

ISSN: 2456-9550

JMC

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DYNAMICS IN SMALL BUSINESS: THE CASE  
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PIPILI ODISHA**

**PRAVATI DALUA**

Email: pravati.jnu@gmail.com

Kamala Nehru College, University of Delhi

**Volume 7, 2023**

**THE JMC REVIEW**

*An Interdisciplinary Social Science Journal of Criticism,  
Practice and Theory*

<http://www.jmc.ac.in/the-jmc-review/content/>

**JESUS AND MARY COLLEGE  
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI  
NEW DELHI-110021**

**EXPLORING FAMILY AND GENDER DYNAMICS IN SMALL  
BUSINESS: THE CASE OF APPLIQUE CRAFT PRODUCTION IN  
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**Abstract**

Family business enterprises are typically male-owned, but the roles of women and other family members are vital for their survival. While men and women may view their participation as a collective effort, it's important to recognise that the family is not always a unified space with shared interests (Anthias, 2022). Using empirical evidences in the form of biographical interviews, this paper aims to examine self-employment and gender as a space of everyday negotiation. With a particular focus on the role of family in female-led business operations, the paper brings in the interconnections between family and gender in small business operations. It also seeks to ask how self-employed male and female craft makers use their family or ethnic identity as resources to pursue economic advantages for themselves and their families. In this context, the paper intends to explore questions like: Do women entrepreneurs rely on their family members as much as men, and is family labour important for their success? How do they deal with the problems they face in their personal and work lives? The critical engagements that this paper offers relate to the idea that women's narratives and experiences are crucial factors in understanding the functioning of small and micro enterprises in general, and the nature of female-led micro and small enterprises in handicraft economies. The paper aims to look at a number of case studies of women entrepreneurs to explore the extent to which family support and family labour determine the business trajectories of women in business. The paper concludes with findings from the

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<sup>#</sup> Associate Professor of Sociology, Kamala Nehru College, University of Delhi. Email: pravati.jnu@gmail.com

ground that are useful in asking further critical questions about the role of family in self-employment. The paper is structured in different parts. Firstly, an account of applique craft production with a changing history has been provided to understand the nuances of craft production. Secondly, a discussion is provided on key aspects of self-employment and female entrepreneurship, highlighting gender, family, and ethnicity. The third part uses material from the empirical research to explore and illustrate some of the issues raised above.

**Keywords:** Applique, Crafts, Entrepreneurship, Family, Gender

## **I. Introduction**

In recent years, some sociological attention has been devoted to the position of women in the labour market and the domestic sphere (Goffee & Scase, 1983). However, the study of women as business proprietors in family-run businesses has been almost entirely neglected in the existing literature. The prejudice that 'entrepreneurship' is typically associated with men has persisted as a pervasive idea in nearly all societies and is evident in most studies. For instance, Watson and Newby (2006), in their study on micro and small enterprise (MSE) owners, illustrated how traditionally masculine values and concepts have tended to dominate much of the management and organisational literature, influencing our perspectives on business success and performance. The authors also argued that empirical evidence demonstrates significant gender-based differences in both the desire for and achievement of business growth (Watson & Newby, 2006). Therefore, adopting a gendered approach offers a more nuanced understanding of female entrepreneurship. Despite the increasing research on female entrepreneurship in recent years, there remain many areas that require focused attention. Specifically, the case of family business enterprises in informal setups demands particular scrutiny to comprehend the experiences of women in business within a gendered context.

Family enterprises, as studies have shown, exhibit distinct organisational characteristics. Typically, family enterprises are male-owned, yet the roles of women and other family members are crucial for their survival. While both men and women may perceive their

participation as a collective effort, it's important to recognise that the family is not always a unified space with common interests (Anthias, 2022). This paper utilises empirical evidence from biographical interviews to examine self-employment and gender as arenas of everyday negotiation. With a specific focus on the role of family in female-led business operations in Pipili, Odisha, the paper explores the interconnections between family dynamics and gender in self-employment. It also seeks to investigate how self-employed male and female craft makers leverage their family or ethnic identities as resources to pursue economic advantages for themselves and their families.

In this context, the paper aims to address questions such as: do women entrepreneurs rely on their family members as extensively as men do? How do they navigate the challenges they encounter in their personal and professional lives as micro-entrepreneurs? The critical insights offered in this paper underscore the significance of women's narratives and experiences in understanding the dynamics of small and micro enterprises in general, and particularly the nature of female-led enterprises in handicraft economies.

The paper examines several case studies of women entrepreneurs in the handicraft business to explore the extent to which family support and family labour shape the business trajectories of women entrepreneurs. It concludes with grounded findings that prompt further critical inquiry into the role of family in self-employment. The structure of the paper is organised into distinct sections: first, it discusses the broader context of the study, emphasising key aspects of self-employment and female entrepreneurship with attention to gendered nuances within family dynamics. Second, it provides an account of the evolving applique craft production in Pipili, Odisha, to illuminate the intricacies of craft, craft makers, and craft production. The third part offers an overview of self-employment patterns in India. The fourth part draws on empirical research materials to explore and illustrate some of the issues raised, employing the framework developed by Anthias and Mehta (2003). Lastly, the fifth part summarises the analytical findings of the article.

## II. Self-Employment and Female Entrepreneurship: Gendered Nuances

Over the past two decades, there has been a notable increase in discussions on self-employment among scholars and communities worldwide. Generally, social science discourses on self-employment often delineate two main arguments: cultural and structural explanations. However, there is ongoing debate regarding the interplay between these two types of explanations in understanding the conditions of self-employment in society.

Kabeer (1994), in her ground breaking work on Bangladeshi homeworkers, argued that the preference for homework is influenced by both structural and cultural factors. She focuses on the dynamics of choice versus constraints, emphasising the roles of culture and economy. Kabeer asserts that the 'preferences' exhibited in the labour market behaviour of Bangladeshi women cannot be attributed solely to individual choices but must be understood within the framework of bargaining and negotiations with more influential family members. To understand this bargain and negotiation, Kandiyoti (1988) has used the conceptual tool of bargaining with patriarchy as a women's choice. It refers to an uneasy compromise, and any resistance and contestation is possible but limited by what is culturally acceptable (Kandiyoti, 2005). She further writes:

These patriarchal bargains exert a powerful influence on the shaping of women's gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology in different contexts. They also influence both the potential for and specific forms of women's active or passive resistance in the face of their oppression. Moreover, patriarchal bargains are not timeless or immutable entities, but are susceptible to historical transformations that open up new areas of struggle and renegotiation of the relations between genders. (Kandiyoti, 1988, p. 275)

Similarly, in studies of ethnic entrepreneurship, scholars argue that the deep social connections within ethnic migrant communities imply that culture alone is not the sole determining factor (Light & Bhachu, 2017). Instead, culture may be strategically employed under specific circumstances. For instance, Bhachu (1986) argued that Sikh women in Britain are assuming leadership roles in businesses as a response to the racial exclusions faced by the Sikh community. Similarly, Bazaaz and Akram (2021) illustrated in their study on Muslim women how gender and caste identities and their mutually

intersectional impact are felt in areas like education, occupation, and income choices. These studies illustrate that gender relations are not static but are influenced by intersecting factors such as class, caste, and ethnic identities. As aptly put:

In every patriarchal society, the popular and normal discourses hold women accountable for ‘domestic and caregiving work,’ and in the case of lower caste women, this popular discourse stands as a barrier to getting formal education in general and professional higher education in particular. Hence, lower caste women become the victim of symbolic violence and remain excluded from the development and inclusion process. Although upper caste women are also supposed to fulfill the responsibilities of ‘domestic and caregiving work,’ their caste capital provides them with particular cultural capital which not only brings ideological change but also determines and impacts educational choices and academic success. (Bazaaz & Akram, 2021, p. 207)

While self-employment among women often arises from limited opportunities in formal employment due to restricted education or skills, it is also influenced by familial structures and relationships, which can render small businesses a viable option. Furthermore, factors like overcoming feelings of alienation, freedom, or self-realisation also contribute to women's entrepreneurial decisions (Tlaiss, 2015). Additionally, structural elements such as governmental policies, activities by non-governmental organisations, international donor organisations, economic conditions, etc., play a significant role in shaping the choices of men and women in small businesses, especially in contexts where other forms of paid employment are scarce. Governments of emerging economies, policymakers, and international donor organisations have therefore supported entrepreneurship as a strategic tool for economic growth and advancement (Al-Dajani et al., 2015). Particularly in the case of women's entrepreneurship, it is being viewed as a tool of women's empowerment (Loh & Dahesihsari, 2013). This optimistic standpoint, however, neglects the existence of inequality that is deeply gendered. For instance, Ojediran and Anderson (2020), in their critical study on empowerment and emancipation, brought out a paradoxical view of how entrepreneuring can simultaneously be a liberating mechanism as well as a constraining one.

### **Family and Self-Employment in Small Business: A Complex Structure**

There is much evidence in scholarships that argue family and self-employment have deeper connections. For instance, Basco (2014) emphasised the interconnections between family and business activities by discussing various advantages and disadvantages of family involvement in business. Similar literature also focuses on the role of family background in entrepreneurial activities (Georgescu & Herman, 2020; Oluwafunmilayo et al., 2017). In a study on Brazilian immigrants in the United States, Siqueira (2007) examines the extent to which human capital and family social capital theories explain the probability of owning a business. Additionally, the study found that the presence of a cohabiting spouse is often treated as an indicator of family social capital that enhances the probability of immigrants owning a business.

Family cohesion as a crucial factor has also been emphasised by many scholars in creating chances for self-employment (Fernández-Roca et al., 2014). Similarly, Mishkin (2021) has highlighted the gender gaps in entrepreneurial transmission since inheritance mostly always happens in sons' or brothers' line. Scholars discussing the interrelationship between family, self-employment, and small business often centre their arguments around how family and family labour act as resources in business. Anthias (2022), for instance, citing the context of ethnic entrepreneurship abroad, argues that men from ethnic groups will be able to rely on their wives and often children for support in their business. Family ideology and kinship networks, religious affiliations, and ethnic bonds such as village associations strongly may act as resources in small business setups, encouraging people to take up such economic activities. However, relying solely on this argument may obscure other aspects of the real world. For instance, there are studies on family businesses that showcase increasing dissatisfaction and conflict as part of these organisations. The study of Anthias (2022) of Cypriots in the 1980s illustrated this aspect of conflict by showing how men expressed their dissatisfaction with their wives working outside of their own enterprise. In another instance, researchers have also found that working in one's own family enterprise, despite conflicts, may also serve the interests of women themselves. For instance, Black feminist scholars, by rejecting the patriarchal premise of women's subordination, argue that many women in some households would like to work in their

own enterprises to keep their families integrated in the face of outside adversities, migration, etc., even amidst conflict at home (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 2005).

From the discussions above, it is evident that family enterprises have diverse and complex structures where women play a crucial role and are always seen as a resource. There are instances where women are victims of bourgeois patriarchal dominance within the family business setup, and at the same time, family cohesion exists in these setups. Both of these arguments are valid within the social world. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to different contexts when assessing the various outcomes for men and women in self-employment sectors.

### **III. Self-Employment, Women's Entrepreneurship in India: An Overview**

According to the Global Women Entrepreneur Leaders report (2015) published by ACG Inc. across 31 countries, India ranked 29th. Data on women entrepreneurs in India remains limited; however, significant insights can be drawn from macro-level data sources. The NSS 68th Round (2011–2012) Report on Informal Sector and Conditions of Employment in India reveals that a higher proportion of informal sector workers are engaged in smaller enterprises. Rural areas show a higher proportion of workers engaged in smaller enterprises compared to urban areas, with approximately 75 percent of informal sector workers in rural areas and 63 percent overall.

The National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) conducted the Sixth Economic Census survey, highlighting the journey Indian women undertake to become entrepreneurs, though they still lag behind their male counterparts. The survey states that 13.76 percent of all establishments in the country are run by women entrepreneurs (GOI, 2016). This translates to 8.05 million establishments out of the total 58.5 million in India being operated by women, employing about 10 percent of the total workforce engaged in various economic activities nationwide. Interestingly, most of these establishments operate without hired workers, with over 86 percent in rural areas and 76.33 percent in urban areas functioning in this manner.

The majority of women-owned establishments are situated in rural areas, with over 65 percent (5.2 million out of 8.5 million) located there, compared to 34.88 percent in urban areas. Additionally, the report indicates that more than 90 percent of businesses owned by women are micro or small-scale enterprises, with approximately 79 percent being self-financed (Saha, 2016).

According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the following definitions apply to the terms:

- **Perennial:** If the entrepreneurial activity is carried on or likely to be carried on throughout the year more or less regularly, it is treated as perennial activity.
- **Seasonal:** If the activity of the establishment is confined to a particular season, i.e., fixed months of a year, it is called seasonal activity. For establishments to be categorised in this category, it is essential that they must have been operational for at least 15 days in the last season in the last 365 days.
- **Casual:** The economic activity of the establishment which is neither perennial nor seasonal is termed as casual. For establishments to be categorised in this category, it is essential that they must have been operational for at least 30 days during the last 365 days.

Following this categorisation, 89 percent, 9 percent, and 1.97 percent of establishments run by women entrepreneurs in the country are classified as perennial, seasonal, and casual, respectively, in terms of their operation. Interestingly, many of these establishments are predominantly self-financed, with nearly 79 percent being self-financed at the national level. This trend is also reflected at the state level, where self-financing remains a major source of funding.

In particular, within the handicraft and handloom sectors, there is a significant presence of women. According to the Handloom Census data for 2019-20, approximately 72.3 percent of the total workers in the sector are women, with the remainder categorised as males and transgender individuals. The majority of these workers are located in rural settings, indicating that women workers dominate the non-urban areas within the handloom industry.

**Table 1: Number of handloom workers by gender**

Gender	Rural	Urban	Total
Male	778772	196961	975733
Female	2274516	271769	2546285
Transgender	403	91	494
Total	3053691	468821	3522512
Male	26	42	28
Female	74.5	58	72
Transgender	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	100	100	100

Source: Ministry of Textiles Handloom Census data for 2019-20

While these data broadly indicate the substantial representation of women in the handicraft and handloom sectors, they do not fully capture the nuanced experiences of women in business, which are intricately woven into the social fabric of their daily lives. Similarly, studies on women's entrepreneurship in India are primarily focused from a management or economic point of view that nurture the argument that women's entrepreneurship is primarily a strategy of achieving empowerment and advancement (Khan et al. 2017; Datta & Gailey 2012)) and therefore focus on the problems faced by women in business (Das, 2000). There are few critical and empirical studies on entrepreneurship that go beyond the discussion of entrepreneurship as economic advancement and is apt here to illustrate. Torri and Martinez (2014) studied the Gram Mooligai Company Limited (GMCL) as a community enterprise run by untouchable women. This study found that entrepreneurial activities enhanced women's productive abilities, leadership skills and, to some extent, social learning abilities, but falls short of confronting caste-based marginalisation embedded in established patriarchal norms and practices. Therefore, this study seeks to explore this complexity empirically by examining women's experiences in entrepreneurial activities within small or micro businesses. The subsequent paragraph offers a concise introduction to the craft itself and the artisans involved.

#### IV. Applique Crafts of Odisha

Odisha ranks among the top five states in India for the number of handicraft-related establishments, following West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. Approximately 7.8 percent of

the country's total establishments are located in Odisha. The appliqué crafts of Odisha boast a rich cultural and economic heritage, originating as temple art primarily used in ceremonies dedicated to Lord Jagannath, the state's supreme deity. The term 'appliqué,' derived from French, refers to an artistic technique involving the layering of small and large patches of colourful fabrics onto a larger base fabric.

Traditionally, artisans from Odisha crafted various items such as Batua (bags), Kothali (purses), Pasa-Pali (dice mats), and Pataka (flags) for the local market. These craftsmen also produced items essential for religious ceremonies, including Chhati (umbrella-shaped items), Chandua (used for temple decorations), Alata (hand fans), and Trasa (banners). One of the most notable uses of these crafts occurs during the annual Rath Yatra or Car Festival, where appliquéd canopies adorn the chariots carrying the presiding deities. These canopies symbolically shield the deities from harsh weather conditions.

During the Rath Yatra, each chariot's cover follows a specific colour scheme: Balabhadra's chariot, known as "Taladhwaja", features bright green and red; Subhadra's chariot, called "Padmadhwaja" or "Darpadalana", is adorned with bright red and black; and Lord Jagannath's chariot, named "Nandighosha" displays bright red and yellow. This tradition has been meticulously maintained in Puri, Odisha, over centuries, with flags and banners considered sacred offerings to Lord Jagannath. These banners, often decorated with simple yet elegant appliqué work using red, yellow, and white fabrics sourced from Pipili, are used to adorn the pinnacle of the Jagannath temple and are revered by devotees who purchase them for religious offerings.

The use of appliqué crafts extends beyond the Jagannath temple at Puri; nearly all temples following similar ritual patterns utilise appliquéd clothes and craft items. Common temple ritual crafts include Chandua, Chhati, and Trasa. Additionally, other customary decorations made with appliqué fabrics can be found, enriching the festive ambiance during locally celebrated festivals. For example, during Chandan Yatra, a 21-day festival of Lord Jagannath in Puri, deities are ceremonially taken on boats called 'Chapa,' adorned with richly decorated appliquéd cloths for a holy patrol in water. The procession prominently displays Chattris (umbrellas) embellished with appliqué work.

Beyond Puri, the 'float' festival is observed in numerous Vishnu and Shiva temples across Odisha. Dola Purnima, celebrated on the full moon day in Falguna, is another significant festival in the coastal districts of Odisha. During this event, idols of Radha and Krishna are paraded in a grand procession, stopping at households to receive offerings. The festival culminates with a swing festival for the deities, where idols are transported in vehicles decorated with applied fabrics. Similar decorations using applied clothes are also observed during Snana Jatra, the annual bathing festival of Lord Jagannath. Ceremonial seats and pillows crafted in appliqué art, locally known as *Chakada Kama*, feature motifs such as 27 stars, geometrical shapes, fish, and frogs, reflecting the cultural richness of the region.

The appliqué craft owes its origins to a caste of tailors known locally as the Darjis, who have been pioneers in this craft for generations. Concentrated predominantly in Pipili, a small block in the Puri district of Odisha, these communities comprise approximately 60 Darji households engaged in craft-making activities for their livelihoods. Their residential premises often double as workshops and retail spaces adorned with exquisite appliqué crafts, attracting tourists en route to the famous temples of Puri and Konark.

Over time, these artisans have diversified from producing primarily religious crafts to creating items catering to tourists, online consumers, and urban craft markets, establishing independent small business units. This craft has also been promoted as a means of generating employment by governmental and non-governmental organisations aiming to alleviate poverty in the region. Today, it serves as a viable livelihood option, benefiting from a supportive ecosystem conducive to appliqué production, bolstered by the area's rich cultural heritage and increasing governmental and organisational support to foster self-employment.

Government policies have played a pivotal role in shaping local aspirations toward entrepreneurial ventures in appliqué crafts. While many policies are inclusive of both male and female entrepreneurs, specific provisions targeting women have been implemented across various subsidies. Notably, the Odisha Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Development Policy 2016 enhances capital investment subsidies for MSMEs and emphasises women's entrepreneurship and empowerment. Similarly, the

Odisha Start-up Policy 2016 mandates a minimum 33% participation of women as founders or co-founders in start-ups, aiming to catalyse entrepreneurial growth among women in the state. The Odisha State Policy for Girls and Women 2014 further supports women's livelihood options by fostering supportive systems for women's groups and collectives to enhance their entrepreneurial endeavours. Initiatives like Mission Shakti and the Make in Odisha Entrepreneurship platforms are specifically designed to increase women's participation in self-employment within small business setups, demonstrating the state's commitment to fostering inclusive economic growth. Though these policy initiatives have aided rural women to enter into entrepreneurial set ups for generating income, but these economic activities need to be studied more carefully to see how it is affecting their lives empirically.

#### **V. Studying Female Entrepreneurs in Applique Industry: Family and Gendered Nuances**

The present paper is part of a two-year-long PhD study conducted in the state of Odisha on applique craft makers in Pipili and nearby areas within the Golden Triangle Tourism Map of Odisha. The study broadly aimed to understand the practice of handicraft making and the economy of craft makers. It used a biographical method to understand small business economies and to identify the roles of family, gender, and other important social structural components that shape these economies. The empirical approach of the study, specifically the biographical methods used for collecting data, is derived from grounded theory methodology, which is widely used in qualitative research analysis. Grounded theories derive their substance of analysis from the data itself, avoiding any grand narratives. The biographical method allows the researcher to understand the context more elaborately and gives more space to the informants to express their thoughts more freely. The research sample consisted of men and women working in the applique industries at Pipili. In this section, we draw on our interview material to analyse and understand two frameworks developed by Anthias and Mehta in their study. This study uses these two frameworks to investigate gender dynamics in the applique industry in the context of Pipili, Odisha: Framework 1 evaluates the Support from family and other networks and

Framework 2 focuses more on the Entrepreneurial motivations and outcomes in applique business.

As previously mentioned, this chapter utilises data from a two-year-long PhD study conducted in Odisha on the applique craft makers of Pipili and surrounding areas situated within the Golden Triangle Tourism Map of Odisha. The study aimed to comprehensively explore the production and consumption of applique crafts by employing a biographical method. This study is part of that larger research project, specifically aiming to understand small business economies and identify the roles of family, gender, and other significant social structural components in shaping these economies. The empirical approach of the study, utilising biographical methods for data collection, draws from grounded theory methodology widely employed in qualitative research analysis. Grounded theories derive their analytical substance directly from the data, eschewing overarching narratives. The biographical method affords researchers a deeper contextual understanding and allows informants greater freedom in expressing their perspectives.

The research sample consisted of men and women engaged in the applique industry in Pipili. With the overarching objective of exploring family businesses, a total of 22 interviews were conducted, evenly split between 11 men and 11 women. Two distinct social groups emerged within the sample: enterprises owned by men and women who inherited their family businesses (the Darji families) and those owned by new entrants in the applique business, most of whom are primarily from marginalised caste communities in the state.

In this section, the study analyses the interview findings using two frameworks developed by Anthias and Mehta in their studies:

Framework 1: Support from family and other networks; and  
Framework 2: Entrepreneurial motivations and outcomes. These frameworks will be employed to investigate the gender dynamics within the applique industry context in Pipili, Odisha,

### **Framework 1: Support from family and other networks in applique industry**

In my study, I found that the family of origin played a crucial role in supporting both men and women (who shared the same caste occupation) in overcoming the challenges associated with acquiring resources such as start-up capital and skilled labour for their businesses. However, only the men were able to utilise labour from within their immediate families, including that of their wives and occasionally from their in-laws. Indeed, the contributions of wives to the business were often undervalued and taken for granted, despite the crucial roles they and their families played. For instance, Ratan (aged 32) owns a family run business that has been handed over to him from his father who started this business as part of his hereditary occupation, presumes that his wife and her family are and should always be available at all times as implied in the following statement: "When I need any financial help regarding my business, my wife's father and brothers are always there. After all, they have given their daughter and sister to me! This is their duty to see how her family works."

In contrast, families new to this business experience a different scenario altogether. Most of these enterprises are situated in the vicinity of Darji village. The sample consisted of enterprise owners from the most marginalised communities or scheduled castes in the state. Many of these enterprises are jointly owned by husbands and wives. These small businesses primarily operate with funding from local government policies aimed at enabling women from marginalised communities to earn a livelihood in rural areas. The local government's pro-women policies have encouraged many women in the region to enter the handicraft business, either as small-scale producers or retailers, after acquiring skills from governmental or non-governmental agencies. To access this financial support, which is exclusively available to women beneficiaries, many women in the region have joined self-help groups and have partially managed to establish their own small enterprises. Many also cited existing artisan welfare policies as motivating and supportive factors in establishing their units in a locality strategically connected to the Golden Triangle tourism map of the eastern part of Odisha, focusing on Puri, Konark, and Bhubaneswar (the most popular tourist destinations in the state).

The study revealed that women received more assistance from their husbands only in jointly owned enterprises. Many of these women expressed satisfaction that their husbands stood with them as co-owners in their businesses. However, their division of labour generally followed traditional gender roles and husbands took more proactive role in learning the nitty-gritties of getting subsidised loans, on what conditions it can be waved off etc. For example, Reena, aged 40), primarily manages their small workshop located at home while also attending to household chores, caring for elders and children, and supervising part-time workers trained at a government-run centre. According to Reena, “I cannot imagine to be in the business without my husband’s support”. Her husband, on the other hand, liaises with larger shop owners, negotiates sales deals, manages bookkeeping, and oversees finances, despite the start-up capital being in his wife’s name.

Nevertheless, there are instances where women who jointly own enterprises with their husbands in households that are engaged in hereditary craft making occupation, express dissatisfaction. They often feel disregarded when their advice is not considered, and their husbands discourage them from accompanying them to set up stalls at exhibitions or for any other public dealings. Meena, aged 28, proud of her heritage as the daughter of a master craftsman and a graduate aspiring to establish her own identity as a reputed artisan like her father, faces similar challenges. Despite her husband being a government employee, they co-own an applique craft retail shop. Because of her background, Meena understands consumer demands and the finer details of craft materials better than her husband. She desires to handle public dealings herself, which her husband opposes. Meena finds it frustrating to be advised against handling public dealings alone and is expected to involve other elderly family members such as her father-in-law or mother-in-law if her husband is unavailable. Similar discontent was observed among educated women with high aspirations to establish themselves as entrepreneurs. However, there are also instances where women have praised their spouses for having a supportive relationship with them. Minati, aged 27, who is a souvenir shop owner at Konark, gives all the credit for her achievement to her husband. They live in a small two-story house where the ground floor has been converted into a souvenir shop. As she narrated:

I am able to start a business after my marriage, all thanks to my husband who has been so supportive throughout. We had a love marriage and our parents did not approve of it. We started all from scratch. But I always knew that my husband would support me no matter what. He has invested his savings in this house and this shop. It's a seasonal business, and the earnings are not great, but every penny counts when you have no help from parental side. We are able to better manage our life with our 5-year-old child while just sitting at home!

While Meena's story reveals patriarchal control over her mobility and capabilities, Minati's story adds to the understanding of why women choose to work near their homes. The role of a caregiver is a primary responsibility for women, and choosing work or getting involved in economic activity near home that is flexible suits women in a society where gendered norms are part of everyday life. Women tend to better bargain with patriarchy when they better integrate their work roles and familial roles. This reminds us of the argument in the context of self-employed mothers in business who often get pulled toward entrepreneurial work in order to reconcile their role as mothers so as to have a flexible work schedule, as aptly put by Tlaiss (2013): "These married entrepreneurs with children were trying to integrate their enterprises and business requirements into their lives, rather than building their lives around the demand of their business" (p. 12).

## **Framework 2: Entrepreneurial Motivations and Outcomes**

Anthias and Mehta (2003) while elaborating on entrepreneurial motivations and outcomes, included several qualitative indicators in their framework. For instance, they considered enterprise characteristics, associated difficulties, flexibility, the role of life crises, and issues of empowerment to understand these motivations. They argue that self-employment often arises due to exclusions, constraints, or discrimination. The findings of the present study partly corroborate this conclusion. Enterprises based on hereditary occupations are generally viewed by owners as matters of pride and identity rather than impositions or outcomes of constraint. In contrast, small enterprises recently established through local government initiatives to boost employment mostly agreed that they had no other viable options in the region given their skills and education levels, apart from joining the applique business. Many also acknowledged the challenges of competing with established enterprises in the region. Additionally, a majority found it difficult at times to

pay their part-time workers due to the seasonal nature of applique craft demands. During periods of low tourist influx, they struggle to sustain their businesses, unlike larger enterprises that have access to urban and export markets.

However, the experiences of men and women also vary during market fluctuations for their crafts. Asha, aged 45, operates her applique souvenir shop in Puri, Odisha single-handedly and never allows her husband to help. Her husband is an alcoholic and often resorts to stealing money from her cash counter, as she pointed out during the conversation. Asha narrated “Winter seasons are the most hectic of the year. It feels great to expect more orders, but at times it is difficult to manage all at once. I need to look after both my children and the business, and I cannot say no to the tasks”.

Another significant difficulty experienced by many educated self-employed women is related to the stereotypical expectations of their role as entrepreneurs. Anita, aged 30, who owns and manages a retail handicraft shop in Konark (within 50 km from her residence), expressed her frustration with suppliers and clients who would always inquire about her husband before engaging with her on business matters.

Numerous studies discuss the reasons why women opt for self-employment, often linked to their responsibilities as caregivers for children and family. Self-employment provides them the option to manage household duties while generating income. Many respondents in newly established enterprises also felt that their craftwork contributes to their family income, especially since their husbands primarily manage agricultural activities, which do not guarantee a steady income. The craft business offers them a flexible space where they can be with their children and family while earning for themselves.

While the flexibility of self-employment attracts many women, one cannot ignore the heavier burden they often bear due to their traditional roles as caregivers that remain largely unchanged. Nevertheless, one cannot deny that a sense of 'independence' and 'freedom' also emerges from this paradoxical situation of self-employment. Many women highlighted positive aspects of women-oriented policies that provided them opportunities at their local level to gain necessary skills training in craft making and establishing their

own businesses. Rajani, aged 27, who has been in the applique business for the last two years, shared:

When I dropped out of college, my parents arranged my marriage. I was 20 years old then. However, I always dreamt of doing some work that gives me income. The turning point came when I joined a Self-Help Group (SHG) while I was still unmarried. I began working with other women on applique (known locally as Chandua) stitching. I enjoyed meeting other women and the work, could save something for my marriage too. Receiving a certificate for my fine stitching skills through a government training program was my significant achievement. With a loan, I set up my own business, which gives me a sense of independence. Now, I am better able to manage my own expenses, and can fund my children's tuition. Yes, I work day and night to balance work and my family, but it's alright that's life. My little earnings help my family have a better life, thus my husband supports me in this.

Rajani's reflection on her own life provides a paradoxical explanation of the position of self-employment, capturing both images of an 'empowered self' and a 'burdened self' that is caught between domesticity and entrepreneurship.

## **VI. Conclusion**

The primary objective of this paper was to explore the gender and family dynamics within small business economies, focusing specifically on the applique industry and enterprises involved in producing or retailing applique products. While the study initially centred on the small applique craft village of Pipili, it expanded its investigative scope to nearby neighbourhoods as per its research demands. The study aimed to develop an understanding of the gendered nuances inherent in business activities, drawing upon investigative frameworks similar to those used by Anthias and Mehta (2003) in their study on gender dynamics in business. The study's conclusions align closely with those of the aforementioned authors, while also highlighting newer dimensions specific to gender and entrepreneurship within an Indian context. Gender stereotyping and the burdens associated with caregiving emerged prominently in many biographical accounts of the respondents, continuing to impact women in business by emphasising their primary roles as caregivers within the family.

A significant finding of the study was that, while men often benefit from the support received from their wives and in-laws, women primarily benefit from major government policy initiatives, as has happened in the case of rural women in Odisha, which has allowed many rural women to enter into economic activities with limited resources and skills. This has undoubtedly given them the opportunity to be financially independent and better handle their aspirations, but it has come with what Kandiyoti (1988) would call a 'bargain with patriarchy'. The study confirms the existing findings that state: family as a resource does not equally benefit men and women; rather, men tend to leverage family resources more effectively than women.

Although significant tension and power dynamics were not overtly evident in the interviews, many women expressed dissatisfaction with their perceived lack of value in public roles as businesswomen and faced restrictions on their mobility. While a few instances showcased women motivated by the desire for financial independence, the study found that, in the majority of cases, married women's primary motivation for self-employment was to engage in economic activities while balancing caregiving responsibilities, particularly mothering responsibilities. Entrepreneurship in informal businesses such as handicrafts, as cited through biographical examples, can be both empowering, since it offers an opportunity to engage in economic activities, and constraining, as one has to nurture one's entrepreneurial self while not challenging prevailing gender norms. This finding also corroborates the arguments of Kabeer (2000), who argues that home-based work allows women to be economically active because the work does not defy social norms particularly of patriarchy. However, this home-based work is less likely to translate into increased intra-household power (Kantor 2003). Consequently, the pressure of self-employment is felt more acutely by women than men, as they bear responsibility for both domestic duties and financial obligations. While women were predominantly driven by a symbolic sense of independence, men were motivated more by the financial outcomes of their business ventures. Any class disadvantages experienced by men were often mitigated through the use of family and kinship networks, allowing them to address challenges such as start-up capital and labour shortages.

Women belonging to Dalit communities, despite facing the most vulnerabilities in terms of their low class position and entry into the applique trade, have not been passive victims of social structures. They have countered their class disadvantages and lack of network resources primarily through the utilisation of local government welfare policies, but all this has been balanced without challenging the existing gendered norms, rather by accommodating such rules of the game to leverage engagement in economic activities. In conclusion, the study underscores that while self-employment presents a paradoxical situation for both men and women, particularly in the absence of better available opportunities, women tend to be more affected by the nature of this work. They operate at the intersection of domestic and public responsibilities, bearing greater burdens as a result

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