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## GENDER-STREAMING OF NORTHEAST INDIA: DISCOURSES BETWEEN WOMEN AGENCY, DEVELOPMENT AND STATE OF MANIPUR

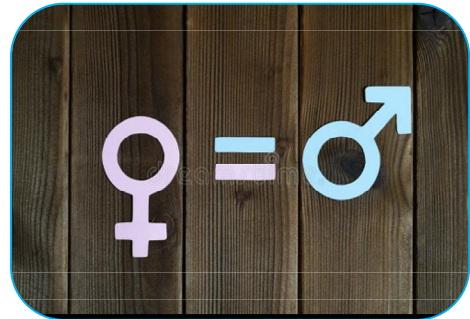
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### ABSTRACTS

*Genderstreaming is the process by which gender disparity is brought to be reduced up to the minimum level. In this direction, entrepreneurship finds a special place. Entrepreneurship is one of the most important inputs in the economic development of a country or a region. Entrepreneurship development among women is considered as a possible approach economic empowerment of women.*

*The objective underlying this paper is to discuss in context of gender and development, the growth of women entrepreneurship in the state of Manipur. The paper also attempts to highlight the main factors which motivates the women entrepreneurs and the major constraints faced by them in practice.*



**KEY WORDS :** *Gender-streaming, Women Entrepreneurs, Manipur, Development, State.*

### INTRODUCTION

Gender-streaming or mainstreaming of women is an important indicator of the development of women as suggested by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. (UNSDG). In this exercise, entrepreneurship plays an important role among other factors. Entrepreneurship is one of the most important inputs in the economic development of a country or a region. Entrepreneurship development and income generating activities are a feasible solution for empowering women. It generates income and also provides flexible working hours according to the needs of home makers. Economic independence is the need of the hour. Women are entering into entrepreneurship even while facing socio-cultural, economic, technical, financial and managerial difficulties. Women entrepreneurship movements have gained momentum by encouragement, appropriate awareness, training, environment and support. This has improved the socio-economic status, which is a pre-requisite of women's empowerment. The emergence of women entrepreneurs and their contribution to the national economy is quite visible in India. Entrepreneurship development among women is considered as a possible approach to economic empowerment of women. In India women entrepreneurship are considered as "necessity entrepreneurship" rather than "opportunity entrepreneurship". Employment to self-employment has been a noticeable phenomenon in the emergence of new entrepreneurs. Women are also endowed with physical and psychological qualities and managerial abilities that are essential for successful entrepreneurship.

The main aim of livelihood promotion is to increase household income. Government should provide better entrepreneurship development among women is considered as a possible approach to economic empowerment of women. In India women entrepreneurship are considered as “necessity entrepreneurship” rather than “opportunity entrepreneurship”. Employment to self-employment has been a noticeable phenomenon in the emergence of new entrepreneurs. Like men, women too are equally endowed with physical and psychological qualities and managerial abilities that are essential for successful entrepreneurship. The main aim of livelihood promotion is to increase household income. The initial stage is forming essential level Self Groups with rural poor women to save women from financial exploitation. The stage is encouraging savings and credit practice. The third and final stage is to get financial assistance through banks in the form of larger loans for investment in economic activities. This means they get more income and lead a decent standard of living for the future. Self - help groups (SHGs) have emerged as one of the major strategies for women’s various schemes of the Government of India have shown those strong women’s groups. E-experience and projects have highlighted the benefits of formation of women’s groups for building confidence and focusing on developmental tasks. Different groups in various states all over the country have focused on skill development and award generation, promoting economic development through income generating activities, inculcating thrift and credit management activities among poor women. So, treating the women with equality of opportunities is much needed. Every region has its own problems and prospects for the development of entrepreneurship and the North Eastern Region is not an exception to that.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following reviews were done for the present study on the state of Manipur and in context of Entrepreneurship: Rani (1991), in her study “Potential Women Entrepreneurs- A Study,” found that most of the respondents came from middle class families, and they had desire to do something independent as prime motivating factor. Shalini (1994), in her study on “Women Entrepreneurship: Profile, Problems and Prospects in India: A Review Analysis” found that major motivational factors were to be their own boss, achieving financial stability by caring additional income, to gain prestige, recognition and respect in society. Chandralekha, Kalyani, and Lavoie (*Ed. Kanungo, 1998*), found in their study entitled “Microenterprise Management by Women in India,” that supplementing family income and providing good standard of living for children were the main reason for starting their business. To be innovative, to be my own boss and unemployment were the least mentioned reasons for starting a business. Hard work followed by risk-taking was the most important quality for an entrepreneur. In this study the writers mentioned that these women entrepreneurs were self-motivated, besides these some of them were motivated by their family members. Ghosh, Gupta and Dhar (*Ed. Kanungo, 1998*), in “Women and Entrepreneurship in India,” found that most of the respondents were high school educated followed by undergraduates. Need for economic independence and self-fulfilment were the main reasons for starting their business. Maintenance of household and acute poverty was the main reason for becoming entrepreneurs by women found in the study done by Bhadra (*Ed. Thakur, Anli Kumar and Rahman, 2009*), on women entrepreneurship, entitled „Women Entrepreneurs in Rural Area: A Case Study of Tribal Women in Kokrajhar District.” Sorikhaibam and Laishram (2011) in their study “Women Entrepreneurship in Manipur, North- East India” found that the prime factor starting the enterprise was the desire to be independent *Women Entrepreneurs in Manipur Chingangbam Newgold Devi* Volume-II, Issue-II September 2015 152 followed by earning more money to afford higher standard of living, better status in the society, and some other only to utilize their skill and help in imparting knowledge to others people. Wadhwa and Koreth(2012), in their study entitled “Empowering Rural Women: Micro-enterprise through Achievement Motivation” found that most of the women entrepreneurs were below 40 years of age and illiterate and most of the women became entrepreneurs in order to support their family. From the above review of literature, it has been found that the major reason for starting enterprise and becoming entrepreneurs by women is the desire to do something independent or to be their own boss, need for economic independence and self-fulfilment, to

gain prestige, recognition and respect in society, supporting family income and acute poverty, to be innovative, unemployment. Most of the women entrepreneurs are self-motivated, but their family members also motivated them.

### OBJECTIVES

The study has the following objectives:

1. To study the socio-economic profile of the women entrepreneurs.
2. To find out the reasons for becoming entrepreneur.
3. To identify the sources of help they receive while starting the enterprise.
4. The problems that they face while starting an enterprise whether individually or in a group.
5. The Future face of their growth and development.

### RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

The study used both primary and secondary data. Secondary data was collected from the books, journals and articles. Primary data was collected from the women entrepreneurs of Imphal East district, Manipur who were running an independent enterprise. The universe of the study was the women entrepreneurs of the Imphal East district. 50 women entrepreneurs were selected purposively for the study.<sup>1</sup> Interview method was used to collect primary data from the respondents using interview scheduled. The study is descriptive in nature.

### STUDY AREA NORTH EASTERN REGION

North Eastern Region (NER) of India comprises of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim covering an area of 2.62lakh square kilometer and with a total population of 39 million (2001) has been chosen as the kingpin of our study area. The economy of the NER of India is different from other regions because of its peculiar physical, economic and social characteristics. In comparison with other states and regions of India, the NER is economically backward. The number of economic activities is less in this region than in other regions of the country. Entrepreneurship culture is still in the bud in this region. But the entire region with its rich natural resources, wonderful scenic beauty, fertile soil, wide rivers and blue hills, pollution free environment and many other peculiar features has got high potentials to develop the entrepreneurship culture particularly in the rural areas.

### CASE STUDY OF MANIPUR

Manipur has a geographical area of 22, 327 sq.kms which constitutes 0.7 percent of the total land surface of India. Ninety percent of the total geographical area of the state i.e., 20,089sq.kms is covered by hills, and the remaining area is a small valley covering only 2,238sq.kms and accounting for only one-tenth of the total area of the state. The state of Manipur splits up naturally into two tracts viz. the hills and the dales. The hill comprises of five districts namely (i) Senapati; (ii) Tamenglong; (iii) Churachandpur; (iv) Chandel; and (v) Ukhul, while the valley consists of four districts viz. (i) Imphal East; (ii) Imphal West; (iii) Bishnupur; and (iv) Thoubal. According to 2011 census "the total population of Manipur is 27,21,756, of which male and female are 13,69,764 and 13,51,992 resp. The ranking of districts of the state by population size of the census is topped by Imphal West with a total of 5,146,83 (18.91 %) followed by Imphal East at 4,52,661 (16.63 %) , Thoubal at 4,20,517 (15.45 %), Senapati at 3,54,972 (13.04 %), Churachandpur at 2,71,274 (9.97 %), Bishnupurat 2,40,363 (8.83%), Ukhul at 1,83,115 (6.73 %) ,Chandel at 1,44,028 (5.29 %) and Tamenlong as the least populated at 1,40,143 (5.15 %)."<sup>2</sup>

On account of peculiar geo-physical features such as rugged terrain, varied climate, texture and soil the state continues to be economically depressed. Agriculture is the dominant sector of the economy of the state. Agriculture sector contributes a major share to the total state domestic product and provides employment to about 52.19 percent of the total workers in Manipur. In fact, the state domestic product fluctuates depending on the performance of agricultural sector. Despite the crucial

importance of this primary sector in the state economy, the irregular and erratic behaviour of monsoon accompanied by inadequate irrigation facilities have resulted in severe fluctuations in agricultural production. Thus, agriculture becomes a living proposition rather than commercial proposition. It has become cliché to say that Manipur is an industrially backward region. However, after keen analysis and on the basis of observation it seems that one of the most important reason for industrial backwardness of Manipur is a drastically poor state of entrepreneurship in the area. Despite having a tremendous scope for the development of entrepreneurial activities in the area, efforts have not been made for such development either by the Government or by the local people.

#### **WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MANIPUR:**

Over the past few decades the sex role of women has been breaking the barriers of four walls. Today the roles of women are not confined to the traditional one as a mother or housewife. The role of modern women is much more than, what it was previously. However even after the 66 years of India's independence the bias against women continues because of the cultural and traditional mores, which has affected a lot on the female status and role. A woman has to play multiple roles in a society but it is equally important that she contributes to the resources of a nation.

According to Gangte (2011), "In Manipuri society, women can be categorised into three groups – 1) educated and employed; 2) educated and unemployed; 3) uneducated. The last group are mostly the ones which set up small enterprises to sustain themselves and their families. Although, becoming an entrepreneur did arouse a little dilemma in many Manipuri women who have the potentialities for becoming one. However, to earn quick money was the basic reason for women to start entrepreneurship. They have a deep-seated need for a sense of independence along with a desire to do something meaningful with their time and to have their own identity instead of remaining closeted behind their husband's nameplate. Women of Manipur with high education view at entrepreneurship as a challenge, while for women with no education background find entrepreneur merely a means for earning money. Those women needed little "pull and push" for venturing ahead as their circumstances forced them. On the other hand, women, coming from good financial background need a little encouragement as at times they themselves were not aware of their own talents and capabilities and wanted their husbands or family members to decide the ways it should be utilized. Also the Meitei Women of the upper crust society were hesitating to put forth the idea of taking up a non-traditional one, and sometimes remained stuck to those of the traditional handloom and handicraft. Regarding the entrepreneurship of women in northeast India, there are very few data.

According to second all India census of small-scale industries (SSI) units (1990) revealed that 12.5% of the units in the northeast India are controlled and managed by women as against 7.7% in the country. However, there is a state wise variation as women entrepreneurs account for 35.4% in Manipur followed by 23.6% in Mizoram and 18.7% in Assam. Nagaland accounts for a mere 0.30%. Though entrepreneurship among women is being vigorously pursued through a number of central and state-sponsored programs and there is a hue and cry for improving the status of women yet the path to success is not easy."<sup>3</sup>

#### **IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

##### **Motivational Factors behind Setting Up of Enterprises**

Setting up an enterprise is not an easy job for women entrepreneurs in Manipur. At the same time running the enterprise is a greater task. A challenge is always there for these women entrepreneurs to run their enterprise successfully earning profit and ensuring the growth of the enterprises which will severely test their entrepreneurial skill and survival of the unit. Despite various odds against them, several women are off to run their own enterprises.

**Table 1**

From the above table it clearly shows that desire to be independent is the most important motivational factor behind the setting up of enterprises by women entrepreneurs. Next factor is to earn more money so that they can afford a higher standard of living. Better status in the society is the next important motivational factor behind setting up of enterprises in the state by women community. For some it is a way to utilize their own skill and help in imparting their knowledge to others so that others can learn and set up their own enterprise and to help them in earning money to have a proper stand in life.

**Table 1**

Motivational Factors	No. of Women Entrepreneurs	Percentage
Desire to be independent	360	80%
Earning more money	250	55.5%
To prove oneself	179	39.7%
Better status in the society	90	20%
To utilize own skill	179	39.7%
To contribute to employment	398	88.4%
Influenced by success stories	23	5.1%

Source: Field Survey<sup>4</sup>

### Major Constraints Faced by Women Entrepreneurship

Even though there has been a considerable increased in the number of women entering in entrepreneurial activity, they are being introduced to many constraints and difficulties with regard to control and decision making, social status and enthusiasm in the product or serviced in which they are dealing.

**Table 2**

### Social Attitude and Support

Our society is a male dominated society and women are treated as dependant on man, the social support is key determinant in entrepreneurship establishment. The most common problem which a woman faced is the no-cooperation from her husband or close family members. Besides, these family related hurdles, women too faced other problems like mobility constraints, dual responsibility, low managing ability, risk bearing ability etc.

### Marketing

On the other hand women in Manipur face marketing challenges in the form of competition from cheaper and substitute product, delayed payment and liberal credit terms.

### Finance

Women entrepreneurs in Manipur lacks financial skills as they did not understand hidden costs and anticipate appropriate cash requirement. They have to depend on own saving as the lending practices of banks and government funding agencies are believed to be restrictive and unfriendly to women. Banks don't have doubt on women capability as they do not consider gender while financing but they place high premium on security of principle and interest amount that is why they take mortgage on bank finance.

**Table 2**  
**Constraints of Women Entrepreneurs in Manipur**

Sl.No	Different Problems	No. of W.E	Out of 50%
1.	Social attitude and support	26	50
2.	Marketing	26	52
3.	Finance	20	68
4.	Management	18	52
5.	Scarcity of raw material	30	60
6.	Motivating Factors	25	90
7.	Standard of Technology	11	66
8.	Transportation	25	50
9.	Power	14	56
10.	Telecommunication	20	90

Source: Primary Data

### Table 3 here

From the above table it can be seen that women entrepreneurs in the state mostly depends on their owned money i.e. 64% for setting up their enterprises followed by bank loan plus own money 18%. Women entrepreneurs in the state do not have the tendency of borrowing from others as they don't have any security to give and oftentimes the borrowed money also carry high rate of interest.

### Operational

Women entrepreneur in India not only struggle at the time of establishment of enterprises but at operational stage also, they have lots to overcome with different functional difficulties. Usually problems of production process like scarcity of raw material, lack of technical skills, lack of utilities and infrastructure facility.

### Management Problem

Women are stronger in more logic based skills though they are weaker in self-promotion and handling frustration. The increasing number of female students and their excellent performance in management education is a proof to the fact. They don't managerial skills but they have less promotional stability which they need to improve upon it. In Manipur out of 50 entrepreneurs, 52% of them face this management problem.

### Mobility Constraints

Now women have got relatively more freedom in terms of entrepreneurial activity but also by the family members if they move out after normal hours. Though women faced lots of problems being mobile in entrepreneurial activity, the mobility problem has been solved to certain extent by the expansion of education of education awareness to all.

### Dual Responsibility and Risk-Bearing Ability

The level of women exploitation on family responsibility ground depends on her social dependence. It is also normally believe that women being feminist gender have low risk ability. A Manipuri woman lives a protected life. The society feels that women do not have risk taking ability. They are being suppressed by the protected environment and are not allowed most of time to take any type of risk even if she is willing or she has the ability to bear.

### Unawareness of the Supports and Incentives

India being a developing country has made efforts at both central as well as state level to solve this problem by way of introducing policy measures and promoting NGO's. The governments of north-

eastern regions besides sanctioning amount for entrepreneur activity, certain percentage were also sanctioned for creating awareness on entrepreneurial development.

**Table 3**  
**Sources of Finance**

Sl.No.	Different Sector	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Bank Loan	4	8
2.	Borrowed from money lenders	-	-
3.	Borrowed from friend	--	--
4.	Owned Money	32	64
5.	Bank Loan as well as own money	9	18
6.	Bank Loan + own money + borrowed from others	3	6
7.	Borrowed from friends + own money	2	4
Total		50	100

Source: Primary Data

#### V. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Promoting entrepreneurship among women is especially important to tackle the problems of under employment and unemployment in the society.
- Education has been instrumental in increasing the participation of women in entrepreneurial activities. Government should provide better educational facilities and schemes to women folk.
- Establishment of proper training institutes for enhancing their level of work-knowledge, skills, risk-taking abilities, enhancing their capabilities. Training Centers should provide training to prospective women entrepreneurs free of. Inculcation of self-confidence amongst women that they can also run a business should be one of the prime motives of these programmes. Potential women entrepreneurs should be exposed to different types of emerging opportunities. Housewives should be motivated to learn additional income.
- A women entrepreneur should herself set up an example by being successful and should act as a role model.
- The SHG linked-Banking system has not been able to deal with barriers that hinder women from using or gaining access to credit. Adequate arrangements must be made for the supply of credit facility at concession rate for the women entrepreneurs in view of their growing needs.
- Creating provision of micro credit system and enterprise credit system linked with SHGs to the women entrepreneurs at local level with low rate of interest.
- A Women Entrepreneur's Guidance Cell should be set up to handle the various problems of women entrepreneurs all over the state.
- Positive attitude in the society recognizing the role of women as entrepreneur may lead to the development of appropriate environment in which women will be able to exploit their entrepreneurial talents.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The principal factor in developing entrepreneurship among women is not in terms of infrastructure or financial assistance or identifying an enterprise but it is a question of clearing the ground for their movement into entrepreneurship. For ages together they have been confined to a secondary role and confined to the homes and you have to bring out so that they become self-reliant, self-respecting enterprising people. Though there are several factors contributing to the emergence of women as entrepreneurs, the sustained and coordinated effort from all dimensions would pave the way for the women moving into entrepreneurial activity thus contributing to the social and economic development of the members of the family and thereby gaining equality and equal importance for

themselves. In a word, one cannot think of empowerment of women minus the economic component. The main economic component should be in terms of women entering diverse fields of entrepreneurship. Today, women are no longer confine to the 3ks viz. Kitchen, kids and knitting.

Manipur offers very little scope for the establishment of large and medium scale enterprises. Consequently the main thrust of planning revolves around the development of small and tiny industries based mainly on local skills to provide employment to local population, and these types of industries are also good enough to attract woman entrepreneurs as they have already been involved in such activities. Some of these activities are handicrafts, handloom, sericulture, etc. Women entrepreneurs faced lots of problems at start-up as well as operating stage. The main reason of non-availability of finance to women is their inability to provide collateral as they do not have any property on their name. On the other side women have got restricted mobility freedom and have to perform dual role one at family and other at work which hinders the entrepreneurial growth. The technological advancement and information technology explosion has reduced the problem of women entrepreneurs. Along with technological revolution, mental revolution of society is required to change the attitude of the society and provide women with democratic and entrepreneurial platform. To end up **a nation can never grow until and unless a woman grows.**

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