International Journal of Education, Modern Management, Applied Science & Social Science (IJEMMASSS)
An International Quarterly bi-lingual Multidisciplinary Double Blind Open Access Peer Reviewed Refereed Journal
ISSN:2581-9925, Impact Factor (Cosmos: 7.555 & I2OR: 5.105), Volume 08, No. 03(IV)(Special Issue), July-September, 2026, pp. 97-104

Women's Access to Finance: Opportunities and Challenges

Dr. Bushra*

Income Tax Practitioner.

*Corresponding Author: bushrairam843@gmial. com

DOI Citation: Bushra, B. (2026). Women's Access to Finance: Opportunities and Challenges. International Journal of Education, Modern Management, Applied Science &Amp; Social Science, 08(03(IV)), 97–104. https://doi.org/10.62823/ijemmasss/8.3(iv).9591

ABSTRACT

For an entrepreneur, it is crucial that access to finance is easy. Indian society has been given the title of a male-dominated society. If we talk about entrepreneurship, women have been seen as weak and as people with a non-commercial mindset. But over the last decade a big change has been observed in this. The government has run several programs through which women can get support to run a business. And in them, a trend has emerged of becoming businesswomen not only out of necessity but also as a passion. In India, fewer properties are in women's names, although the government has tried to promote the practice of keeping property in women's names by giving tax exemptions. But it is still a reality that the number of women who own property themselves is small. In such a situation, it becomes very difficult for women to gather the resources to start a business. It is also observed that women take loans by pledging their gold to run their business. Usually, the gold they pledge is the jewellery they wear and use daily. By nature, a woman is inclined to support others, especially her family members — whether it is her father, son, husband or brother. She wants to see these people become financially strong first and also gives her full contribution to make them successful. But contrary to a woman's thinking, the men of the family express doubts about her work and her idea of doing business, questioning whether she even has the qualities to do business and fearing that the capital invested in the business might go to waste. In this scenario It can be said that a woman has to face many obstacles in society, and these obstacles are both domestic and external. But while fighting all these obstacles, women have always proven themselves — by ignoring the flaws and barriers present in society, they can find the opportunities available within this very system and make the best use of them. And in this context, easy access to financial assistance for women can open new paths of progress for them.

***Keywords**: Women, Opportunities, Challenges, Finance, Entrepreneurship.*

Introduction

India has the title of a patriarchal society, and women are kept at second place in society, whether it be the threshold of the home or the world of Business. If we talk about entrepreneurship it is believed about women that they are not interested in doing business, that they are not business-minded. It is true that a woman's heart is tender, and she always puts the men of her house first, whether it is her father, husband, or son, and she supports them always to become success full wealthy people. But over the last decade a big change has been observed in this. The government has run several programs through which women can get support to run a business. And in them, a trend has emerged of becoming businesswomen not only out of necessity but also as a passion. According to the NITI Aayog report (March 2025), a 42 percent growth was recorded in women's personal finance in 2024, whereas in 2019

* *Copyright © 2026 by Author's and Licensed by Inspira. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work properly cited.*

* ***A Special Issue for the papers accepted for publication in the Two-Days Multidisciplinary National Seminar on Role of Entrepreneurship in Socio-Economic Upliftment of Women in India(22-23May 2026) Organized by Faculty of Commerce, The Graduate School College for Women, Jamshedpur, Jharkhand(A Constituent Unit of Kolhan University, Chaibasa, Jharkhand)in Collaboration with Jharkhand State Higher Education Council, Department of Higher and Technical Education, Govt. of Jharkhand & Punjab and Sind Bank, Sakchi, Jamshedpur.***

it was 39 percent. The report states that women mostly take gold loans, which accounted for 36 percent of the total loans taken by women in the year 2024, while in 2019 such loans were 90 percent. This means that women's access to credit has improved. Report further explained that, in financial year 2023-24, Rs 2. 22 lakh crore was disbursed to 4. 24 crore women under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana, and through the PM SVANidhi Yojana, loans worth Rs 5,939. 7 crore were given as working capital to 30. 6 lakh women street vendors till December 2024. According to UDYAM Registration Data 2025, till January, in the year 2025, more than 40 percent of MSMEs have been registered in the names of women. Despite this emergingtrend , it is a reality that there are still difficulties and challenges in the paths of women's entrepreneurship.

Objective and Methodology

This study is based on secondary data, to understand how capable women are of owning property themselves and accessing finance. What kind of challenges and opportunities they have to deal with in order to do business and become an entrepreneur. Are women in India proving their entrepreneurial mettle while dealing with these opportunities and obstacles?

Literature Review

Anuradha [1](2024) found in her study that women in rural areas have performed better economically through self-employment. Women achieved this self-employment in the fields of farming, small-scale trading, and handicrafts. Microcredit has played a key role in this, which they easily obtained from microfinance institutions by being linked to SHGs. In other words, her study finds that rural women's access to credit has become easier. She argues that there is a need to build digital infrastructure in semi-urban and rural areas so that women can easily access digital financial services through digital literacy. While progress has been made in women's access to finance, the gender gap still exists and strong steps are needed to close it.

Kadaba[2]et al. (2023) found in their study that the advancement of digital technology has strengthened women's economic empowerment and created new opportunities for SHG members. Through this, it has become easier for SHG members to connect with financial literacy programs and access market-related information. Moreover, digital technology has played a key role in sustainable development through financial inclusion, empowerment, and improved livelihoods.

[3]Purva Khera (2018) found in her study that if the gender gap is reduced, there will be a positive change in Indian women's access to finance. Her findings indicate that a reduction in the gender gap could lead to a 1. 6 percent increase in GDP due to women's workforce stability, and unemployment among Indian women could decline by up to 5 percent. This study, based on two sectors, indicates that a flexible job environment in formal sectors will boost the formal economy, GDP will increase by 4. 7 percent, and unemployment will decrease by up to 9 percent due to the workforce participation of both males and females in formal sectors. If hiring costs are reduced by 10 percent, there will be an 11. 5 percent increase in overall labor force participation in formal sector. However, the gender gap will still persist, and men will benefit more because women will lag behind due to being unskilled, traditional restrictions, safety issues, and gender-based discrimination. This gap will further widen the gender gap, but in comparison, being skilled can increase women's participation. This study also highlights the increase in women's labor force participation in the formal sector despite lower wages.

Dr. Shantanu [4]Saurabh et al. (2018) found in their study that women's economic conditions improved after joining SHGs. Compared to other states in India, there is a need to better link women with SHGs in states like Bihar, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. Their study not only acknowledges the role of SHGs in facilitating women's access to microfinance institutions but also considers them a key means of financial support for women.

---

[1]Rajkunwar chetya, Anuradha (2024)", financial inclusion of women : barriers, challenges, and policy interventions in India ", *international journal of advanced research*, 12(20), pp.160-168.

[2]kadaba at .el (2023),"Impact of digital financial inclusion initiative on the Self-help group :for sustainable development, *International Journal Of Management, Technology And Social Science* 8(4), 20-39.

[3]khera (2018) purva ,"closing gender gaps in India :Does increasing women's access to finance help ?, *IMF working paper* 212

[4]Saurambh, Shantanu at .el (2018) "Assessment of Self- Help groups on women empowerment: A case study of Utter Pradesh district" ,*BHU Management, vol.6 ,issue 1&2(Jan-Dec)*

Women as Entrepreneurs

In this era of AI and rapidly growing economic inequality, the women of India have stepped forward to prioritize their economic responsibilities. Despite living within the four walls of her home, she believes her contribution is vital for her family's progress, and this belief keeps her striving to move ahead on her path. Half of India's population consists of women. If a woman becomes economically strong, then through her, both the family and society also become strong. We cannot imagine a developed India without the economic progress of women. Women have emerged as the economic backbone of their families. Her role in a family has changed — she is rapidly transforming from a homemaker to the role of breadwinner. Whether it is different kind of business, investment in the stock market, the hotel business, or work as street vendors or waitresses, a woman is gaining economic strength by establishing her foothold everywhere. As an entrepreneur, a woman can secure a distinct place in society, establish her position in a male-dominated society, and make a significant contribution to reducing poverty in the country. The World Bank report released on April 17, 2025, narrates the story of the successes of Indian women entrepreneurs. The World Bank, in collaboration with the Indian government, has helped women gain access to finance and become skilled through various programs. Because of this, women from several states in India are successfully carrying out their economic activities and are also bringing other women from society along with them. Thousands of women are scripting new stories of economic empowerment through entrepreneurship programs run by the SEWA's Leelavati Project Community Skills Schools, initiatives under the Johar Project, and schemes of the National Rural Livelihood Mission. These programs are backed by the World Bank.

Muskan Vohara from Anand district, Gujarat, enhanced her business through social media platforms after receiving digital skills training under SEWA's Leelavati Project — a World Bank supported program that also had backing from the Japan Social Development Fund. Because of this, she was able to sell all her stock.

Somati from Gumla district, Jharkhand, took Pashu Sakhi training under the Johar Project and now earns ₹10,000 to ₹20,000 , she is able to fulfil herneed. People call her the "animal doctor," which makes her feel proud. Before the training, she could only earn ₹3,000 to ₹5,000. Under the Johar Project, 57,000 farmers have received training, 90 percent of whom are women.

Janki from Shivagangai district did not have the collateral amount. Through matching grant programs run under World Bank initiatives, she received 30 percent collateral support along with professional guidance, which helped her expand her hardware business. She says her revenue increased by up to 40 percent because of this support, and she even hired another woman to help , it means she also became a job creator. Since2022 , through this program, ₹267 crore has been given as loans to 8,400 women entrepreneurs.

Whether through Community Skills School programs or other masonry programs, women have not only skilled themselves and earned income, but while making history, they have also provided employment to other women. And they have also become an inspiration for them. That was the story of the economic empowerment of women entrepreneurs in India. And if we talk about women in the labor force, about their access to even the smallest opportunities through it, the World Bank believes that raising women's labor force participation to 50% could boost India's GDP by up to 8%.

Table 1: Women Entrepreneurs (Beneficiaries)

Year	Women Entrepreneurs under PMEGP
2020-21	27285
2021-22	39156
2022-23	32626
2023-24	36806
2024-25 (UP TO 31. 122024)	11415

Annual Report (2024-25) Ministry of micro, smalland medium enterprises

Table 1 shows the number of women entrepreneurs,**(Under Prime Ministers Empowerment Generation Programme)** was 27,285 in 2020-21 and rose to 36,806 in 2023-24. But in 2024-25, it fell to 11,415 under this scheme — a decline of 25,391 compared to 2023-24.

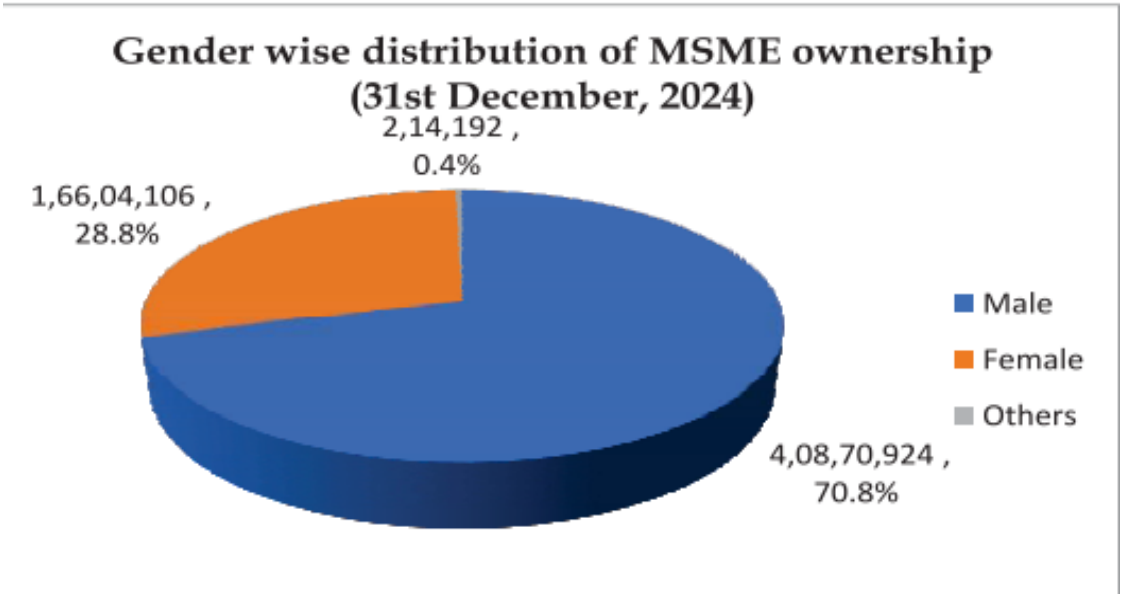


Figure 1: Gender Wise Distribution of MSMEs Ownership (31Dec,2024)

Annual Report (2024-25), Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises

Figure 1 indicates that women's ownership of MSMEs is considerably lower than men's. Men own 70. 8% of MSMEs, whereas women own only 28. 8% — a difference of 42 percentage points. The total number of MSMEs is 57689222.

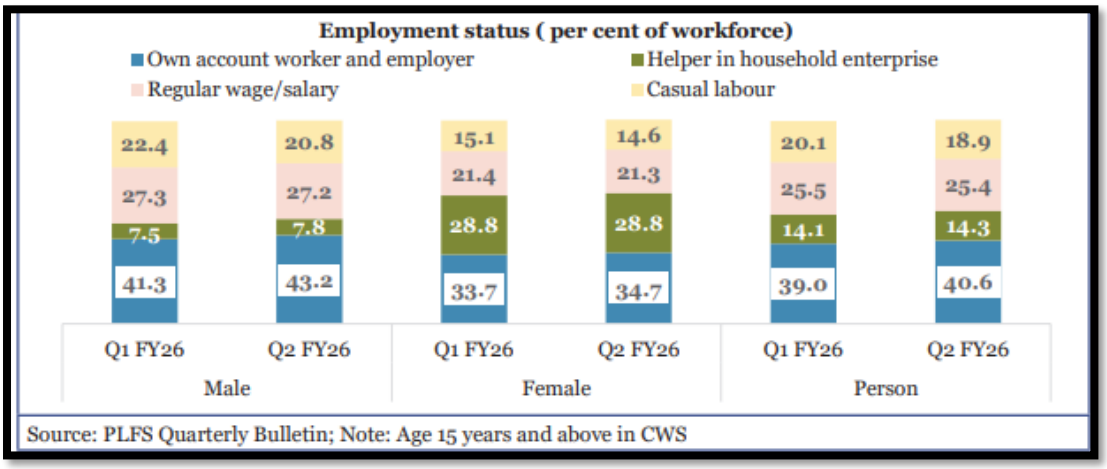


Figure2: Labour Market Dynamics in H1 FY26 :(Status)

Source: Economic Survey 2025-26

Figure 2 shows that the share of women among on-account workers and employers is 33. 7%, which is 7. 6% lower than that of men. The share of men in regular wage/salary employment is 27. 3%, while for women it is 21. 4%, which means women's regular wage/salary employment is 5. 9% lower than men's. The number of women working as helpers in household enterprises is 21. 3% higher compared to men. The share of women working as casual labor in Quarter 1 of Financial Year 26 is 7. 3% lower than that of men.

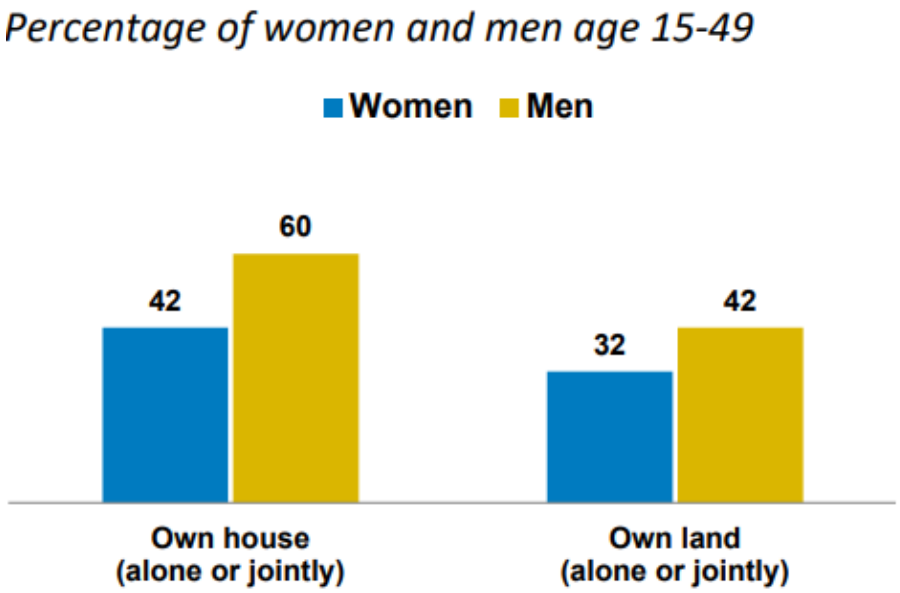


Figure 3: Ownership of Assets

Source: National Familyhealth Survey (2019-2021)

Figure 3 shows that 42% of women aged 15 to 49 own a house, which is 18 percent less than men, while 32% of women own land, but that is 10% less compared to men.

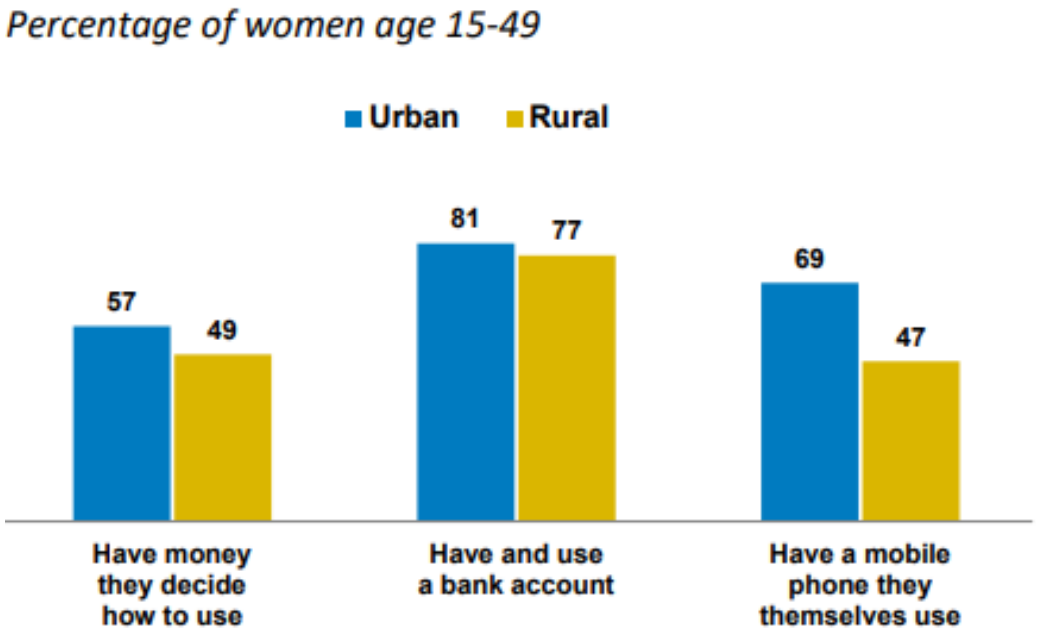


Figure 4: Ownership of Financial Assets and Mobile Phone

Source: NFHS (2019-21)

Figure 4, shows that 49% of women aged 15 to 49 in rural areas have their own money and can decide how to use it, while in urban areas the share of such women is 8% higher than in rural areas. Urban women have 4% more bank accounts than rural women, which they use. The figure also shows that the number of women who own and can use mobile phones is 12% higher in urban areas compared to rural areas. In rural areas, only 47% of women have this facility.

Challenges for Women to Become Entrepreneurs

- Through their efforts, women have overcome numerous obstacles, yet in India's male-dominated society, they are still not considered as skilled as men, which creates barriers to their economic progress.
- Women handle more responsibilities than men. Besides household work, to which they dedicate 7 to 8 hours every day, the burden of responsibilities does not allow them to be mentally independent. Because of this, they face difficulties in establishing themselves in the economic world. According to Time Use survey 2025 and BBCsreport ,If a woman in the world spends 2. 8 hours more than a man on household responsibilities, then an Indian woman spends almost 4 hours more time on household work.
- Despite various government and World Bank supported programs for women's access to finance, in India women still take gold loans. According to NITI AAYOG, the share of women in gold loans in semi-urban and rural areas is 70 percent. Often, the gold pledged is the jewelry they use themselves. In this way, they are deprived of their own gold for economic activities.
- High interest rates are a very big obstacle for women's entrepreneurship. The interest rate on loans that women obtain to start a business is like the rate charged by a commercial bank, which makes it difficult to repay the loan. As a result, the startup journey ends with them becoming debtors.
- Whether it's participation in the labor force or the dream of becoming an entrepreneur, a woman wants a safe environment. But news of crimes against women every hour , reduces their confidence which affects their thinking. And before taking a step forward, worrying about their safety, they lose many good opportunities. If women try to improve their economic condition through labor force participation, then the increased 12-hour workdays, low salary, and permission to work at night become matters of great concern for them.
- To become an entrepreneur, it is necessary that a woman has easy access to finance, but the lack of availability of complete documents, the fear of not being able to repay the loan, and poor banking experience have weakened women's borrowing capacity.
- NITI Ayog states, inIndia, 79 percent of women are owners of self-financed businesses, and only 7 percent of MSME credit is available to women, because lenders place them in the high-risk borrower category. The reason for this is their weak credit history and lack of business experience.

Opportunities for Women to become Entrepreneurs

- To economically empower women, or to make funds available to them, the government has made the husband's earnings tax-free if he wants to give them to his wife. In this way, a wife can receive financial assistance from her husband to do business.
- Collateral-free loans are creating ease for women. However, as of now, they are available only up to 1. 5 lakh Indian rupees. But most of the women-owned MSMEs depend on this very loan.
- The government has made arrangements to provide small loans to women through various schemes so that they can start home-based businesses. For example, poultry farming, selling eggs, selling bangles, etc. Women can easily run all these businesses from their homes.
- SHGs have played an important role in enabling women to do business in groups and obtain small loans. SHGs have made it easier for women in villages, semi-urban areas, and urban areas to connect with microfinance institutions.
- In the year 2023, under Financing Women Collaborative, which is an initiative of the Women Entrepreneurship Platform, steps were taken to make women's access to finance easier. SIDBI and TU CIBIL are also part of this. Under this, financial service providers, public and private banks, and other organizations that support women entrepreneurs have created a system on a

single platform for women to obtain credit, this has eased the pathways for women entrepreneurship. Between 2023-24, more than 50,000 women entrepreneurs benefited through this platform. One special feature of this NITI Aayog program is that while expanding opportunities for women's entrepreneurship, it has also skilled and mentored women entrepreneurs for international partnerships so that they can deliver their best performance in the future. In other words, WEP has tried to eliminate the boundaries for Indian women, for their greater success in the world of business.

- For women, one major opportunity is that female entrepreneurs are playing a key role in creating jobs for other women. This is increasing women's interest in earning an income. Reports indicate that companies led by women, or organizations where women hold top positions, tend to have a higher number of female employees.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The government has launched several schemes, like Pradhan Mantry Mudra yojna, PM SVA Nidhi Yojna, Matching grant programs with the support of World Bank to make access to finance easier for women, but the reality is that the most important source for women to acquire wealth in order to become entrepreneurs has still been their own assets. According to NITI Aayog, 79% of businesses run by women have been set up with funds raised by themselves, i. e., self-finance, and their share in credit given to MSMEs is only 7%.

Analysis of data from national family health survey 5 ,reveals that only 42% of women aged 15-49 own a house, and only 32% of women own land. That means the number of women in India who own a house or land is not even 50%. This is why women mostly take loans by mortgaging the gold they wear. NITI Aayog states that women's participation in gold loans is 70%.

The Annual Report 2024-25 of the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises states that under the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme, the number of women entrepreneurs was increasing from 2020-21 to 2023-24. But compared to 2023-24, the number of women entrepreneurs under this scheme declined to 11,415 in 2024-25, whereas in 2023-24 the number of women entrepreneurs under this scheme was 3,6806.

The Annual Report 2024-25 states that women own only 28. 8 percent of the total 5,76,89,222 MSMEs, compared to men.

The Economic Survey 2025-26 states that 28. 8% of women work as helpers in household work, which is 21. 1% more compared to men. The main reasons for this could be ease of getting work, safety, and being unskilled.

In India, women have less MSMEs entrepreneurship compared to men, and they also have fewer assets and wealth.

Yet, despite this, the inclination among women to do business and become entrepreneurs themselves has emerged in the last 10 years due to various government programs. And in the last two to three years, the amount of 2000 to 3000 rupees deposited into their accounts by the government in various states under different schemes has boosted their morale.

Despite all the barriers and limited resources , women have always proven themselves as entrepreneurs. But there are still many difficulties in the ways of its access to finance. This could become easier if their access to finance did not depend on their own property or wealth, and was instead completely dependent on government-provided loans at low interest. Collateral-free loans should not be limited to only 1.5 lakh, because inflation is rising rapidly. The amount should be determined by calculating according to inflation so that women also get the opportunity to start a business with better capital.

To make women's access to wealth easier, it is very important that workers' working hours be reduced from 12 to 8 and their payments be increased. In this context, we also saw a protest by workers in Noida (Utter Pradesh), in which a large number of women participated. There is also a need to expand skill programs for women so that they can earn well. The scope of the [1]WEP's ,[2]WFCprogramme being run by NITI Aayog needs to be further expanded so that lakhs of women can enter the world of business.

[1]**NITI AAYOGS Women Entrepreneurship Platform**

Based on this study, it would not be wrong to say that women entrepreneurs have proven themselves. However, there has been no change in their ability to obtain finance, or in the amount and means of providing finance, that could be considered the basis for a transformation in the system. Not many eases have been created in their path to earn money through labour force participation. The situation has remained the same for womenlabour, for the last 30 years.

References

1. Rajkunwarchetya, Anuradha (2024)",financial inclusion of women :barriers ,challenges ,and policy interventions in India " ,*international journal of advanced research,* 12(20),pp. 160-168.
2. Saurambh , Shantanu at. el (2018) "Assessment of Self- Help groups on women empowerment: A case study of Utter Pradesh district" ,*BHUManagement* , vol. 6 ,issue 1&2(Jan-Dec)
3. khera (2018) purva ,"closing gender gaps in India :Does increasing women's access to finance help ?,*IMF working paper 212.*
4. kadaba at. el (2023),"Impact of digital financial inclusion initiative on the Self-help group :for sustainable development, *International Journal Of Management , Technology AndSocial Science 8(4), 20-39.*
5. Kabeer, N. (2005). Is Micro finance a magic bullet for women's empowerment?Analysis of findings from South Asia. *Economic And Political Weekly* 40(44),4709-471 8
6. National Family Health Survey 5
7. Time Use Survey 2025
8. World Bank Report 2025
9. Niti Aayog Report 2025
10. Economic Survey 2025 -2026
11. Annual Report (Ministry Of Micro Small And Medium Enterprises)2024 -25
12. WWW. BBC. COM.

❑❑❑

[2]**NITI AAYOGS** PROGRAME FINANCING WOMEN COLLABORATIVE UNDER WEP , CHAIRED BY SIDBI ,CO CHAIRED BY TU CIBIL