



Financial Inclusion for Viksit Bharat Towards 2047: With Special reference to Caste, Gender and Entrepreneurship in Maharashtra

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Abstract:

India's pathway to inclusive and sustainable entrepreneurship needs encouragement multiplicity, financial convenience, and sustainability-driven business models. Inclusion can be achieved by promoting caste and gender equality, expanding financial access, and enhancing skill development. By integrating these elements, India can build a resilient, equitable, and environmentally responsible entrepreneurial ecosystem, aligning with its India at 2047 vision of "Viksit Bharat". Caste and gender significantly influence inclusive entrepreneurship, which is key to achieving sustainable development in India. Marginalized communities face barriers to capital and opportunities, requiring financial and policy support for equitable growth. Women entrepreneurs encounter funding and societal challenges, making targeted initiatives crucial for their empowerment. Inclusive entrepreneurship fosters economic equity, social progress, and environmental sustainability, driving India toward a self-reliant and inclusive economy in line with its 2047 vision.

This Paper analyses the Challenges faced by the entrepreneurs based on Caste and Gender in Maharashtra and also analyses the Government Policy for the Development of Entrepreneurship in Maharashtra. Secondary Source is used to Conduct this research study.

Introduction:

Maharashtra is India's leading industrial state, contributing 13% of the nation's industrial output. Key sectors include pharmaceuticals, petroleum, heavy chemicals, technology, automobiles, food processing, textiles, and plastics. The state's business-friendly environment is driven by advanced sectoral policies, a skilled workforce, strategic location, and strong infrastructure. However, entrepreneurship in Maharashtra is not without challenges, especially for historically marginalized groups. Caste discrimination limits access to funding, networks, and market opportunities for lower-caste entrepreneurs, while higher castes often dominate business organizations. Similarly, gender discrimination hinders female entrepreneurs, who face financial barriers, societal biases, and work-life balance challenges. Women from lower castes experience compounded difficulties due to the intersectionality of caste and gender discrimination, further restricting their access to opportunities and resources.

Objective:

1. To study the Challenges faced by entrepreneurs based on caste and gender in Maharashtra.
2. To study the government policy for the Development of Entrepreneurship in Maharashtra

Challenges Faced By the Entrepreneurs on the Basis of Caste:

Being an entrepreneur is a challenging activity that requires a lot of courage, dedication, as well as barely literate. However, entrepreneurs who belong to specific castes may experience additional challenges as a consequence of social and cultural attitudes. A few challenges faced by entrepreneurs based on caste include the following:

- **Limited Resources:** Business owners from certain castes may have limited access to resources like funding, networks, and mentorship. Caste-based discrimination can limit a company's access to new venture investors and networking opportunities, which can make it more challenging to grow and develop a business.
- **Social discrimination:** Caste patterns play a significant role in some societies, and certain castes may be considered undesirable. Due to this stigma, entrepreneurs may have a harder time establishing credibility and winning the confidence of potential customers and investors, which will make it more challenging for them to be effective in business.
- **Limited Educational Access:** The ability of entrepreneurs from excluded castes to acquire the skills and information required to establish and run a successful company may be obligated by their lack of access to high-quality education or training.
- **Discrimination:** Access to markets or distribution networks can be refused, entrepreneurs from lower castes can be harassed by officials, and caste-based discrimination can take many various forms. Such biases may discourage business growth and success, which may weaken an entrepreneur's motivation and spirit.
- **Limitations for Participation in Government Programs:** Governments may offer incentives and programs to encourage entrepreneurship, but entrepreneurs from excluded castes may not be able to take part in these initiatives or may run into administrative problems.
- **Limited Market Access:** Entrepreneurs from lower castes frequently have little access to marketplaces and distribution networks. They may find it challenging to contact customers and offer their goods at fair prices as a result.
- **Infrastructure Problems:** Poor transportation and information networks are among the infrastructure problems that lower-caste business owners frequently encounter. Because of this, it might be challenging for them to market their goods abroad and obtain raw materials.

Challenges Faced By the Entrepreneurs on the Basis of Gender:

Entrepreneurs face various challenges, categorized as economic environment, business life-cycle, product-market fit, business management, and personal approach. These challenges impact male and female entrepreneurs differently due to gender biases and societal expectations. Women entrepreneurs often struggle with gender discrimination, limiting access to funding, networks, and market opportunities. They face difficulties in securing capital, maintaining cash flow, and scaling businesses. Social expectations further restrict their participation in certain industries and professional networks. Work-life balance is a significant challenge, particularly for women juggling caregiving responsibilities. Men, on the other hand, may experience pressure to conform to specific business roles and industries. They may also struggle with emotional support and high stress due to societal expectations of strength and self-reliance. Both genders face common business challenges such as financial management, marketing, and human resource management. However, women encounter additional barriers like limited mentorship, fewer role models, and restricted access to business resources. Addressing these gender-based disparities is crucial for fostering a more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem.

- **Starting a business:** Securing funding, locating clients, and assembling a team are issues that both men and women face when starting a business. Women, however, may face additional difficulties like discrimination and gender bias.
- **Maintaining Cash Flow:** Maintaining a healthy cash flow is essential for any kind of business, but it can be especially difficult for women entrepreneurs who may find it difficult to get financing or be taken seriously by lenders and investors.
- **Growing the Business:** A strong team, access to capital, and the capacity to adjust to shifting market conditions are all necessary for growing a business. Women entrepreneurs may experience particular challenges in accessing capital, as well as a lack of support and mentorship possibilities.
- **Balancing Work and Family:** Finding a work-life balance can be difficult for both male and female entrepreneurs, especially if they have young children or other parenting obligations.
- **Access to Capital:** Women entrepreneurs frequently face access issues, which can make it challenging for them to start or expand their businesses. This may be particularly true if they work in fields where men dominate historically or if their goods are considered as more "niche" or specialized.
- **Bias and Discrimination Based on Gender:** Women business owners may encounter prejudice and discrimination when attempting to sell their goods. For instance, they might be treated unfairly by suppliers or vendors, or they might be given less respect than men in their profession.
- **Marketing & Selling:** Entrepreneurs must be skilled at successfully marketing and selling their goods and services. This entails figuring out who their target market is, coming up with a marketing plan, and setting up a sales funnel.
- **Gender Bias:** Women entrepreneurs may experience discrimination and gender bias in a variety of ways, including when trying to get financing, find guides, and gain the respect of other employees or colleagues.
- **Work-Life Balance:** Women company owners may have trouble juggling their professional and personal obligations, especially if they are also parents.
- **Access to Networks and Resources:** Women business owners may have fewer chances to access networks and resources, such as business accelerators or mentorship programs, that can help them expand their operations.

Government Policies for Development of Entrepreneurship in Maharashtra:

To encourage an innovation and entrepreneurship mindset in the state, the government of Maharashtra has launched a number of programs and implemented policy changes. The Maharashtra government has recently developed a wide variety of new schemes and possibilities in a number of different industries to promote innovation.

The government of Maharashtra has made sure that all its policies have centered on facilitating equal chances for women because it recognizes the significance of women's economic participation and entrepreneurship in helping the development and wealth of the nation. By granting the opportunity for loans, networks, marketplaces, and workshops, the government aims to advance women in India's entrepreneurial ecosystem. To encourage entrepreneurship and support the growth of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in the state, the government of Maharashtra has supported by providing facilities and schemes to entrepreneurs.

The Maharashtra Centre for Entrepreneurship Development (MCED):

The Maharashtra Centre for Entrepreneurship Development (MCED) is a key initiative by the Maharashtra Government to train and support aspiring entrepreneurs. Established in 1988, MCED has played a significant role in fostering entrepreneurship by providing high-quality training programs and ongoing support to individuals from diverse backgrounds. It collaborates with multiple sponsoring agencies, including the Directorate of Industry, District Industry Centre, and Ministry of Textiles, to offer free training to individuals aged 18 to 45. MCED provides various training programs, including:

Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP): Enhances entrepreneurial skills and business management capabilities.

Technical Entrepreneurship Development Programme (TEDP): Focuses on technical skills for first-generation entrepreneurs.

High-Tech EDP Courses: Teaches advanced technical skills, including structural analysis and optimization.

Workshops & Seminars: Cover topics like MSME setup, agro-based entrepreneurship, Kaizen, Poka-Yoke, and faculty development.

Cluster Training: Conducted across various cities in Maharashtra, focusing on industry-specific skills like food processing, data science, and textile design.

By offering structured training, industry exposure, and skill development, MCED plays a crucial role in promoting self-employment and boosting Maharashtra's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Government Initiative for MSME:

The role of the Ministry of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises is to assist states in fostering entrepreneurship, employment, and livelihood opportunities, as well as enhancing MSMEs' competitiveness in a dynamic economic environment. The estimated number of MSMEs in Maharashtra is 47.78 lakh, which represents approximately 8 percent of the total MSMEs in India. This includes 47.60 million micro firms and 0.17 million minor businesses.

Noteworthy is that Maharashtra maintains a variety of programs for MSMEs throughout the state, including financing and financial support, training in skill development, infrastructure improvements, marketing assistance, technology and quality updates, and other services.

Women Policy 2013 – Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of Maharashtra

The **Women Policy 2013** by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of Maharashtra, aims to promote women's entrepreneurship and employment by offering special privileges in industries such as textiles, dairy, sugar, fisheries, and food.

Key provisions include:

- Specialized training for women in managing small-scale industries and improving communication skills.
- Support for women in securing business agreements with international organizations.
- Encouragement through lectures by successful entrepreneurs.
- Establishment of a dedicated financial corporation for female entrepreneurs.
- Creation of women's credit societies to provide low-interest loans.
- A single-window facility for applications, approvals, financial aid, and international collaborations.
- Reservation of **10% of plots** in Maharashtra State Industrial Corporation (M.I.D.C.) for women entrepreneurs.

- Increased participation of women-owned businesses in **corporate social responsibility (CSR)** initiatives.

This policy aims to empower women by providing financial assistance, training, and institutional support, fostering their independence and active participation in Maharashtra's business landscape.

Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana:

Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) provides MUDRA loans. The program offers business loans ranging from Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 million in three categories:

Sishu (up to Rs 50,000), Kishor (from Rs 50,000 to Rs 5 lakh), and Tarun (above Rs 5 lakh). Agricultural service businesses, food production businesses, artisans, independent contractors, small business owners, truck owners, home improvement and repair shops, and retailers are eligible for loans under this program.

Stand Up India Scheme:

The Stand-Up India Scheme provides bank financing between 10 lakh and 1 crore to at least one scheduled caste or scheduled tribe borrower and at least one female per bank branch in order to launch a greenfield business. This loan is primarily available to businesses in the trading, service, and manufacturing sectors. A minimum of 51% of the shares and stake must be held by a SC/ST or female entrepreneur in non-individual firms.

Seed Money Scheme (SMS):

Unemployed people are given soft loans in the shape of equity under this program to encourage them to start their own businesses. They will be able to use this loan to help them in part meet the financial criteria for applying for a bank loan. Any person living in Maharashtra who intends to start an industry or a service with a project cost of up to Rs 25 lacs can get this type of loan. The entrepreneur must be between the ages of 18 and 50, jobless, and have lived in Maharashtra for the previous 15 years.

Mahasamruddhi Mahila Sashaktikaran Scheme:

A program to empower women in the state of Maharashtra was recently introduced by the state administration. The program is known as the Mahasamruddhi Mahila Sashaktikaran Program. Women in rural areas face numerous challenges, and the government wishes to support them in leading healthy lives. The program was introduced on March 8, 2021, International Women's Day, by Hasan Mushrif, the minister of rural development for Maharashtra. This program is specially designed for rural regions.

Conclusion:

Entrepreneurship contributes significantly to the economic and social development of India as a whole. Entrepreneurship contributes to the development of a more prosperous and equitable society in India by fostering innovation, fostering economic growth, and addressing social issues. The external economic climate presents challenges to both male and female entrepreneurs, but these challenges may also be influenced by gender-specific variables like discrimination, cultural expectations, and views of business leadership. Women may face additional challenges because of gender bias, discrimination, and a lack of support, and resources, even though men and women entrepreneurs experience comparable challenges throughout the lifecycle of their businesses. Women entrepreneurs may face additional obstacles because of gender biases, access to financing, and societal expectations, despite the fact that men and women entrepreneurs may encounter challenges related to product type. Both men and women encounter obstacles in entrepreneurship, but these obstacles may be different for men and women depending on social expectations and gender. By achieving the inclusion of entrepreneurship, we can

achieve the financial inclusion which lead to achieve the Inclusive and Sustainable Growth by Viksit Bharat towards 2047.

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