feminism.
- 4 Design the suitable strategies to mitigate the problems of women entrepreneurship caused by feminism.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to critically analyze the intersection of feminism and women entrepreneurship. The methodology includes the following components:

1. Research Design:

A descriptive and exploratory design is employed to understand the influence of feminist ideologies on women's entrepreneurial experiences and to identify related challenges.

2. Data Collection:

Primary Data: Collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 women entrepreneurs from diverse sectors.

Secondary Data: Sourced from academic journals, books, case studies, and reports related to feminism, gender studies, and entrepreneurship.

3. Sampling Method:

Purposive sampling is used to select women entrepreneurs with varying degrees of exposure to feminist thought, ensuring diverse perspectives.

4. Data Analysis:

Thematic analysis is applied to identify key patterns, themes, and contradictions in the data, focusing on how feminist principles impact entrepreneurial motivation, strategy, and outcomes.



5. Ethical Considerations:

All participants are informed about the purpose of the research. Their consent is obtained, and confidentiality is maintained throughout the study.

Limitations of the Study

As the concept of entrepreneurial feminism is in inception stage and hardly the people know about it. The research and articles produced on the topic are also few. This paper as a result of the non availability of the personal and written data suffers the following limitations.

1. The paper considers only those aspects of feminism that have caused problems to women entrepreneurship.
2. The paper is based on the very few articles selected for the analyses; hence the data collected is purely secondary data.
3. Though the paper quotes the examples of failed women entrepreneurship, there still exist successful women entrepreneurs.

Analysis of Data

As this paper attempts to analyze how Feminism entrepreneurship poses the challenges for the women entrepreneurship. It is the eager attempt of this paper to bring forth the elements of both the concepts of feminist entrepreneurship and women entrepreneurship contradict with each other. These contradicting elements can be better understood with table presented below. The table is designed with three different parts depicted in rows, the first row depicts the base on which the feminism entrepreneurship and women empowerment contradict each other, the second and the third row explain how both the feminism entrepreneurship and women empowerment contradict.

SL NO	Base of Contradict	Feminism	Women Empowerment
1	Radical	Radical feminism is a philosophy emphasizing the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women, or, more specifically, social dominance of women by men.(Focus on negativity of surrounding)	Encouraging corporate leadership capacity with the quality to ascertain gender equality. (Focus on how the surrounding can be utilized for self empowerment)
2	Socialist Feminism	Socialist feminist theory analyzed the connection between the oppression of women and other oppressions in society, such as racism and economic injustice. (Fault finding)	Making sure that all men and women workers are provided with equal facilities in terms of their overall welfare and safety at workplaces. (Reconciling)
3	Housework As A Political	Housework was seen as both an	Making sure



	Issue	unequal burden on women, and an example of how women's work was devalued. (Ignores and opposes the household responsibilities)	that all men and women workers are provided with equal facilities in terms of their overall welfare and safety at workplaces. (Endorses both household and entrepreneurial responsibility)
4	The Pro-Woman Argument	Pro-Woman Line argues that women do resist negative portrayals and oppressive standards. (Aggression)	Encouraging women to develop entrepreneurial skills, which in turn, would make them self-dependent. (Composed Image)
5	Women's Liberation	Assumes that the women are bounded. (Narrow sense)	Advocating the promotion of gender equality within in a community. (Overcoming the hurdle and broad sense)
6	Rebel vs. Leader	Encouraging rebellion capacity with the quality to ascertain equality	Encouraging leadership capacity with the quality to ascertain equality
7	Approach Towards The Members	Modern feminism only tells women they are not capable of and unable to succeed through its underlying message of selfishness.	Educating women according to the professional requirement and encourage them to grow further in life

Consider the following quotes,

Arianna Huffington In the book she wrote, "Women's Lib claims that the achievement of total liberation would transform the lives of all women for the better; the truth is that it would transform only the lives of women with strong lesbian tendencies."



“Not only is it harder to be a man, it is also harder to become one.” – **Arianna Huffington**

“Liberation is an ever shifting horizon, a total ideology that can never fulfill its promises. It has the therapeutic quality of providing emotionally charged rituals of solidarity in hatred – it is the amphetamine of its believers.” – **Arianna Huffington**

“Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid that men will kill them.”
Margaret Atwood

“Men are from Earth, women are from Earth. Deal with it.” **George Carlin**

“A feminist is anyone who recognizes the equality and full humanity of women and men.”
Gloria Steinem

“Women are still treated as secondary issues. It is still far too easy and accepted for leaders to ignore uncomfortable truths... Women, we know, are the first to be affected by war, and the last to be taken into account when it ends.”- **Angelina Jolie, actor & activist**

All the above quotes and opinions tend to consider the men as their competitors and they also intend to show that the women are equal to men.

Suggestions

Following suggestions can be made to the feminist entrepreneurs on the basis of the observations done above. These suggestions not only eliminate the hurdles that hamper the women empowerment.

1. Get women into power. A proven way to overcome many systemic barriers to a woman's success has been increased participation by women in local, regional and national legislation as empowered change agents. In just 10 years, the number of women holding seats in houses of national parliament in south Asia rose from 7% to 18%. But a global goal of equal representation is still a long way off, with only one woman for every four men in parliamentary houses. A woman's voice and her ability to become a leader in her community is fundamental to empowering women.
2. Work together. Alarming, gender gaps in sub-Saharan Africa have widened at higher levels of schooling. This is a reverse of the global trend towards greater parity. Between 1999 and 2010, the ratio of girls in secondary school fell from 83 to 82 girls for every 100 boys at the secondary level and from 67 to 63 girls for every 100 boys at the tertiary level. This is stalled progress and a reversion to the deep gender inequalities that characterized previous eras.
3. Gender equality also does not mean that males and females must always be treated the same. Given the existence of biological sex differences, it is reasonable for males and females to have different legal rights in some instances.
4. Equal rights are not enough. Inequality exists in our minds, in our biases and prejudices, and that remains to be fixed.



Conclusion

The paper attempts to point out that both men and women are to be treated and considered differently. It cautions the women entrepreneurs that treating men entrepreneurs as threat and trying to be equal to them or showing them that women are greater and capable may fail to meet the very objective of women empowerment through entrepreneurship. “Men are men, women are women; there is no question of comparison. Equality is out of question. They are not unequal and neither they can be equal. They are unique”.

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