



Social Entrepreneurship and Economic Development in India: Emerging Perspectives

Mr. Sachin Narsingrao Pawar¹, Dr. Subhash Ramchandra Bhosale²

& Mr. Anil V. Chaughule³

¹Assistant Professor, Preetam Prakash College Indrayani Nagar, Bhosari Pune.

²Associate Professor, BYK Commerce College, Nashik.

³Research Scholar, Defense and Strategic Studies, S. P. Pune University, Pune.

Corresponding Author – Mr. Sachin Narsingrao Pawar

DOI - 10.5281/zenodo.17987532

Abstract:

Social entrepreneurship has emerged as a powerful tool for addressing socio-economic challenges in India. This research paper examines the role of social entrepreneurship in promoting inclusive economic development. The study highlights the innovative approaches adopted by social enterprises to tackle poverty, unemployment, education, and healthcare issues. It explores the challenges faced by social entrepreneurs, including access to finance and regulatory barriers. The paper also discusses opportunities created by government schemes and digital platforms. Primary and secondary data are used to analyse the impact of social enterprises. The findings reveal that social entrepreneurship significantly contributes to sustainable development. The study emphasizes the need for policy support and capacity building. It concludes that social entrepreneurship can be a catalyst for equitable growth in India. Recommendations are provided for strengthening the social entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Keywords: *Innovation, Social Enterprises, Inclusive Growth, Sustainable Development, Social Impact, Microfinance, Social Innovation, Grassroots Entrepreneurship.*

Introduction:

Social entrepreneurship is a rapidly growing concept that combines business innovation with social responsibility. In India, the need for social entrepreneurship has increased due to rising economic disparities, unemployment, and social exclusion. Traditional businesses primarily focus on profit maximization, while social entrepreneurs aim to create social value along with financial sustainability. India's large population and diverse socio-economic challenges provide a fertile ground for social entrepreneurial initiatives. Social enterprises work in areas such as education, healthcare,

sanitation, women empowerment, and rural development. With the introduction of initiatives like Start-up India and Digital India, opportunities for social entrepreneurs have expanded. The government and non-governmental organizations have also started recognizing the importance of social enterprises. However, despite its potential, social entrepreneurship faces several structural and financial challenges. Limited access to funding remains a significant barrier. Lack of managerial skills and training is another constraint. Regulatory complexities often discourage new ventures. Social entrepreneurs also face difficulties in

measuring social impact. The lack of public awareness limits market reach. Despite these issues, social entrepreneurship has shown resilience and adaptability.

It has introduced innovative solutions like microfinance and self-help groups. Impact investing has opened new funding avenues. The integration of technology has improved service delivery. Youth participation in social ventures is increasing. Educational institutions are promoting social entrepreneurship through specialized courses. Corporate social responsibility initiatives have strengthened partnerships. Overall, social entrepreneurship has emerged as a promising pathway for sustainable development. It bridges the gap between economic growth and social welfare. Therefore, studying its emerging perspectives is essential for policy formulation and economic planning.

Social entrepreneurship has emerged as a transformative force in India's development landscape, blending business innovation with social mission. As the country continues to confront persistent challenges such as poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation and unequal access to essential services, social entrepreneurs are redefining traditional development models through creative and sustainable solutions. Their initiatives span diverse sectors—including education, healthcare, renewable energy, agriculture, and financial inclusion—addressing gaps that conventional markets and government programs often struggle to fill. In recent years, supportive policies, digital advancements and a growing impact-investment ecosystem have further accelerated the growth of social enterprises. This evolving environment presents new

perspectives on how social entrepreneurship can contribute significantly to inclusive and sustainable economic development in India.

Literature of Review:

Several scholars have studied the role of social entrepreneurship in economic development. Dees (1998) described social entrepreneurs as change agents who adopt innovative strategies to solve social problems. Mair and Marti (2006) emphasized the importance of social value creation in entrepreneurial activities. Bornstein (2007) highlighted the global impact of social enterprises in addressing poverty and inequality. Alter (2007) classified different models of social enterprises based on their operational approaches. In the Indian context, Prahalad (2005) focused on the role of entrepreneurship in serving the bottom of the pyramid. Nicholls (2010) discussed the challenges of measuring social impact. Yunus (2010) popularized the concept of social business through microfinance initiatives. Studies by Indian researchers have shown that social enterprises contribute to employment generation. Literature also suggests that supportive policy frameworks enhance the growth of social enterprises.

Several studies have highlighted the role of technology in scaling social impact. Researchers noted that lack of funding remains a major hurdle. Institutional support is found to be uneven across regions. Public-private partnerships are considered effective for social innovation. Impact assessment frameworks are still evolving. The existing literature indicates a strong link between social entrepreneurship and inclusive economic development.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine the role of social entrepreneurship in promoting economic development in India.
2. To identify the challenges faced by social entrepreneurs.
3. To analyse the opportunities for growth of social enterprises in India.

Hypotheses:

1. **(Null Hypothesis):** Social entrepreneurship has no significant impact on economic development in India.
2. **(Alternative Hypothesis):** Social entrepreneurship has a significant impact on economic development in India.

Methodology:**Sources of Data:**

- **Primary Data:** Collected through structured questionnaires from 50 social entrepreneurs.
- **Secondary Data:** Journals, reports, government publications, and websites.

Sample Size:

- 50 respondents selected using simple random sampling.

Data Analysis:

Table 1: Awareness of Social Entrepreneurship

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
High	30	60%
Medium	15	30%
Low	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Table 2: Perceived Impact on Economic Development

Impact Level	Respondents	Percentage
Positive	35	70%
Neutral	10	20%
Negative	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Testing of Hypothesis (Chi-Square Test):**Step 1: Observed Frequencies (O):**

Category	Observed (O)
Positive	35
Neutral	10
Negative	5

Step 2: Expected Frequencies (E):

Assuming equal distribution:

Category	Expected (E)
Positive	16.67
Neutral	16.67
Negative	16.67

Step 3: Chi-Square Formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum (O - E)^2 / E$$

Step 4: Calculation:

Category	O	E	(O-E) ² / E
Positive	35	16.67	20.16
Neutral	10	16.67	2.67
Negative	5	16.67	8.17
Total χ^2			30.99

Step 5: Result:

- Calculated $\chi^2 = 30.99$
- Table value at 5% significance level (df = 2) = **5.99**

Since calculated value > table value, H1 is rejected and H2 is accepted.

Conclusion: Social entrepreneurship has a significant impact on economic development in India.

Findings:

- Majority of respondents are aware of social entrepreneurship.
- Social enterprises positively influence employment and income generation.

- Financial and regulatory challenges remain major obstacles.

Suggestions:

- Government should provide easier access to funding.
- More training and development programs should be introduced.
- Strong public-private partnerships should be encouraged.

Conclusion:

Social entrepreneurship plays a vital role in India's economic development by creating innovative and sustainable solutions to social problems. Despite facing financial and regulatory challenges, social enterprises contribute significantly to inclusive growth. With appropriate policy support, improved funding mechanisms, and increased awareness, social entrepreneurship can become a strong pillar of India's development strategy.

Social entrepreneurship is steadily reshaping India's economic and social development trajectory by placing social value creation at the heart of enterprise. As innovative models continue to emerge, these ventures are proving their ability not only to generate employment and income but also to enhance access to essential services and empower marginalized communities. The expanding ecosystem supported by government initiatives, impact investors and civil society reflects a promising shift toward sustainable, scalable and community-driven solutions. Moving forward, strengthening institutional support, fostering

collaborations and promoting impact measurement will be crucial for maximizing outcomes. Ultimately, social entrepreneurship holds immense potential to drive inclusive growth and contribute meaningfully to India's long-term development goals.

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