

Empowering Women in Food Entrepreneurship
A Study on Food Justice and Democracy in Pondicherry Bioregion

A report submitted by

Dr. M. Roja Lakshmi

Under the supervision of

Prof. Helene Guétat-Bernard

&

Dr. Ritu Tyagi

PATAMIL Research Program

French Institute of Pondicherry

Social Science Department

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I. Introduction

Indian cultural background has witnessed describable distinction of expectations between male and female. Certainly higher from females though. Taking food as a constant and basic necessity of life this study delves into the dynamic landscape of women food entrepreneurs in the Pondicherry bioregion, exploring both rural and urban contexts. The research aims to unravel the opportunities and challenges faced by these women foodpreneurs, while also examining the intersectionality of their backgrounds, identities and their impact on marketing skills, strategies and overall development. Drawing on feminist and sociological approaches, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the nuanced experiences of women engaging in food entrepreneurship in general and within this specific geographical and cultural context. The Pondicherry bioregion, characterized by its rich cultural diversity and agricultural heritage, stands at a crossroads in the pursuit of food justice and democratic governance within its food systems. In this context, the crucial role played by women food entrepreneurs emerges as an anchor for reshaping the landscape of the region's sustenance. Recognizing the unique contributions of women in the food sector not only aligns with principles of gender equity but also holds the key to addressing the multifaceted challenges which impedes the realization of food justice and democratic ideals. The role of women in the food sector is pivotal, especially in the context of achieving food justice and democracy. Food justice entails fair access to nutritious food, sustainable agricultural practices, and inclusive participation in decision-making processes related to food systems (Guthman, 2008). In this regard, women food entrepreneurs play a significant role in reshaping the food landscape, fostering community resilience, and promoting democratic ideals in Pondicherry.

"Women entrepreneurship refers to the process by which women identify opportunities, gather resources, and initiate, organize, and manage business ventures with the aim of achieving economic success and personal fulfilment".

"Female food entrepreneurs are women who establish and manage businesses within the food industry, including food production, catering services, restaurant ownership, and food product development. They play a crucial role in shaping culinary trends, promoting food culture, and contributing to the economy".

The above definitions emphasize on "A woman entrepreneur is therefore a confident, creative and innovative woman desiring economic independence individually and simultaneously creating employment opportunities for others". The essence of women entrepreneurs and their

significance in shaping economies and societies has been defined and discussed by several popular references. These references highlight the unique characteristics, challenges, and contributions of women in entrepreneurship. They often emphasize the importance of gender inclusivity and empowerment in fostering economic growth and innovation.

i) Women Business Owners in Food production and distribution: Women entrepreneurs in the food sector are individuals who own and operate businesses involved in food production, processing, distribution, or retail. These entrepreneurs may manage farms, food processing units, restaurants, catering services, or retail outlets. The study by (Fisher, Suzanne M., and Lisa McLeod, 2013) explores the experiences, challenges, and strategies of women entrepreneurs in the food sector. The authors examine various themes such as access to resources, market opportunities, gender dynamics, and policy implications for women-owned food businesses. Another study focused on an overview of the literature on women's entrepreneurship in agribusiness, including food production and distribution. The authors (Brady & Mairead, 2020) analysed factors influencing women's participation in agribusiness, barriers to entry and growth, as well as opportunities for policy intervention and support. In the study 'Gender in Food choice and Nutrition: An Introduction' emphasize on the role of gender in food choice and nutrition, with implications for women entrepreneurs in the food sector. The authors (Grunert, Klaus G., and Liisa Lähteenmäki, 2018) discuss how gender norms and preferences influence food consumption patterns, marketing strategies, and product innovation.

Another research study by (Sharma & Reena, 2017) presents a case study analysis of women entrepreneurs in food production, focusing on their motivations, challenges, and business strategies. They highlight the role of social networks, access to finance, and market opportunities in shaping women's entrepreneurial ventures in the food sector. Women's entrepreneurship in the food sector across developing countries, with a focus on challenges and opportunities. The authors (Roy, Abhijit, and Amrita Roy Choudhury, 2019) discussed factors such as cultural norms, access to resources, and policy support influencing women's participation in food-related businesses.

ii) Leaders in Culinary Ventures: Women entrepreneurs in the food sector are leaders and innovators in culinary ventures, showcasing their skills and creativity in food-related businesses. These entrepreneurs could include chefs, restaurants, or owners of food-related enterprises, emphasizing their role in shaping culinary trends and experiences. Study assesses

gender differences in culinary entrepreneurship, including the motivations, challenges, and success factors of male and female culinary entrepreneurs. The authors (Palihawadana, Dayananda, and M. Joseph Sirgy, 2017) explore how gender norms and societal expectations influence women's entrepreneurial experiences in the culinary sector. Another qualitative study by Lee, Joo Young, and Ji-Eun Lee, 2020) emphasis on the experiences of women chefs in leadership positions within the culinary industry. They explore themes such as work-life balance, gender bias, and strategies for overcoming barriers to women's leadership in culinary ventures.

iii) Women Entrepreneurs contribution to Food Justice: One key contribution of women food entrepreneurs to food justice in Pondicherry is their emphasis on local sourcing and sustainable practices. By prioritizing locally sourced ingredients and adopting eco-friendly production methods, they reduce the environmental impact of food production and support small-scale farmers in the region. This not only strengthens local food systems but also ensures access to fresh, nutritious food for communities (Johnson, Sarah K., and Emily R. Smith, 2019). Furthermore, women food entrepreneurs play a crucial role in addressing food insecurity and promoting access to healthy food options, particularly in underserved areas. Through initiatives such as community kitchens, food distribution programs, and affordable meal services, they provide nutritious meals to vulnerable populations, including low-income families and marginalized communities. The role of women entrepreneurs in promoting food justice, including initiatives related to equitable access to healthy food, sustainable food production, addressing food insecurity, environmental sustainability, and community empowerment.

Women's entrepreneurship in the context of food security and economic development in developing countries (Kumar, Neelam & Meena, 2017) explore how women-led food businesses and social enterprises contribute to poverty reduction, nutritional improvement, and empowerment of marginalized communities, thereby advancing food justice goals.

v) Women Entrepreneurs in Agribusiness: Women entrepreneurs in the food sector are actively engaged in agribusiness, encompassing activities from farming and agricultural production to agro-processing and value addition. They may lead businesses involved in the cultivation of crops, raising livestock, or processing agricultural products for commercial purposes.

vi) Sustainable Food Champions: Women entrepreneurs in the region may also be defined as those actively engaged in promoting sustainability, implementing eco-friendly practices, and

contributing to the local and organic food movement. Women entrepreneurs play a crucial role as sustainable food champions, contributing to the promotion of environmentally friendly and socially responsible practices in the food industry. These entrepreneurs are driving innovation and positive change by prioritizing sustainability throughout the entire food supply chain, from production to consumption.

vii) Social Entrepreneurs for Food Justice: Women entrepreneurs in Pondicherry's food sector may be recognized as social entrepreneurs, addressing issues of food justice by promoting equitable access to nutritious food, particularly in marginalized communities.

These are some definitions highlight the diverse roles that women entrepreneurs play within the food sector, ranging from traditional agricultural practices to innovative culinary ventures and socially responsible enterprises. Their contributions are crucial not only for economic growth but also for shaping sustainable, inclusive, and dynamic food systems and multidimensional development of the society.

In the Pondicherry bio-region, a significant shift has been witnessed as women food entrepreneurs break away from their expected confines of the domestic sphere to venture into the bustling streets and markets. Traditionally relegated to household chores within the confines of a conservative social structure, women in this region are now embracing entrepreneurship in the food sector, marking a notable departure from their traditional roles. Historically confined to household chores within the constraints of a conservative social structure, women in this region are defying societal norms by venturing into entrepreneurship within the food sector. This shift is emblematic of broader societal changes challenging entrenched gender norms and roles. Scholars such as Kabeer (2005) and Sen (1990) argue that women's economic empowerment is crucial for challenging traditional gender hierarchies and fostering gender equality. By entering the public sphere as entrepreneurs, women in Pondicherry are not only asserting their economic independence but also challenging the prevailing notion that their role is limited to domestic duties. This signifies a reconfiguration of gender dynamics within the community. According to Amartya Sen (1990), women's agency and capabilities are essential for achieving social and economic development. Thus, by engaging in entrepreneurial activities in food sector, these women are demonstrating agency and reshaping perceptions about their roles and capabilities. Qualification is one such parameter on basis of which the capability of a woman to earn is usually adjudged. Food entrepreneurs in Pondicherry are graphing

themselves on the map of such earning women where this factor of qualification is proven irrelevant.

Moreover, the emergence of women food entrepreneurs in Pondicherry's markets underscores the importance of economic empowerment in fostering gender equality. By participating in the economic activities of their community, these women are not only contributing to their household incomes but also reshaping perceptions about women's capabilities and roles. However, this transition is not without its challenges. Research by Agarwal (1997) highlights how patriarchal norms and structural inequalities can impede women's access to resources and opportunities. Despite their entrepreneurial endeavours, women in Pondicherry may face barriers such as limited access to finance, social stigma, and cultural expectations.

The investigation employs a mixed-methods research design, incorporating surveys, interviews, and participant observations to capture both quantitative and qualitative data. Preliminary findings highlight the diverse array of food enterprises led by women, ranging from traditional cottage industries to modern urban ventures. Despite the growing interest in women's participation in entrepreneurship, the study reveals persistent challenges such as limited access to financial resources, support systems, stereotyping and gender-based discrimination, socio-cultural expectations and reality alike.

Furthermore, the research emphasizes the importance of recognizing the intersectionality of women's identities, acknowledging the influence of factors such as caste, class, and educational background on their entrepreneurial journey. This intersectional lens aims to contribute to a holistic understanding of the challenges faced by women across diverse backgrounds fostering inclusivity and targeted policy interventions.

In exploring the marketing strategies employed by women food entrepreneurs, the study identifies innovative approaches shaped by feminist ideologies. These approaches often challenge traditional gender norms and empower women to carve out spaces in the competitive food market. From leveraging social media platforms to incorporating sustainable and locally-sourced ingredients, women entrepreneurs in Pondicherry showcase resilience and creativity in their marketing endeavours.

In recent years, the multicultural tourist hub Pondicherry has witnessed a remarkable transformation in its culinary landscape, and at the forefront of this gastronomic revolution are women entrepreneurs who have ventured into the food industry. Traditionally confined to domestic spaces, these women have broken societal barriers to carve a niche for themselves in

the bustling markets and streets of Pondicherry. Their journey not only reflects a personal triumph but also symbolizes a larger shift in gender dynamics and economic participation. This research seeks to assess the narratives of women entrepreneurs in the food industry in Pondicherry, while shedding light on transition that they witness from household roles to the vibrant world of street and market entrepreneurship.

In the vibrant diversity and dynamism of the food industry, women entrepreneurs have emerged as key contributors, transcending the boundaries of traditional domestic roles to become architects of culinary ventures. This transition is not merely a shift from the kitchen to the market; it is a transmission of knowledge, culinary artistry, women empowerment and a profound connection with the food-cultural and familial roots. As women navigate the intricate journey from household kitchens to the competitive realm of the market, they carry with them not just recipes but the essence of heritage, family traditions, and an intimate understanding of the culinary skills and craft.

II. Theoretical Framework

This study draws on feminist, sociological, and post-modern perspectives to analyze the complex interplay of gender, power, food justice, and democracy. Feminist theories highlight the importance of recognizing and challenging gender-based inequalities and power dynamics within the food sector. Sociological perspectives provide insights into the social structures and cultural norms that shape women's experiences in food entrepreneurship. Post-modern approaches emphasize the plurality of narratives and the need to deconstruct dominant discourses that marginalize certain voices within the food system.

The feminist perspective provides a critical lens through which to analyze the complex interplay of gender, power, culture, food justice, and democracy in the context of women food entrepreneurs in the Pondicherry bioregion. Feminist theories emphasize the need to recognize and challenge patriarchal structures and gender inequalities that shape women's experiences in the food sector. This perspective highlights how cultural norms and societal expectations often limit women's access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power within the food system. The study by Amin (2014), has centring the voices and experiences of women food entrepreneurs, feminist analysis seeks to uncover the ways in which gender intersects with other social identities and structures to perpetuate inequality and injustice.

Sociological perspectives offer insights into the social structures, institutions, and cultural dynamics that influence women's participation in food entrepreneurship and shape broader

patterns of food justice and democracy. Sociological theories help elucidate the roles of social class, ethnicity, religion, and other factors in shaping women's opportunities and constraints within the food sector. This perspective also examines the social processes through which power is negotiated, contested, and reproduced within food systems, shedding light on issues of privilege, marginalization, and resistance. Sociological analysis underscores the importance of considering the broader social context in understanding the experiences of women food entrepreneurs and in developing strategies for promoting equity and social change.

The postmodern perspective challenges essentialist notions of identity, culture, and power, emphasizing the plurality of meanings and narratives within the food sector. Postmodern theories highlight the fluidity and complexity of gender, culture, and food practices, questioning fixed categories and binaries. This perspective encourages us to examine the multiple ways in which women food entrepreneurs negotiate and navigate power relations, cultural norms, and discursive frameworks within the Pondicherry bioregion. By deconstructing dominant discourses and interrogating taken-for-granted assumptions, postmodern analysis opens up space for alternative perspectives and voices, fostering greater inclusivity and diversity within discussions of food justice and democracy.

Karl Polanyi's Theory of Reciprocity:

In understanding the dynamics of women entrepreneurs in the food sector, Karl Polanyi's theory of reciprocity provides a compelling lens. According to Polanyi, reciprocity is a fundamental principle governing human interactions, emphasizing social bonds and mutual obligations. In the context of women entrepreneurs, this theory illuminates the reciprocal relationship between the entrepreneur and the consumer group. Women, often embedded in tight-knit communities, establish a unique form of economic exchange that goes beyond the impersonal transactions seen in the corporate market.

Karl Polanyi's theory of reciprocity offers valuable insights into the intersection of women food entrepreneurs and food justice. Reciprocity, as Polanyi described it, refers to the social exchanges and mutual obligations that underpin traditional economies. In the context of women food entrepreneurs, this theory can be applied to their role in fostering community connections, sustainable food systems, and equitable access to nutritious food. Women food entrepreneurs often operate within networks of reciprocity, leveraging relationships built on trust and cooperation. Through their businesses, they contribute to local economies, support small-scale farmers, and provide opportunities for marginalized groups. In doing so, they embody Polanyi's

vision of reciprocity as a means of achieving economic and social balance. Furthermore, women food entrepreneurs play a crucial role in promoting food justice. By prioritizing locally sourced ingredients, sustainable practices, and fair labour standards, they challenge the exploitative aspects of the industrial food system. Their emphasis on community engagement and empowerment aligns with Polanyi's belief in the importance of social cohesion and solidarity.

The theory of reciprocity sheds light on how women entrepreneurs, by incorporating traditional recipes and culinary practices, create a sense of belonging and shared identity with their consumer group. This reciprocal relationship is not solely economic; it encompasses a web of social ties, trust, and shared values. As women entrepreneurs navigate the corporate market, they grapple with maintaining this reciprocity, ensuring that their ventures remain rooted in the authenticity and community ties that define their enterprises. In essence, Karl Polanyi's theory of reciprocity provides a framework for understanding the transformative potential of women food entrepreneurs in advancing food justice. Through their commitment to reciprocity-based economies and equitable food access, they contribute to building more resilient and inclusive food systems for present and future generations.

As we delve into the narratives of women entrepreneurs in the food sector, we embark on a journey that goes beyond profit margins and market shares. It is a journey of resilience, cultural preservation, and the intricate step between tradition and adaptation. Through the lens of Karl Polanyi's theory, we seek to unravel the delicate balance that women entrepreneurs strike as they navigate the corporate market while preserving the reciprocity that is the heartbeat of their culinary enterprises.

III. Statement of Problem:

In the context of the Pondicherry bio region, the involvement of women food entrepreneurs raises critical questions, and to examine specific facets of their entrepreneurial journey undertaken by women in the food sector. In this study, we argue that there is a need to address, understand and explore their contributions and challenges. The critical questions include how the women food entrepreneurs took the dynamic transitions from domestic kitchen to street-level businesses; significant effect of COVID economic crisis driven economic challenges; and how the inbuilt culinary skills position them in competition with established hotels and unbitable position in a society and family. The study investigates how the principles of Karl Polyani's reciprocity influenced (fitting to the context of food-business model in the city) the

business model. Understanding how the women food entrepreneurs built reciprocal relationships with consumers and vice-versa provides insights into the dynamics of sustainable entrepreneurship and community engagement. How did they shed light to the broader impact of women serving as role models and catalysts for change in the entrepreneurial landscape; assess on preserving cultural heritage, promoting healthier food options, breaking the barrier of house-wife and addressing affordability concerns. Exploring their role in addressing food accessibility, affordability and the provision of quality food options to a demography often overlooked by mainstream food businesses.

The statement of problem addressing these critical questions and focusing on specific aspects of entrepreneurship such as transition from domestic kitchen to street-level business, economic crises during pandemic, culinary skills and competition with hotels, consumer relations and theory of reciprocity, catalysts for change and role models, cultural preservation, affordability concerns, and societal influence. It is also emphasized on multifaceted understanding of the challenges, successes, and contributions of women food entrepreneurs in the Pondicherry bio region.

IV. Opportunities and Challenges:

Understanding the opportunities available to women in the food entrepreneurship sector is crucial for fostering sustainable economic development. Simultaneously, identifying and addressing the challenges they face is imperative for crafting effective support systems. This research aims to document and analyse these opportunities and challenges through the lens of women entrepreneurs themselves, relying on their narratives and real-life case studies. The investigation additionally examines the support mechanisms and enablers derived from familial and communal networks, self-help groups (SHGs), and governmental interventions.

Intersectionality:

Recognizing the diverse identities within the category of "women entrepreneurs," we adopt an intersectional perspective that acknowledges the impact of intersecting factors such as caste, class, and educational background on entrepreneurial experiences. By doing so, we aim to shed light on the nuanced ways in which multiple identities intersect and influence the opportunities and challenges faced by women food entrepreneurs in Pondicherry.

Marketing:

The study extends its inquiry into the marketing strategies employed by women entrepreneurs, focusing on how feminist ideologies and sociological perspectives shape their approach. This involves an examination of how these entrepreneurs navigate gender norms and societal expectations through innovative marketing strategies, from leveraging social media platforms to incorporating sustainability into their business models.

Feminist and Sociological Approaches:

By adopting feminist and sociological frameworks, this research seeks to go beyond a mere economic analysis of women's participation in food entrepreneurship. It aims to understand how power dynamics, gender roles, and societal structures influence and are influenced by the entrepreneurial endeavours of women. The research thereby contributes to a broader discourse on gender, entrepreneurship, and social change.

Transmission of Knowledge:

The transmission of culinary knowledge from the kitchen to the market signifies more than a mere business endeavour; it's a narrative of cultural preservation and empowerment. Women entrepreneurs, often the bearers of familial culinary legacies, embark on a journey where they share not only recipes but the stories, rituals, and sentiments that have been passed down through generations. This transmission becomes a powerful tool, not only for personal economic upliftment but also for preserving and disseminating cultural richness in the wider social fabric.

Challenges in a Corporate Market:

Women Entrepreneurs face a myriad of challenges in the food sector. However, as women entrepreneurs' step onto the competitive stage of the corporate market. The corporate market, characterized by its scale, resource abundance, and aggressive marketing, poses a stark contrast to the intimate and personal ethos of traditional cooking. Competition with corporate entities brings challenges such as resource disparities, market access barriers, and the need for strategic marketing that aligns with the authenticity and uniqueness intrinsic to women-led food enterprises.

V. Need of the Study

The need for women's involvement in the food sector is compelling and justified by the transformative impact they bring to the industry. Over time, women have been challenging traditional roles confined to the domestic space, transcending kitchens to assert their presence in the vibrant domain of street markets and the broader food sector. The justification for women's involvement in the food sector is grounded in the recognition of the diverse and indispensable roles that they play in shaping sustainable, equitable, and resilient food systems. Several compelling reasons underscore the need for increased participation of women in the food sector.

i) Nutritional Importance: Women, as primary caregivers, significantly influence household nutrition. Their active involvement in the food sector ensures a focus on diverse, balanced, and nutritious food options, contributing to improved health outcomes for families and communities. Pondicherry is also familiar as French Capital of India and therefore the cuisine like quiche, spinach crepe, saram kamaraj salai, khowsuey, pundy mousakka, ratatouille, coq au vin, and bouillabaisse showcase classic French flavors in traditional meals and reflect the “must eat” factor in cuisines of Pondicherry.

ii) Economic Empowerment: Women entering the food sector, particularly street markets, find opportunities for economic empowerment. By engaging in various roles within the industry, from farming to food entrepreneurship, women gain financial independence, reducing gender-based economic disparities and contributing not only to household income but also to the overall economic development of communities. (refer)

iii) Preservation of Indigenous Knowledge: Women often serve as custodians of indigenous agricultural knowledge and traditional culinary practices. Their involvement ensures the preservation of these invaluable traditions, contributing to the resilience and sustainability of local food systems.

iv) Diversity and Innovation: Women bring diverse perspectives and innovative approaches to the food sector. Their involvement fosters creativity, adaptability, and the introduction of new ideas, enhancing the overall resilience and competitiveness of the food industry.

v) Gender Equity: The food sector has historically been marked by gender disparities, limiting women's access to resources, markets, and decision-making roles. Involving women addresses these inequities, promoting a more balanced distribution of opportunities and responsibilities.

vi) Food Justice and Security: Women's involvement is critical for achieving food justice and security. Their active participation in decision-making processes helps ensure that policies and practices address the needs of diverse communities, particularly vulnerable populations.

vii) Entrepreneurial Leadership: Women entrepreneurs bring unique leadership styles to the food sector, emphasizing collaboration, community engagement, and social responsibility. The assertion of individual agency of women through autonomous decision-making underscores a pivotal stance, demonstrating its indispensability.

viii) Skill Utilization and Recognition: As women transition from domestic kitchens to the public sphere, their culinary skills are recognized and valued. Street markets provide a platform for women to showcase their expertise, transforming what was once considered as an informal skill into a recognized and marketable asset.

ix) Diversification of Roles: Women in the food sector are diversifying their roles beyond traditional expectations. While the kitchen has historically been seen as a woman's domain, their involvement in street markets reflects a broader spectrum of responsibilities, from household responsibilities to the business management.

x) Community Building: Women in street markets often act as community builders. Their presence fosters a sense of connection and shared identity among vendors and customers, contributing to the social fabric of local markets.

xi) Promotion of Local and Sustainable Practices: Women in the food sector, especially in street markets, often emphasize local and sustainable practices. Their businesses frequently prioritize locally sourced ingredients, organic produces, contributing to environmental sustainability and supporting local farmers.

xii) Cultural Preservation: Through their roles in street markets, women play a vital role in preserving culinary traditions and cultural heritage. They share not only food but also stories, traditions, and cultural practices that enrich the cooking landscape of the community.

xiii) Empowerment of Others: Women entrepreneurs in street markets often become sources of inspiration. By breaking stereotypes and challenging gender norms, they

pave the way for more women to enter the food sector, fostering a more inclusive and diverse industry. Through participation in Self-Help Groups (SHGs), receiving training facilitated by governmental bodies or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), accessing financial assistance via loans, or engaging in mentorship of fellow women in the realm of food entrepreneurship, individuals fortify the community, uplift fellow women, and serve as inspirational figures for future generations.

xiv) Influence on Culinary Trends: Women in street markets contribute to shaping culinary trends. Their innovative approaches, diverse offerings, and creative expressions in food preparation influence the broader food culture, transcending the traditional boundaries.

The multifaceted contributions of women in the food sector extend beyond economic gains to encompass social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. Women's involvement in the food sector, particularly their transition from domestic spaces to street markets, is a testament to their resilience, entrepreneurship, and ability to challenge societal norms. Beyond economic contributions, their presence enriches the culinary landscape, promotes sustainability, and fosters a more inclusive and diverse industry. Recognizing and supporting women in these transformative roles is essential for building robust, equitable, and culturally vibrant food systems.

VI. Objectives of the study

1. To assess the social and economic background of women food entrepreneurs in Pondicherry, and understand perspective of community towards them,
2. To study the factors and challenges that assist women food entrepreneur in transitioning from domestic roles to becoming food entrepreneurs in the public domain,
3. To assess the experiences of women food entrepreneurs in urban and rural Pondicherry to understand location-specific challenges and opportunities,
4. To understand how factors like caste, class and education influence role of women food entrepreneur.

VII. Research Methodology:

The primary data collection is in phased manner inclusive of a preliminary pilot study conducted by the researcher in February 2023. Feedback and suggestions obtained from the field were integrated in accordance with the research objectives, leading to the final study conducted between March and November 2023. Approximately 48 case studies were

undertaken, with some instances of failure and lesser relevance being excluded from consideration. Consequently, a total of 44 case studies were selected for analysis. Each participant contributed between 30 to 80 minutes to the interview process, depending on the interview location and their convenience. All participants were identified as female food entrepreneurs aged between 26 to 80, with support from family members and other assistants in their business activities. Approximately 17 of the participants belonged to marginalized communities, particularly the Scheduled Caste, while other entrepreneurs predominantly hailed from the Most Backward Classes (MBC) community, with only a few exceptions of forward caste women. Data collection involved extensive interview techniques, employing both open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires conducted exclusively in the Tamil language. The prior consent was obtained from participants for audio recording of interviews to facilitate accurate citation of their statements. Inquiries encompassed various aspects including economic status, support systems, loan arrangements, perspectives on the food business, future plans, and related topics, aimed at comprehending their struggles and viewpoints concerning entrepreneurship in the food industry.

Research Design:

The study employs a qualitative research design to gain in-depth insights into the experiences and challenges faced by women food entrepreneurs in the Pondicherry bio region. Qualitative methods allow for a nuanced exploration of the narratives and complexities surrounding the transmission of culinary knowledge and the challenges of competing in the corporate market.

Sample Size:

The study includes a sample size of 44 women food entrepreneurs from the Pondicherry. The selection criteria encompass a diverse range of enterprises, including both rural and urban settings and diverse backgrounds, ensuring a comprehensive representation of the culinary landscape.

Sampling Technique:

Purposive sampling is employed to select participants based on their relevance to the research objectives. The sample includes women entrepreneurs engaged in various food enterprises, such as street food stalls, market vendors, and boutique culinary ventures, ensuring a rich diversity of experiences.

Data Collection:

- a. In-Depth Interviews: Semi-structured in-depth interviews are conducted with the participants to capture their personal narratives, challenges faced, support system and strategies employed in their entrepreneurial journey.
- b. Observation: Participant observation is utilized to gain a contextual understanding of the daily operations, cultural nuances, and interpersonal dynamics within the entrepreneurial environment.
- c. Document Analysis: Relevant documents, such as business plans, promotional materials, and recipes, are analysed to complement the interview data and provide a holistic view of the participants' enterprises.

Data Analysis:

The collected data undergoes thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns, themes, and narratives. This qualitative approach enables the exploration of the intricate connections between the transmission of culinary knowledge, challenges faced in the corporate market, and the reciprocal relationships with consumers.

Narrative Approach:

In qualitative research design, the narrative approach offers a powerful lens through which to explore the experiences, motivations, and challenges of women food entrepreneurs. This approach recognizes the importance of storytelling in conveying rich, nuanced accounts of individuals' lived experiences.

By employing the narrative approach, researchers have attempted to delve into the personal narratives of women food entrepreneurs, allowing them to share their journeys, aspirations, and struggles in their own words. Through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, researchers can capture the complexities of these entrepreneurs' lives and the socio-cultural contexts in which they operate. Moreover, the narrative approach facilitates a deeper understanding of the intersecting identities and power dynamics that shape women's experiences in the food industry.

Additionally, the narrative approach fosters a sense of reflexivity, encouraging researchers to critically reflect on their own biases and assumptions throughout the research process. By acknowledging their positionality and engaging in dialogue with participants, researchers can

co-create narratives that are more authentic and representative of women food entrepreneurs' diverse perspectives. It also offers a valuable methodological framework for qualitative research on women food entrepreneurs, enabling researchers to uncover untold stories, challenge dominant narratives, and amplify the voices of marginalized individuals within the food industry.

Description of Rural and Urban Pondicherry Bio Region:

Pondicherry, nestled on the southeastern coast of India, presents a unique blend of rural and urban landscapes within its bio region. Despite the differences between rural and urban areas, both contribute to the rich tapestry of the Pondicherry Bio Region. Together, they form a dynamic ecosystem where tradition and modernity intersect, shaping the region's identity and fostering resilience in the face of change.

The rural areas of the Pondicherry Bio Region, agriculture remains a significant livelihood for many residents. Farmers cultivate a variety of crops, including rice, pulses, sugarcane, and vegetables, often using traditional farming methods passed down through generations. The rural landscape is dotted with lush green fields, small villages, and vibrant marketplaces where locals gather to buy and sell fresh produce. These rural communities are closely tied to the land, with agrarian practices shaping their way of life and cultural traditions. Despite facing challenges such as land fragmentation and water scarcity, many rural residents maintain a deep connection to their agricultural heritage and work tirelessly to sustain their livelihoods.

In contrast, the urban areas of the Pondicherry Bio Region are characterized by bustling streets, colonial architecture, diverse culinary establishments, and a dynamic consumer base with a vibrant cultural scene. The city of Pondicherry, with its French influence and cosmopolitan atmosphere, serves as the economic and administrative hub of the region. Here, residents engage in a wide range of professions, including tourism, commerce, education, and healthcare. Urban life in Pondicherry offers access to modern amenities and opportunities for social and economic advancement. However, it also brings its own set of challenges, including traffic congestion, pollution, and disparities in wealth and opportunity.

Women entrepreneurs in urban settings often engage in a variety of food enterprises, from niche cafes to street food stalls, navigating the competitive urban landscape. The culturally diverse and liberalized milieu is anticipated to exhibit greater receptivity and willingness to explore local and international cuisines, with diminished predispositions towards barriers such as caste, class, and gender. This propensity for culinary experimentation may be empirically examined.

VIII. Review of literature

Challenges in Marketing Against Corporates:

Women entrepreneurs in South India encounter formidable challenges when competing with corporate entities. Sengupta and Malhotra (2020) delve into the complexities of marketing strategies employed by women in the food sector, highlighting the hurdles faced in the corporate-dominated landscape. Utilizing feminist approaches, the study delves into the gendered dynamics of corporate competition and the strategies employed by women entrepreneurs to establish their ventures in the market.

Rural and Urban Contexts in Pondicherry:

Varied challenges emerge for women food entrepreneurs in rural and urban settings within Pondicherry. Devi and Sharma (2020) explore the dynamics of entrepreneurship in rural Pondicherry, while Mehta and Singh (2017) focus on the challenges and strategies of women in urban areas, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the regional entrepreneurial landscape.

Intersectionality in Marketing Ancestral Millets Foods:

The marketing of ancestral millets foods in South India involves a nuanced understanding of intersectionality. Rajan and Menon (2017) emphasize the interplay of gender, caste, and class in women's entrepreneurial endeavors, adding depth to the discourse on ancestral foods in the region. Balasubramanian and Sharma (2019) extend this exploration by shedding light on the marketing strategies adopted by women entrepreneurs, emphasizing cultural and traditional aspects.

South Indian Women Food Entrepreneurs:

Gupta and Yadav (2019) provide insights into the challenges faced by women food entrepreneurs in South India, offering a gendered analysis of their ventures. Chauhan and Verma (2021) contribute to the discussion by examining the resilience of women in South Indian culinary start-ups, providing a dynamic portrayal of the entrepreneurial landscape.

Rural and Urban Challenges in Pondicherry:

Exploring the challenges faced by women food entrepreneurs in Pondicherry's diverse contexts, Yadav and Malik (2019) investigate the roles of women in preserving culinary traditions in

rural areas, while Mehta and Singh (2017) delve into the unique challenges experienced by urban entrepreneurs, offering a comprehensive view of Pondicherry's food entrepreneurship.

Marketing Ancestral Foods Against Corporates:

The marketing of ancestral and traditional millets foods by women entrepreneurs poses a distinctive challenge against corporate giants. Singh and Malhotra (2017) examine the marketing strategies employed by women entrepreneurs in India, emphasizing the juxtaposition of tradition and modernity in their ventures.

Urban Challenges for Women Food Entrepreneurs in Pondicherry:

Choudhary and Saini (2018) contribute to the exploration of Pondicherry's culinary landscape by providing insights into the marketing strategies of urban women entrepreneurs. The research sheds light on how these entrepreneurs navigate challenges and compete with corporate entities in the urban setting.

Empowering Women Through Culinary Ventures:

Mishra and Singh (2015) discuss the broader implications of women's entrepreneurship in the food sector in India, emphasizing the empowering potential of culinary ventures for women. This research provides a foundational understanding of the transformative role of food entrepreneurship in gender dynamics.

Quality Healthy Foods and Corporate Challenges:

Mehta and Singh's (2020) examination of healthy foods as a form of resistance underscores the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the Indian food sector. The study emphasizes the intersectionality of health-conscious marketing against corporate norms.

Traditional and Modern Ventures in Pondicherry:

Rani and Thomas (2019) contribute to the discourse on Pondicherry's culinary entrepreneurship by comparing traditional and modern food ventures led by women entrepreneurs. This research adds a nuanced perspective to the dynamic interplay between tradition and innovation in the region.

Part - II. State of Art

A. Food Justice and Democracy

Unfolding the contours of classical food habits as against the vivid variation in modern food habits is the biggest challenge for the food entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship is recognised as being critical to economic development and sustainability worldwide. Given the global challenges of employment, it is imperative to enable women, who comprise half the global population to participate constructively in the economic activities of their country or regions. Entrepreneurship development is a key element in strategies that allows economies to benefit from the talents, energy and ideas—the productive potential—that women bring to the labour market (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor [GEM], 2015). Central to inclusive and sustainable industrial development is the urgent need to harness the economic potential of women. It is estimated that by 2020, 870 million women who have been living or contributing at a subsistence level will enter the economic mainstream for the first time as producers, consumers, employees and entrepreneurs (UNIDO Gender, 2014).

The food sector in any region is a critical aspect of economic development, and women entrepreneurship plays a crucial role in shaping the landscape. In the Pondicherry bioregion, women entrepreneurs have likely made strides in the food industry, contributing to the local economy and fostering community development (Jones & Smith, 2020). However, certain problematic aspects may persist, particularly concerning food justice and democracy.

Women entrepreneurs in the food sector face multiple challenges primarily, related to access to resources such as finance, land, and technology. Limited access can hinder their ability to establish and sustain successful ventures, impacting both economic empowerment and overall food justice. Secondly, unequal market dynamics also affect, with women entrepreneurs encountering barriers to entry or facing discrimination. This can limit their ability to compete on an equal footing, affecting the democratic nature of the market and potentially leading to gender and economic disparities. Thirdly, socio-cultural norms and stereotypes may dictate traditional roles for women, constraining their ability to enter and excel in the entrepreneurial sphere within the food sector. Traditional gender roles could present obstacles for women seeking to enter the food sector, impacting their ability to exercise entrepreneurial agency and participate democratically in economic activities. Fourthly, in agricultural settings, issues related to land rights and ownership may disproportionately affect women entrepreneurs.

Limited access to and control over land can impede their capacity to engage in sustainable and just agricultural practices, affecting both food security and democratic participation in the local food system. Fifthly, Disparities in access to education and training programs may hinder women entrepreneurs from acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge to innovate and compete effectively in the food sector. Sixth, Unequal participation in the food supply chain may result in women entrepreneurs facing difficulties and marked by inequities, in reaching and accessing fair markets and fair prices for their products. This can contribute to a lack of food justice within the system. Lastly, the role of policy and advocacy is crucial in addressing these challenges. Efforts to promote gender-inclusive policies, support systems for women entrepreneurs, and initiatives that foster food democracy can contribute to a more just and equitable food sector in the Pondicherry bioregion.

Understanding and addressing these problematic aspects (problematic aspects not right word, see some synonyms) requires a holistic approach that involves policy interventions, community initiatives and efforts to promote gender equality and reduce gender and caste discrimination. These efforts are essential for promoting a thriving and inclusive environment for women entrepreneurship in the food sector. This research is made an attempt to focus on these challenges which can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the state of art and facilitate positive changes and equitable environment in the food industry. Thus, self-employment or entrepreneurship is seen as a route out of poverty and discrimination, as a desirable alternative to wage employment (Deshpande & Sharma, 2013). It also reflects the possibility of a necessity-based early-stage entrepreneurial activity that is driven by limited choices for work. Although necessity entrepreneurship is important in enabling women to create income generating businesses, opportunity-driven entrepreneurs are important for an economy for their greater potential impact on dimensions such as job creation aspirations (GEM, 2015). Though women entrepreneurship in traditional sectors remains an important option for women, it becomes important to address questions on their access to finance, independence, justice and other supports from the state for ensuring economic empowerment and mobility. However, some other studies have suggested that government should support women through micro-finance, education and training in the development of their skills to give more employment opportunities (Sinha & Sinha, 2013).

While women entrepreneurship in manufacturing declined from 34.9 per cent during 5th Economic Census to 29.8 per cent during the 6th Economic Census, in hotel and restaurant sector there was a marginal increase from 2.2 per cent during the 5th Economic Census to 2.8

per cent during the 6th Economic Census (2005 & 2013). The state-wise participation of women in entrepreneurial activities among OBCs showed that Tamil Nadu (21.28 per cent) and in Puducherry among OBCs (0.21 percent), followed by SC (0.13 percent), general category (0.06 percent) and ST (0.02 percent). Historically, there has been a trade-off inherent in the gender caste overlapping that while dalit and adivasi women have been subject to greater material deprivation and oppression, SC and ST individuals on an average are poorer with lower education, fewer assets and poorer networks (Deshpande & Sharma, 2013).

The other aspects that demand attention is the size of the enterprise, and access to credit that would enable one to understand whether entrepreneurship among social groups is necessity or survival-driven or preference-driven. Such questions need a thorough probing and investigation for informing governmental policy to promote entrepreneurship and mobility among women belonging to the deprived sections of society.

Theoretical approaches – Feminist, Sociological and Post-modern perspectives on food justice and democracy.

The feminist theory of entrepreneurship - Entrepreneurial feminism, developed from social feminism, is a theory that explains how feminist values are enacted through the venture creation process to improve the position of women in society. **Entrepreneurial feminism**, developed from social feminism, is a theory that explains how feminist values are enacted through the venture creation process to improve the position of women in society. Coined by Barbara Orser and Catherine Elliott, entrepreneurship is viewed as a mechanism to create economic self-sufficiency and equity-based outcomes for girls and women. Entrepreneurial feminists enter commercial markets to create wealth and social change, based on the ethics of cooperation, equality, and mutual respect.

Feminist Perspective on Entrepreneurship: The feminist perspective on entrepreneurship centres on understanding how gender dynamics influence entrepreneurial activities. This perspective critiques traditional entrepreneurship theories for often neglecting the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs. It explores issues such as access to resources, gendered expectations, and the impact of societal norms on women's entrepreneurial experiences. Feminist theories in entrepreneurship emphasize the importance of recognizing gender-roles, and addressing gender-based inequalities to promote a more inclusive and equitable entrepreneurial landscape.

Sociological Perspective on Entrepreneurship: The sociological perspective on entrepreneurship examines entrepreneurship through the lens of societal structures, institutions, and social networks. It considers how broader social factors, such as culture, education, and social capital, shape entrepreneurial behaviours and outcomes. Sociological theories highlight the role of social context in influencing entrepreneurial opportunities, decisions, and success. This perspective often explores how social relationships and institutional frameworks impact the emergence and development of entrepreneurial ventures. Reference

Postmodern Perspectives on Entrepreneurship: The postmodern perspective challenges traditional, linear views of entrepreneurship and embraces a more fluid and dynamic understanding about it. It questions the idea of a universal entrepreneurial narrative and instead emphasizes diversity, multiple realities, and the subjective nature of entrepreneurial experiences. Postmodern theories in entrepreneurship recognize that entrepreneurial activities are context-dependent and shaped by various discourses, power structures, and individual interpretations. This perspective encourages a more inclusive and open-ended exploration of entrepreneurial phenomena, acknowledging the complexity and diversity within the entrepreneurial landscape (Seymour, 2016).

Feminist theoretical perspectives play a crucial role in understanding the experiences of women food entrepreneurs in the context of achieving food justice and democracy. Feminist theoretical perspectives offer a lens through which to analyse and address the gendered dimensions of food justice and democracy. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by women food entrepreneurs is essential for developing inclusive strategies that promote a more equitable and sustainable food system. (Marlow, S., & McAdam, M. (2013). Females in food entrepreneurship are making significant strides in the culinary world, bringing innovation, diversity, and sustainability to the table. One notable aspect of female-led food entrepreneurship is the emphasis on holistic and ethical practices. Many women-owned food businesses prioritize locally sourced, organic ingredients, and adopt eco-friendly production methods, contributing to sustainable food systems and environmental conservation. Moreover, female food entrepreneurs often infuse their cultural heritage, personal stories, and unique culinary perspectives into their ventures, creating authentic and memorable food experiences for their customers. Their ventures serve as platforms for cultural exchange, celebrating diversity and fostering community connections.

Despite facing challenges such as access to funding, intersectionality, power dynamics, gender bias, and balancing work-life commitments, women in food entrepreneurship demonstrate resilience, creativity, and passion in pursuing their culinary dreams. Supportive networks, mentorship programs, and initiatives such as food sovereignty, representation, community building and solidarity, promoting gender equality in the food industry are instrumental in empowering women entrepreneurs and nurturing their growth.

- (i) **Intersectionality:** Feminist perspectives emphasize the importance of intersectionality, recognizing that women food entrepreneurs may face multiple layers of discrimination and privilege based on factors such as race, class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Understanding how these intersecting identities influence access to resources, opportunities, and power is essential for addressing the complexities of achieving food justice.
- (ii) **Power Dynamics:** This perspective highlights power imbalances within the food system, revealing how women entrepreneurs may be marginalized in decision-making processes, market access, and resource distribution. Analyzing power dynamics helps uncover the structural barriers that hinder women's participation and success in the food industry.
- (iii) **Food Sovereignty:** Feminist theories align with the concept of food sovereignty, which advocates for communities' right to control their own food systems. Women entrepreneurs play a significant role in reclaiming local and traditional food practices, challenging corporate control, promoting sustainable agriculture and organic food habits.
- (iv) **Representation and Voice:** Feminist perspectives underscore the importance of representation and voice. Examining who holds decision-making positions in the food industry and ensuring diverse voices, especially those of women, are heard is essential for democratizing the food system and reinforcing gendered justice.
- (v) **Community building and Solidarity:** Feminist approaches emphasize the significance of building supportive communities and fostering solidarity among women food entrepreneurs. Collaborative efforts in various social organizations can amplify the impact of individual actions and contribute to a more just and democratic food system.

The foundational theoretical paradigms within the discipline of sociology offer significant elucidations regarding the endeavours of female food entrepreneurs in their quest for food

justice and democracy. These theoretical frameworks furnish a holistic structure for comprehending the societal intricacies and systemic pressures that mould the experiences of female food entrepreneurs. A critical examination of these perspectives is imperative for formulating approaches that foster parity, fairness, and democratic principles within the realm of food systems.

- (i) **Structural Functionalism:** Women food entrepreneur has to operate not only in the socio-economic structure but also has to operate within the congenial cultural boundaries. Hence the role of women food entrepreneurs is magnified through the way she involves and co-creates an acceptance in her structural set up by functioning in an adaptive manner. For example, a women food entrepreneur targeting in-house cooking has to limit her geographical area and also has to map the timings of the service receiver vis-à-vis food items that she is capable to prepare in given time. This analysis hence is individually parametered by each of the entrepreneur. This approach therefore assist in examining how women entrepreneurs contribute to economic development, community cohesion, and the overall functioning of the food system.
- (ii) **Conflict Theory:** Conflict theory highlights the power struggles and inequalities within society. In the context of women food entrepreneurs, this perspective may focus on the disparities in access to resources, market opportunities, and decision-making power. Illustratively putting, a woman food entrepreneur who is strictly vegetarian at her own home would not prefer cooking non-vegetarian food even for a higher prospect or a better platform or even when she knows while other such similarly situated woman is open for such prospect, comparing the income holding capacity of each of these woman one would find latter earning more than the former. Hence this theory assists in identifying the real time issues that the woman food entrepreneur faces especially when the industry itself does not come out with a clear statistical data on market competition.
- (iii) **Symbolic interactionism:** Symbolic interactionism emphasizes the micro-level interactions and meanings that individuals attribute to their roles. This perspective may explore how women food entrepreneurs navigate societal expectations, gender roles, and cultural norms in their daily interactions within the food industry. The symbolic meaning of women's involvement in food entrepreneurship can influence how they are perceived and how they perceive themselves. For those who examines

capability of each individual on basis of their educational qualification would prefer to observe such food entrepreneurship as a vulnerable discourse for even those who are least qualified or illiterate.

- (iv) **Social Construction of Reality:** Building on symbolic interactionism, the social construction of reality perspective examines how societal norms and expectations shape individuals' perceptions and experiences. For women food entrepreneurs, this includes understanding how gender norms influence their access to resources, market opportunities, and societal recognition.
- (v) **Feminist Sociology:** Feminist sociology, while overlapping with feminist theoretical perspectives, brings specific sociological insights to the study of women's experiences. This perspective critically examines patriarchal structures and institutions that may constrain women's participation and success in the food industry. It also considers the ways in which women's entrepreneurship challenges and transforms existing social norms and power dynamics.
- (vi) **Institutional theory:** Institutional theory explores how formal and informal institutions shape behaviour and outcomes in society. For women food entrepreneurs, this perspective may investigate how institutional structures, such as government policies, industry norms, and cultural expectations, impact their ability to achieve food justice and democracy.
- (vii) **Social Capital:** Social capital theory focuses on the social networks and relationships that individuals can leverage for personal and professional advancement. Women food entrepreneurs may benefit from strong social capital through supportive networks, mentorship, and collaborative partnerships, which can enhance their ability to navigate challenges in the industry. In the context of entrepreneurship, social capital theory emphasizes the importance of social networks, relationships, and trust in facilitating entrepreneurial activities, accessing resources, and seizing opportunities. Entrepreneurs with strong social capital can leverage their networks to gain access to information, funding, mentorship, and collaboration, thereby enhancing their chances of success. (Nahapiet, J., & Ghoshal, S. 1998).
- (viii) **Post-modern theoretical perspectives,** with a focus on reciprocity, offer unique insights into the experiences of women food entrepreneurs as they strive to achieve food justice in a democratic manner. These theoretical perspectives, coupled with a focus on reciprocity, provide a lens through which to understand the dynamic and

multi-faceted experiences of women food entrepreneurs and consumer as their extended family. Recognizing the fluid nature of identities, embracing diverse narratives, and fostering reciprocal empowerment are essential for promoting food justice and democracy within a post-modern framework.

- (a) **Postmodernism and Deconstruction:** Post-modernism challenges grand narratives and encourages the deconstruction of established categories and meanings. In the context of women food entrepreneurs, this perspective may involve questioning traditional gender roles, challenging fixed notions of success, and deconstructing normative narratives within the food industry.
- (b) **Identity and Subjectivity:** Post-modern perspectives emphasize the fluid and constructed nature of identity. Women food entrepreneurs may navigate multiple and evolving identities, and their experiences are shaped by the intersectionality of gender, race, class, and other factors. Reciprocity in identity formation involves understanding how women entrepreneurs shape and are shaped by the cultural and social contexts in which they operate.
- (c) **Narrative and Storytelling:** Post-modernism values diverse narratives and storytelling as ways to understand individual experiences. Women food entrepreneurs may engage in narrative practices that challenge dominant discourses, sharing stories that disrupt conventional norms and shed light on the complexities of their journeys.
- (d) **Hyperreality and Consumer culture:** Post-modern perspectives highlight the influence of hyperreality and consumer culture. Women food entrepreneurs may engage with the constructed realities of branding, marketing, and consumer expectations. Understanding how these dynamics shape their enterprises and influence societal perceptions is crucial.
- (e) **Reciprocal empowerment:** Reciprocity, as a key concept, involves mutual give-and-take. In the context of women food entrepreneurs, reciprocal empowerment signifies a dynamic process where individuals support each other, share resources, and collectively work towards dismantling systemic barriers. Networks and communities of women entrepreneurs may embody reciprocal empowerment, fostering a sense of solidarity and collective agency by working towards to achieve common goals and gendered esteem.
- (f) **Fluidity and Change:** Post-modern perspectives emphasise the fluid and ever-changing nature of social phenomena. Women food entrepreneurs may embrace

adaptability, innovation, and the ability to challenge and redefine norms, fostering a dynamic and evolving approach to their roles in the food system.

Part-III Women Entrepreneurs in the Food Sector

Following a methodical examination of extant literature pertaining to food entrepreneurship and the empowerment of women within a framework of food justice and democracy, this study has directed its focus towards elucidating the rationale behind women primarily centred around domestic spheres transitioning into entrepreneurship by leveraging their traditional culinary expertise, which has historically been a requisite part of their upbringing. Moreover, the chapter endeavours to delineate the various sources of inspiration prompting women to venture into the food business, particularly amidst the backdrop of a global market and the era of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The analysis further encompasses an exploration of the multidimensional factors including environmental influences, socioeconomic backgrounds, financial equity and empowerment, acquired skills, and the cultural significance of food, all of which contribute to shaping women's decisions to engage in food entrepreneurship.

The role of women entrepreneurs in the food sector has been steadily growing, reflecting a dynamic shift in the business landscape. The world of entrepreneurship in the food sector is experiencing a significant transformation, with an increasing number of women making their mark in this dynamic industry. The rise of women entrepreneurs in the food sector is not just a testament to their culinary skills but also reflects a broader societal shift towards inclusivity and empowerment. This section explores the factors influencing women to become entrepreneurs in the food sector and the diverse sources of inspiration that propel them into this culinary realm.

A. Factors Influencing Women to Become Entrepreneurs in the Food Sector: From the Field

1. **Passion and Expertise:** Many women entrepreneurs in the food sector are driven by a genuine passion for food and culinary arts. Their expertise, whether gained through formal education or personal interest, serves as a foundation for building successful food businesses.

A fundamental driving force behind many women entrepreneurs in the food sector is a genuine passion to serve people through their culinary skills. Whether honed through formal education, training or cultivated through personal experiences, their expertise in

the art of cooking becomes the cornerstone for establishing successful food businesses. The love for creating delectable dishes motivates them to turn their passion into a profession and share the financial responsibilities of the house.

2. **Flexibility and Work-Life Balance:** The food industry offers women the opportunity to create flexible work schedules, allowing them to balance professional and personal responsibilities. This flexibility is particularly appealing for women seeking a harmonious work-life balance. Women perceive themselves as having the autonomy to decide whether to attend work during instances of illness without necessitating approval from the employer, so they preferred their independence and flexibility to work. Scholarly research (Jack, S. L., & Anderson, A. R., 2002; Peris-Ortiz, M., Rueda-Armengot, C., & Aibar-Guzmán, B., 2019) in gender studies highlights that woman are consistently expected to fulfil household duties, with societal norms dictating that women are primarily responsible for managing domestic affairs, including kitchen duties and overall household chores, even within ostensibly progressive liberal era. Women find themselves ensnared in these gender-based obligations, compelled to fulfil them regardless of personal inclination. Failure to meet both sets of responsibilities often result in societal criticism and reinforcement of traditional gender roles, thereby constraining women to domestic duties irrespective of their desires to engage in professional or domestic spheres.
3. The food industry offers a unique blend of creativity and flexibility, making it an appealing choice for women seeking a balance between professional and personal responsibilities. The ability to set flexible work schedules allows women entrepreneurs to navigate their careers while still prioritising family life, fostering a healthier work-life balance. A case study of mother-sister collaborative food business on *Muruku*, *Elladai* and *Somas* (Traditional snacks from tamil nadu) mentioned by the daughter Roopa that;

I can earn from home by preparing snacks at home. My mother will go and deliver the snacks to our regular customers. My father supports bringing raw materials from the market. I cannot depend on someone for a job and earnings. I can independently work on my comfort. If I feel sick, I will not cook the snacks and will rest, for which I do not need to request anyone or get their permission. The domination, odd working hours, unfriendly working environment and safety of women are major concerns when working under the boss. I will cook

at my home; the safest place with no restriction on working hours, no issues with salary and vulgar comments.

4. **Niche Opportunities:** The food sector provides a myriad of niche opportunities, allowing women entrepreneurs to specialize in specific areas such as organic, sustainable, or ethnic cuisines. This enables them to tap into emerging markets and cater to diverse consumer preferences.

The food sector provides a rich tapestry of niche opportunities, allowing women to specialise in specific culinary areas. Whether it's organic and sustainable cuisine, unique ethnic flavours, or specialised dietary options, these niche opportunities empower women to cater to evolving consumer preferences and tap into emerging markets.

5. **Empowerment and Independence:** Entrepreneurship in the food industry empowers women to take control of their careers and financial independence. The ability to shape and manage their own businesses fosters a sense of empowerment and autonomy.

Entrepreneurship in the food sector serves as a gateway for women to achieve empowerment and financial independence, agreed by majority of the respondents. By owning and managing their businesses, women entrepreneurs break traditional mods and assert their autonomy. This newfound sense of control over their professional destinies becomes a driving force in their journey as culinary innovators.

6. **Networking and Support Systems:** Growing networks and support systems within the entrepreneurial community contribute to the rise of women in the food sector. Mentorship programs, business incubators, and networking events provide valuable resources and guidance.

The growing network of support systems within the entrepreneurial community plays a crucial role in encouraging women to venture into the food sector. Mentorship programs, business incubators, and networking events provide valuable resources, guidance, and a sense of camaraderie, fostering an environment conducive to success.

B. Sources of Inspiration for Entering the Food Business:

1. **Culinary Influences:** Women entrepreneurs often draw inspiration from renowned chefs, culinary experts, or family traditions. Exposure to diverse cuisines and culinary experiences can ignite a passion for creating unique and innovative food offerings.

Ancestral culinary knowledge, culinary skills, and family traditions serve as wellsprings of inspiration for women entering the food business. Exposure to diverse cuisines and culinary experiences sparks a passion for creating unique and innovative dishes, driving them to translate their inspirations into entrepreneurial ventures

2. **Health and Wellness Trends:** The increasing focus on health and wellness inspires women to enter the food sector with a commitment to providing nutritious and wholesome options. This alignment with contemporary lifestyle trends can lead to successful ventures. The increasing focus on health and wellness inspires women to enter the food sector with a commitment to providing nutritious and wholesome options especially after covid. Aligning their ventures with contemporary lifestyle trends, they contribute to the growing demand for healthier food choices in the market.
3. **Social Impact:** Entrepreneurs inspired by a desire to make a positive impact on society often find the food sector conducive to initiatives such as promoting local and sustainable sourcing, reducing food waste, or addressing food insecurity.

Women entrepreneurs in the food sector are often motivated by a desire to make a positive impact on society. Initiatives such as promoting local and sustainable sourcing, reducing food waste, and addressing food insecurity become integral parts of their businesses, allowing them to contribute to broader social goals.

4. **Technology and Innovation:** The rapid advancements in technology and the rise of food-related platforms and apps inspire women entrepreneurs to explore innovative ways of delivering, marketing, and consuming food. This tech-driven landscape opens up new possibilities, creating an environment where creativity and entrepreneurship intersect.

Women entrepreneurs in the food sector are influenced by a combination of personal passion, industry trends, and the desire for empowerment. As the food industry continues to evolve, it presents an exciting landscape for women to showcase their creativity, skills, and entrepreneurial spirit. The factors influencing their entry into this dynamic industry are as diverse as the array of flavours they bring to the table. From passion and expertise to the pursuit of a balanced lifestyle and a desire for social impact, women entrepreneurs are redefining the narrative of the culinary world. As the food industry continues to evolve, the contributions of women entrepreneurs promise to shape a more inclusive and vibrant gastronomic landscape.

- C. **Knowledge and Training:** Formal training plays a crucial role in empowering women food entrepreneurs and significantly impacts their ability to achieve success in the

competitive business landscape. Here are some key points illustrating the impact of formal training on women in the food entrepreneurship sector.

1. **Skill Enhancement:** Formal training programs equip women with essential skills, including culinary expertise, business management, financial literacy, and marketing strategies. This enhances their overall competence and confidence in managing various aspects of their food businesses. Though formal training has received by few respondents, after completing the training these women are confident to start and expand their food business. Gnana Soundary said that

After formal training she got the confidence to display her millets cookies and value-added products in SARAs and in Annual Flower show Pondicherry. She received this training from KVK and started her own millets value added products unit.

Another Women Bhagyawati a female organic farmer received training of doing organic farming and pickles preparation and millets based foods. She is continuing with her organic farming and started an organic shop in her village. She is selling the traditional rice varieties, organic honey, millets.

2. **Networking Opportunities:** Training programs often provide a platform for networking with industry experts, fellow entrepreneurs, and potential collaborators. This fosters valuable connections that can open doors to partnerships, mentorship, and opportunities for growth.
3. **Access to Resources:** Training initiatives offer women entrepreneurs access to resources such as funding, market information, and support networks. This is particularly important for overcoming financial barriers and gaining insights into market trends, helping them make informed decisions.
4. **Entrepreneurial Mindset:** Formal training instils an entrepreneurial mindset, encouraging women to think creatively, take calculated risks, and adapt to changing market conditions. This mindset is crucial for navigating challenges and seizing opportunities in the competitive food industry.
5. **Building Confidence:** Education and training contribute to building confidence among women entrepreneurs, enabling them to communicate effectively, negotiate business deals, and make decisions with futuristic assurance. This increased confidence is a key factor in their ability to overcome gender-based biases and succeed in a so called male-dominated industry.

6. **Market Research and Innovation:** Formal training provides women entrepreneurs with the tools to conduct effective market research, identifying consumer preferences and emerging trends. This knowledge enables them to innovate their products or services, ensuring relevance and competitiveness in the market.
7. **Sustainability and social impact:** Many training programs emphasize the importance of sustainability and social responsibility. Women entrepreneurs, when equipped with such knowledge, are more likely to incorporate eco-friendly practices and contribute positively to their communities, enhancing their businesses' overall impact.

Formal training significantly empowers women food entrepreneurs by equipping them with the necessary skills, networks, resources, and mindset to navigate the complexities of the food industry. This, in turn, contributes to their success and the overall growth and diversity of the entrepreneurial landscape.

D. Women Food Entrepreneurs Background: The trajectory of women food entrepreneurs in Pondicherry is a fascinating narrative that intertwines personal journeys, economic empowerment, and culinary prowess. Many women in Pondicherry have embarked on a biographical journey marked by the pursuit of autonomy and financial independence.

Driven by economic needs and a desire to break traditional gender roles, these entrepreneurs have harnessed their culinary skills, turning them into a powerful tool for economic empowerment. Cooking, traditionally considered a domestic duty and a crucial part of women's identity, has become a means of economic sustenance for these enterprising women and their family.

The experiences of women food entrepreneurs in Pondicherry are diverse and reflect the dynamic nature of their roles. Starting from home kitchens and small-scale enterprises, these women have navigated challenges, including societal expectations and limited resources, to establish themselves as successful entrepreneurs. The journey often involves a mix of traditional recipes handed down through generations and innovative approaches to meet contemporary market demands.

Through their endeavours, these women have not only created unique culinary identities but also contributed to the local economy. Their businesses, ranging from catering services to food startups and restaurants, have become integral parts of Pondicherry's vibrant food scene.

Beyond economic success, these women have played a significant role in challenging stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive and diverse entrepreneurial landscape. Their trajectories serve as inspiring examples for future generations, showcasing the potential for women to thrive in traditionally male-dominated sectors.

The biographical journey of women food entrepreneurs in Pondicherry is a testament to the transformative power of culinary skills, economic determination, and the breaking of gender norms. As these women continue to carve their paths, they contribute not only to their own empowerment but also to the rich tapestry of Pondicherry's culinary heritage.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its associated economic crises have significantly impacted women in Pondicherry, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities that have emerged, particularly in the context of marginalized backgrounds. The pandemic has served as a catalyst for some women to embark on entrepreneurial journeys, especially in the food sector.

The economic fallout from COVID-19 has led to job losses, reduced incomes, and increased financial instability, disproportionately affecting women. Many found themselves at the forefront of managing household responsibilities and dealing with the brunt of economic hardships. In response to these challenges, some women in Pondicherry turned to entrepreneurship, with the food industry becoming a particularly attractive avenue. Subbalakshmi, Veerammal, Kalaimani, Rajyalakshmi and Varalakshmi had started their food business during covid times with various reasons such as financial crisis, their partners job loss etc.

The influence of COVID-19 on women's decision to start food enterprises can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the pandemic prompted a surge in demand for home-cooked meals and local food products as people became more conscious of health, hygiene and safety. Women, often the primary caregivers and homemakers, capitalized on this trend by leveraging their culinary skills to start home-based food ventures or small-scale enterprises. Secondly, the economic uncertainties triggered by the pandemic encouraged women to seek alternative sources of income and financial stability with independence. Entrepreneurship, especially in the food sector, provided an avenue for many poverty-ridden women to generate income while adapting to the changing market dynamics.

Exploring the impact on marginalized backgrounds adds a layer of complexity to this narrative. Women from marginalized communities, facing historical socio-economic disparities, have encountered unique challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. Limited

access to resources, education, and traditional employment opportunities has often pushed them towards entrepreneurship as a means of survival and empowerment. Despite the adversity, women from marginalized backgrounds in Pondicherry have demonstrated resilience and resourcefulness. Leveraging their cultural and culinary heritage, some have started food enterprises that celebrate local flavours and traditions. Community support and initiatives aimed at empowering marginalized women have played a crucial role in facilitating their entry into food entrepreneurship.

The impact of COVID-19 and economic crises on women in Pondicherry has been profound, prompting some (during covid times these 8 respondents started their food business, consists of 18 percent in the study) to navigate these challenges by venturing into the food industry. The intersectionality of gender and marginalized backgrounds has shaped unique entrepreneurial narratives, showcasing the ability of women to adapt and innovate in the face of adversity. As Pondicherry continues its path to recovery, acknowledging and addressing the specific needs of women, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and resilient community.

Part - IV. Food Preparation and Knowledge Transmission

a. Recipe Preparation

The food industry has undergone significant transformations in recent years, with an increasing emphasis on diversity, innovation, and health consciousness. Women entrepreneurs are playing pivotal roles in preserving and transmitting traditional recipes through their culinary skills, as evidenced in this study. This chapter made an attempt to explore the vital connection between women food entrepreneurs, the transmission of ancestral cooking skills, and the diversity in food recipes, with a specific focus on the incorporation of healthy alternatives like millets and value-added products. How the women entrepreneurs utilise their culinary skills to transmit their traditional unique food culture within a modern periphery and how does it attract the customers by diversified dishes and multicultural cuisine as a way of women empowerment is also tried to look into. The support system, financial inclusion, importance and benefits of millet-based foods are also been part of the analysis.

b. Preserving ancestral Cooking skills

Women have long been the custodians of culinary traditions, passing down ancestral cooking skills through generations. In many cultures, traditional recipes are an essential part of rich cultural identity, reflecting history, values, and local resources. Women entrepreneurs, being promoters of these healthy traditional recipes, are actively engaged in preserving and revitalizing them. The transmission of culinary knowledge over generations becomes a bridge between the past and the present generation women, ensuring that unique flavours and techniques are not lost with time. Generation by generation the women get the skills from their grandmother, mother, mother-in-law and other relatives and still follow the methods, measurements and skills as the culinary knowledge, mentioned by the respondents.

c. Diversity in Food Recipes:

The world is a mosaic of diverse cultures, each with its own unique tradition, sculpture and rich culinary heritage. Women entrepreneurs in the food industry contribute to this diversity by showcasing and popularizing traditional home-based recipes. Whether it's the aromatic spices

of Indian cuisine, the savoury flavours of Middle Eastern dishes, or the comfort foods of European traditions, women play a key role in introducing and celebrating this diversity on a global scale. This not only satisfies the taste buds but also fosters cultural appreciation and understanding.

d. Incorporating healthy alternatives

The rise of health-conscious consumers has led women food entrepreneurs to innovate by incorporating healthier alternatives into traditional recipes. Millets, for example, have gained popularity as a nutritious and sustainable option. Women entrepreneurs are at the forefront of introducing millets into traditional cuisines, creating a bridge between the old and the new. By doing so, they not only contribute to the well-being of their consumers but also promote sustainable agricultural practices. A millet food entrepreneur in her response mentioned that she cooks and sells various millet-based products/ snacks like *Murunga keerai*, *Adai*, *Puttu*, *Ragi Kuzhu* etc. which are healthy according to her. It improves immunity and also fertiliser and pesticide-free organic produces are good for health. To control Diabetes and high Blood Pressure the patients are prescribed. The respondent has also mentioned that it helps in weight management and a healthy nervous system. Those women have started experimenting with the benefits of millet-based foods and got good results by consuming the items regularly with their family members, they have promoted these for the good health of their customers because they have mentioned their customers they treated like extended family members. All should be healthy and disease-free, and their initiative of this food business is just a small step towards this movement with lesser financial support to the entrepreneurs and their families.

e. Values added products

Women entrepreneurs are not only preserving traditional recipes but are also adding value to them by creating innovative and convenient products. From artisanal jams to specialty spice blends, these value-added products bring a modern twist to traditional dishes. This not only attracts a broader consumer base but also ensures the economic empowerment of women in the food industry. The values not only put much for authentic traditional dishes, but one of the major funding says, especially post-COVID food consciousness has risen using more of the millets by the health conscious persons. Especially some youth instead of having junk and fast foods now visit the entrepreneurs to have a millet meal, which is of course a value-added business to a healthy life, the entrepreneurs are by their efforts making it a great value.

f. Transmission of culinary skills and knowledge

The transmission of culinary skills and knowledge is often an intimate and informal process, with women playing a central role. Through community interactions, workshops, and mentorship programs, women entrepreneurs pass on their expertise to the next generation. Vasanta and Sakthi are preparing the traditional candy popularly known as kamarkattu. Vasanta being a mother-in-law she taught to her daughter-in-law about the preparation and selling their traditional candies to nearby sweet shops, hotels and supplying to other towns. Sakthi got an opportunity to teach the traditional candy to the workshop students from agriculture university and few SHG women batches. Pennarasi and Varalakshmi prepararing the masala powders and taking culinary classes at KVK to teach the new women entrepreneurs who are about to start their food business. Santhana Mary, is providing training of masala powders, Dosa batter and pickles preparation. This transfer of knowledge is not just about recipes but also encompasses the art of balancing flavors in terms of accurate measurement of ingredients and preparation time, understanding local ingredients, and embracing cultural nuances.

g. Karl Polanyi's Reciprocity: One of Polanyi's most important contributions to socioeconomic analysis is the explanation of three integrated network models of socioeconomic reciprocity. The work of Karl Polanyi to develop the idea of three modes of exchange, which could be identified throughout more specific cultures than just Capitalist and non-capitalist. These are reciprocity, redistribution and market exchange. Majority of the respondents had replied that they are running this food business not for only profit making but they are happy and satisfied with moderate profits. The female food entrepreneurs including dalit women entrepreneurs are not seeking for the profits but emphasized on the custom satisfaction. Examining the perspective of women entrepreneurs in the food sector, a unique dimension emerges. Women, often positioned as key contributors to family and community well-being, may view consumers as an extended family. In this view, economic transactions are not solely about profit and loss but also about nurturing relationships and contributing to the welfare of the community.

The notion of "clientele" becomes significant in understanding the dynamics of reciprocity in the food sector. Polanyi's idea of giving food as an extension of domestic relationships suggests that economic transactions can involve a deeper social context. The act of providing food is not merely a market exchange but a form of reciprocal interaction that reinforces social bonds. Introducing reciprocity into market exchanges challenges the conventional understanding of

economic relationships as purely transactional. Instead, it emphasizes the embeddedness of economic activities within social contexts. By recognizing the relational aspects of buyer-seller interactions, the food sector can foster a sense of community, trust, and shared responsibility. The theory of reciprocity offers a valuable lens through which to analyse and understand economic interactions, especially in the food sector. The perspectives of women entrepreneurs and the concept of clientele highlight the importance of social relationships in shaping economic transactions, challenging traditional market-centric views and promoting a more socialistic wholesome understanding of economic activities.

Analysis of Buyer-Seller Reciprocity in the Food Sector: In Polanyi's framework, economic transactions are not solely characterized by impersonal market forces but are deeply embedded in social relationships. The food sector serves as a poignant example of how reciprocity operates in buyer-seller dynamics. Traditionally, economic exchanges in this sector have not only been about the exchange of goods for money but have also involved a complex web of social ties and mutual obligations.

Within the food sector, the concept of buyer-seller reciprocity challenges the conventional economic view of transactions as solely profit-driven. Instead, it emphasizes the importance of social connections, trust, and shared values in shaping economic exchanges. Sellers may develop a sense of responsibility towards buyers, recognizing the broader impact of their transactions on the well-being of the community.

Women Entrepreneurs' Perspective on Consumers as an Extended Family: Women entrepreneurs, often playing a pivotal role in the food sector, bring a unique perspective to buyer-seller relationships. For many women, consumers are viewed not just as customers but as an extended family. This perspective adds a familial dimension to economic transactions, where the act of providing food becomes a nurturing and community-building endeavour. A respondent shared that when she does not come to her shop, the next day customers ask her about health or personal issues, they are concerned about her as a family member or well wishers. The entrepreneurs also try to serve well-cooked hygiene food as the same food is consumed by their family members and the customers if served unhygienic foods, they will never come again. They have good number of regular customers to whom they treat like family members and a few customers also responded satisfactorily about the genuine cost of the food, affectionate behaviour and hygiene of the entrepreneurs as positive factors.

The familial lens through which women entrepreneurs view their consumers transforms economic exchanges into more than mere transactions. It fosters a sense of care, responsibility, and a commitment to the community's well-being. The economic activities of women entrepreneurs in the food sector, therefore, become intertwined with social and familial values, reflecting the broader implications of reciprocity.

Links with the "Clientele": Giving Food and Extension of Domestic Relationships: The concept of "clientele" in Polanyi's framework refers to the idea that economic transactions involve a reciprocal interaction that extends beyond market exchange. In the context of the food sector, giving food is not merely a commercial transaction but an extension of domestic relationships. This can be seen as an act of reciprocity, where sellers contribute to the sustenance and well-being of the community.

The introduction of reciprocity into market exchanges challenges the traditional understanding of the commercial relationships. It emphasizes the importance of social bonds, trust, and community engagement in economic activities. By acknowledging the interplay between serving food or feeding and the extension of domestic relationships, the food sector can foster a more sustainable and socially responsible model of economic interaction, which has experienced from the field where the consumers care for the good health of the seller and the seller also concerned about the healthy life of the consumers by serving healthy foods like an affectionate family member.

Safety and Independence:

Safety and independence are crucial elements that shape the experiences of individuals in both public and private spheres. This study also tries to explore the gendered aspects of safety and independence, with a focus on women's perceptions in exposure to public spaces and their independence in managing food businesses.

Women's Perception of Safety in the Street versus Male-Dominated Spaces: The perception of safety is inherently subjective and can be influenced by various factors, including gender. Women often experience distinct feelings of safety or vulnerability based on the spaces they inhabit. Women's perceptions of safety may differ significantly from the street and market space to closed spaces and from those in male-dominated spaces. This discrepancy can be attributed to the prevalence of gender-based violence and harassment. In the context of public spaces such as street and market space, women feel safer rather than working in godowns and companies works under male supervision. In streets or market spaces, women food

entrepreneurs face lack of toilet facility, problems with drunkards, and longtime standing issues while serving foods. They are vulnerable with the experience of the misbehaviour of the drunkards who usually ask for free food and stare at them for long with abusive words. Some vagabonds also look at them as helpless single women, because of that they have come to the street not for food business to save their family, but to fulfil their nastiest desires. That in many cases hurdle to continue the food business by women alone in the street, especially in the night. When it comes to single women and widows without a male support as either father, son or husband, it is almost an opportunity for the men to take advantage of the situation. The struggle still going on from the women entrepreneurs' side to fight with the situation to break the barrier of male-dominated business as some of the respondents are fighting back to the social taboos on gender. According to them, many of the time male counterparts those who are doing the same business nearby the stall of these women sometimes sought at them and warn to shift the food stall or stop the business.

Independence in Managing Food Businesses: Independence is a multifaceted concept, extending beyond personal safety to encompass economic autonomy and decision-making capabilities. Women entrepreneurs in the food sector navigate a complex landscape that requires balancing cultural expectations, economic constraints, and their aspirations for independence. In the realm of managing food businesses, women entrepreneurs often navigate a complex landscape that requires a balance between autonomy and external influences. Independence in the context of food businesses involves the ability to make strategic decisions, manage operations, and participate actively in the market. Women entrepreneurs may encounter challenges related to gender biases, access to resources, and societal expectations. Empowering women in the food industry involves creating an environment that fosters their independence, enabling them to overcome barriers and contribute meaningfully to the food sector. The response of the women entrepreneurs depict that in the decision making about the menu and spending of the amount and investing in food business is completely the independent decision of the women entrepreneurs. They ask for suggestions and some of them discuss with their spouses where the decision is of course in the women hands. The affirmative support system through the Self-Help Group formation and loan subsidy is a great help to empower the women entrepreneurs and make them independent. The most important factor to independent women or any other marginalised communities is the financial stability, which they get from these supports of SHG, loans and food-business. Almost more than 35 respondents mentioned that they face issues in applying for the loans which may support them better financially. The

strict document verification, lot of paper works, delaying in sanction of the amount, visiting multiple times to enquire about the application status are the major hurdles to their financial inclusion and independence, for which they depend on the local tindal loans and pay a huge amount on interest. Almost all of them have mentioned that since they started the food business they not only became independent but also have a respectable position in the family decision making with the financial stability. They are independent to spend their income in they necessary household expenses, buying something for them or other expenses, which were restricted by their husbands with taunt to spend from their own income.

Part -V. Marketing Challenges and Intersectionality

A. Marketing Challenges

The current section of this comprehensive study delves into the marketing challenges and intersectionality faced by women food entrepreneurs in both rural and urban settings in Pondicherry. The journey of women entrepreneurs in the food industry is marked by distinct challenges influenced by geographic factors and intersecting social identities. Their identity and independence in a patriarchal society and challenges faced in marketing because of the male-domination in the business, society, selling traditional culture-based foods in a multicultural cuisine era where the young generation prefer the junk and fast-food, their marketing strategies how make them survive in the competitive market are the major issues of analysis in this section. Does their belonging of caste, class, gender, quality and hygiene of food, support system through training, SHG, governmental initiatives and other multidimensional challenges and sustenance are also tried to look in-depth.

Challenges faced by women food entrepreneurs in Rural and Urban Pondicherry: Women food entrepreneurs in both rural and urban Pondicherry encounter a spectrum of challenges in the realm of marketing the food products. In rural areas, women food entrepreneurs had limited access to resources such as capital, technology and market information. Infrastructure deficiencies, marketing lack of financial institutions in remote areas pose significant hurdles to establishing and expanding food businesses. The absence of modern marketing channels further complicates reaching a broader consumer base and lack of technology of online payments, pose significant hurdles. In urban settings, although access to resources and marketing the foods are comparatively better, but women food entrepreneurs face stiff competition such as urban market demands sophisticated marketing strategies and adaptation to rapidly changing consumer preferences. Additionally, the Tindal loan with high interest rates, verbal and sexual harassment by tindal loan collection agents are also some major issues. Majority of the urban women entrepreneurs are not able to attend their family and social functions due to the pressure of tindal loan return with interest. Many a times, they do sacrifice the social and traditional festival gatherings. The urban space consumers do not really care for

the caste background of the entrepreneur, while it was explained by the respondents that in a small village set-up almost the consumer and food entrepreneur are known of each other's caste background, which stand a barrier to sell the cooked foods of a Dalit entrepreneur to the so called upper caste consumers. That is a major reason many of the entrepreneurs shifted to the urban space to not be identified by their caste but hygiene food serving and good fame as a good food-business woman. In rural areas majority of them mentioned they can sell alone without a male support, where it is complete diverse in the urban Pondicherry due to the drunkard and other unsocial public. Even they get good profit in the urban space, where in the rural areas they are usually asked to serve good quality and quantity of foods. Lastly, gender stereotypes and male domination is high in the urban food industry.

Intersectionality in terms of Caste, Class, Gender and Culture: Intersectionality plays a crucial role in shaping marketing challenges, as women often experience multiple layers of discrimination and humiliation based on their background of caste, class, gender, and culture. Intersectionality plays a significant role in shaping the experiences of women food entrepreneurs. Caste dynamics can influence market access, consumer behaviour, and business collaborations. Almost all the Dalit women food entrepreneurs face caste barrier to grow as an entrepreneur and expand the business in rural Pondicherry. In urban Pondicherry, the caste has a minimal role in the entrepreneurial growth. The Class disparities in terms of educational attainment, access to resources, demography, impacting on market participation. Economic class intersects with gender, affecting women entrepreneurs differently based on their socio-economic backgrounds. Issues such as access to education, financial resources, and networking opportunities vary, impacting the scale and scope of marketing efforts. Gender roles and cultural norms influence consumer behavior, shaping preferences and expectations.

B. Providing Quality Food

Quality assurance is paramount in the food industry, where consumer trust and satisfaction hinge on the consistency and excellence of the products offered by the women food entrepreneurs. This quality food provision includes the business strategies employed by food businesses to ensure the holding of regular consumers and delivery of high-quality food to their clientele.

Ensuring quality in food service is a multifaceted challenge that demands strategic approaches. Implementing rigorous quality control measures throughout the supply chain, from sourcing quality ingredients to final preparation, is essential. Employing the good practices of clean and

hygiene led to quality food provision, license and certifications, and avoiding food preservatives, such as food colours, refrigerated foods, low quality grains and oils. Additionally, engaging with local farmers and suppliers to ensure the freshness and authenticity of ingredients and organic practices in agricultural harvesting fosters a commitment to quality food serving. Training and incentivizing staff to prioritize hygiene and food safety practices, customer feedback and continuous effort of improvement, further contribute to delivering high-quality meals to clientele. One of such examples shared by the respondents, they have followed the customers feedback and using banana leaves for serving the food and in parcel too which is organic and environment friendly. Their educated children have socialised them with the knowledge about food poisoning, benefits of using such eco-friendly platter and the fatal of using poly bags etc.

Awareness and adoption of millets during Covid-19: The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped perceptions around food and health, leading to increased awareness and adoption of nutritious alternatives such as millet foods and organic vegetables and fruits farming and consuming. Millets, being rich in nutrients and environmentally sustainable, gained prominence as people became more health-conscious (need reference to substantiate the point). Businesses in the food industry capitalized on this trend by incorporating millet-based dishes into their offerings. This shift not only aligns with health-conscious consumer preferences but also supports local agriculture, contributing to a more resilient and sustainable food ecosystem without more use of pesticides and fertilisers.

The pandemic created awareness about the importance of a strong immune system and overall well-being. This shift of health-conscious among consumer behaviour and Women food entrepreneurs catch hold an opportunity for food businesses to reframe their narratives around health and nutrition. Emphasizing the nutritional value of meals and their positive impact on immunity became central themes of marketing and communication strategies in the food industry. Post-pandemic, the heightened awareness of the connection between food and health is likely to persist, influencing consumer choices and demanding continued innovation in providing nutritious, high-quality food options.

Affordability without compromising with the quality is an integral aspect of food value, especially for economically vulnerable populations. Businesses that prioritize providing healthy food at an affordable price play a crucial role in enhancing the overall food chain. This involves optimizing production processes to minimize costs without compromising on

nutritional value. Additionally, initiatives aimed at educating consumers about the importance of healthy eating habits contribute to long-term well-being. Transmitting knowledge about nutrition and making healthy choices accessible to all segments of society not only fulfils the social responsibility but also strengthens the business position in the market.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges, transforming not only our daily lives but also reshaping our perspectives on health and nutrition. Amidst the turmoil, a noteworthy shift occurred in the awareness and adoption of millet foods, especially as championed by women entrepreneurs. This transformation represents a significant narrative in the context of food and health during and after the COVID-19 era (extra paragraph).

The pandemic served as a wake-up call, prompting individuals to reevaluate their dietary choices and prioritize health and well-being. Millets, traditionally considered as "forgotten grains," gained prominence as a result of their nutritional value, environmental sustainability, and affordability. Women entrepreneurs played a crucial role in promoting the awareness and adoption of millet-based foods during this period.

In the wake of the pandemic, there was a growing recognition of the importance of building strong immune systems. Millets, known for their rich nutrient profile, became a preferred choice due to their high fibre content of around 15 to 20 percent, essential minerals, and low glycaemic index. Women entrepreneurs seized this opportunity to introduce and promote millet-based products, ranging from snacks to staple foods, aligning with the newfound focus on health-conscious consumption, which was also a routine food for some of them during their childhood. They have learned how to cook those millets and cook those dishes occasionally, which healthy food culture was going vanished day-by-day the pandemic has reintegrated it into their daily food habit and mode of earning.

The narrative around food and health evolved, emphasizing the holistic well-being of individuals and communities. The connection between nutrition and immunity became a central theme, and millets emerged as a versatile and nutritious alternative to traditional staples. This shift not only reflected changing consumer preferences but also highlighted the adaptability and resilience of women entrepreneurs in responding to emerging market trends.

Furthermore, the commitment to providing healthy food at an affordable price to poor consumers became a cornerstone of the narrative. Women entrepreneurs, attuned to the economic challenges faced by vulnerable populations, devised innovative strategies to enhance their role in the food chain. By incorporating millets into cost-effective and nutritious offerings,

these entrepreneurs contributed to addressing food security issues and promoting a more sustainable and inclusive food ecosystem.

The transmission of knowledge was a key element in this transformative process. Women entrepreneurs played a dual role as both providers of healthy millet-based foods and educators on the benefits of their products. By sharing knowledge about millets' nutritional advantages, cultivation methods, and cooking techniques, they empowered consumers to make informed choices. This transmission of knowledge not only enhanced the credibility of women entrepreneurs but also fostered a sense of community and shared responsibility for health and nutrition.

The awareness and adoption of millet foods during the COVID-19 pandemic represent a pivotal narrative in the broader context of food and health. Women entrepreneurs, by promoting these nutritious alternatives, not only responded to shifting consumer preferences but also contributed to building a more resilient and sustainable food chain. The emphasis on providing affordable, healthy options to underserved communities and the transmission of knowledge emphasized the transformative role of women entrepreneurs in shaping the future of food consumption and well-being.

Female entrepreneurs endeavour diligently to offer nutritious food in moderate fare, incorporating millets into their menu. Despite their efforts, a considerable portion of consumers exhibit a reluctance to patronize roadside vendors due to health-conscious concerns. The perception of roadside fare as unsanitary persists, yet it occupies a nuanced position within the realms of culinary choice, hygiene and entrepreneurial endeavour. Several women have initiated their ventures amidst or subsequent to the pandemic, grappling with familial financial constraints. These individuals necessitate assistance and training in both hygiene practices and the culinary preparation of millets, a task renowned for its intricacy. Improperly cooked millets risk compromising the retention of essential vitamins and minerals, rendering skills and training on precise cooking techniques imperative. While KVK earnestly strive to impart knowledge to women, there remains a palpable need to adequately train more numbers of entrepreneurs to realize the full potential of the millet initiative. Indeed, millets boast nutritional superiority when meticulously prepared, contingent upon consumers' informed understanding of their benefits. Propagation of these benefits demands concerted governmental efforts and public support, a reality underscored by the testimony of pioneering female entrepreneurs. Market receptivity towards millets as a premium dietary option warrants bolstering, as

entrepreneurs encounter challenges in consolidating their millet-centric enterprises amidst competition from more convenient and palatable fast-food alternatives. Additionally, the perishability of millets exacerbates the logistical hurdles associated with their preservation and marketing. Consequently, disillusioned by modest profits and logistical constraints, certain entrepreneurs have diverted their attention towards other culinary pursuits. Urgent action is requisite to champion the millet mission and cultivate a culture of millet consumption and adherence to hygienic dietary practices, essential components of a wholesome lifestyle.

C. Supporting Systems

Supporting systems play a pivotal role in fostering the growth and success of women food entrepreneurs in Pondicherry. This section explores the synergistic efforts of institutions such as Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and government initiatives in providing crucial support to women entrepreneurs in the food industry.

Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) and Self-Help Groups (SHGs) play pivotal roles in supporting women entrepreneurs, particularly in the rural agricultural sectors. KVKs act as knowledge dissemination centers, providing technical guidance, training, and advisory services to women engaged in various entrepreneurial activities, including farming and agribusiness. These institutions empower women by enhancing their skills, introducing modern agricultural practices, and facilitating access to resources.

Self-Help Groups, on the other hand, serve as community-based support networks. They provide a platform for women entrepreneurs to pool resources, share experiences, and access collective financial assistance. Through skill-building initiatives and collaborative efforts, SHGs contribute to the economic empowerment of women, fostering a sense of self-reliance and community cohesion. The combined efforts of KVKs and SHGs creating a supportive ecosystem that enables women entrepreneurs to overcome challenges and thrive in their ventures.

Role of KVK and Self-Help Groups in supporting Women Entrepreneurs: Majority of 78 percent of women entrepreneurs from SHGs had undergone training from Krishi Vigyan Kendra and opined that these two serves as a linchpin in the support ecosystem for women food entrepreneurs in Pondicherry. KVKs act as knowledge dissemination centres, providing technical guidance, training, and advisory services. Women entrepreneurs benefit from KVK's expertise in modern agricultural practices, market trends, and value addition to agricultural

products. Through workshops, seminars, and hands-on training, KVK empowers women with the knowledge and skills essential for successful entrepreneurship.

Self-Help Groups are instrumental in creating a community-based support network for women entrepreneurs. SHGs provide a platform for women to pool resources, share experiences, and access collective financial assistance. By fostering collaboration and mutual support, SHGs enhance the economic resilience of women entrepreneurs. Beyond financial contributions, SHGs also serve as spaces for skill development, mentorship, and the exchange of knowledge, creating a conducive environment for sustainable entrepreneurial endeavours.

Collaborative Initiatives of KVK and SHGs: The synergy between KVK and SHGs is a noteworthy aspect of the supporting system. Collaborative initiatives, such as joint training programs and awareness campaigns, leverage the strengths of both institutions. KVK contributes technical expertise, while SHGs provide grassroots insights and a community-driven approach. This collaboration enhances the overall support structure for women entrepreneurs, ensuring a holistic and effective intervention.

Government Initiatives for Training and Financial Support: The Government initiatives effectively implemented by the Block Development Office in Pondicherry prioritize the training and skill development of women entrepreneurs. Specialized training programs aim to bridge knowledge gaps, providing insights into business management, marketing strategies, and financial literacy. By enhancing the entrepreneurial skill set, these programs empower women to navigate the complexities of the food industry with confidence.

Recognizing the financial constraints faced by women entrepreneurs in a developing economy, the government implements various schemes aimed at providing financial support. Schemes such as MUDRA (Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency) and Stand-Up India offer accessible loans and financial assistance tailored to the specific needs of women entrepreneurs. These initiatives facilitate the establishment and expansion of food businesses, ensuring that financial barriers do not hinder entrepreneurial aspirations. Some of the respondents being beneficiaries also shared the benefits positively.

Government policies that prioritize gender inclusivity and entrepreneurship further fortify the support systems through some proactive measures, such as earmarking a percentage of government contracts for women-led enterprises, contribute to creating an equitable business environment. Policy frameworks that address the unique challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in the food industry underscore the government's commitment to fostering

inclusive economic growth. The democratic and welfare support system of the government, in a developing economy are pro-poor, need the stakeholder's active participation and support through the SHGs, KVK and other initiatives.

D. Challenges and Persistence

Factors leading to discontinuation of food businesses: Food businesses, like any other entrepreneurial endeavour, face a myriad of challenges that can lead to discontinuation. Common factors contributing to business closures include financial constraints, market fluctuations, and inadequate business planning. Insufficient market research and a lack of adaptability to changing consumer preferences can also play a significant role. Majority women shared those societal perceptions of the food business as laborious and the potential isolation of managing it alone is tedious task. The entrenched societal expectation for women to assume primary caregiving roles within the household, encompassing familial care, domestic chores, child-rearing, and elderly support, presents formidable obstacles that impede their pursuit of personal and professional aspirations. Moreover, pervasive social norms and cultural taboos further constrain women's autonomy, dissuading them from seeking independent financial opportunities beyond the confines of their domestic sphere and inhibiting the realization of their aspirations. They do agree with the view that by encouraging collaboration and support networks can contribute to the persistence and success of women in the food business for a long period.

Women's perceptions of food business as laborious and managing it alone: Women entrepreneurs often face societal expectations and gender norms that perceive the food business as laborious and demands an excessive amount of physical effort and time. These stereotypes discourage women from entering the industry or create additional pressure to prove their capabilities, contributing to burnout and potential discontinuation. Women's perceptions of food businesses as laborious and the challenge of managing them alone are notable obstacles. Balancing the demands of running a business with traditional gender roles and responsibilities can be daunting. Moreover, the lack of a support system or assistance in managing the business may lead to isolation, frustration and decreased enthusiasm. Overcoming the perception of managing a business alone requires creating and leveraging support systems that provide not just assistance but also emotional encouragement for women entrepreneurs. In some cases the women assistants, business partners and in some cases the male members of the family support them physically and morally to survive in the food business.

Part- VI. Conclusion

Food justice is a multifaceted concept encompassing equitable access to nutritious food, fair treatment of food producers, and sustainable practices within the food system. In the Pondicherry bio-region, characterized by diverse cultures and ecosystems, women entrepreneurs are playing a pivotal role in promoting food justice through innovative approaches to food production, distribution, and advocacy. Food justice encompasses equitable access to nutritious food with affordable prices, and the preservation of cultural heritage within the food system. In the Pondicherry bio-region, women street food entrepreneurs play a crucial role in promoting food justice by bringing their kitchen to the streets, sharing their cultural heritage, and cooking skills, thereby enriching the local food landscape and empowering their communities.

Equitable Access to Nutritious Food: In many parts of the Pondicherry bio-region, access to nutritious food is hindered by economic disparities and uneven distribution networks. Women-led initiatives are addressing this issue by establishing community gardens, cooperatives, and food hubs that prioritize locally sourced, organic produce. By bypassing traditional supply chains and connecting directly with consumers, these entrepreneurs ensure that fresh and healthy food is accessible to all, regardless of their socio-economic status.

Sustainable Practices: Sustainability is a core principle of food justice, and women entrepreneurs in the Pondicherry bio-region are leading the way in implementing environmentally friendly practices. These women food entrepreneurs prioritize the long-term health of the land and ecosystems upon which food production depends. By embracing sustainable practices, they not only mitigate environmental degradation but also ensure the resilience of local food systems in the face of climate change and other challenges.

Community Engagement and Advocacy: Beyond their direct contributions to food production and distribution, women entrepreneurs in the Pondicherry bio-region are actively engaged in community outreach and advocacy efforts to raise awareness about food justice issues. Through workshops, educational programs, and grassroots organizing, they empower consumers to make informed choices about their food and advocate for policy changes that promote equity, sustainability, and social justice within the food system.

Preservation of Cultural Heritage: The Pondicherry bio-region boasts a rich tapestry of culinary traditions influenced by its diverse cultural heritage, including French, Tamil, and

Indo-European cuisines. Women street food entrepreneurs serve as custodians of this culinary legacy, preserving traditional recipes passed down through generations. By infusing their street food offerings with authentic flavours and techniques, these entrepreneurs contribute to the preservation and celebration of cultural identity, fostering a sense of pride, belonging within their communities.

Promotion of Nutritious and Affordable Food: In a region where access to nutritious food can be limited, women street food vendors play a crucial role in providing affordable and accessible meals to residents and visitors alike. Women street food entrepreneurs often prioritize fresh, locally sourced ingredients in their cooking, offering wholesome and nourishing options that cater to diverse dietary preferences of both veg and non-veg foods. By making nutritious food available at affordable prices, these entrepreneurs contribute to addressing food insecurity and promoting health and well-being of their consumers.

Empowerment and Economic Opportunities: For many women in the Pondicherry bio-region, street food vending represents a pathway to economic empowerment and self-sufficiency. By setting up their own food stalls or carts, women entrepreneurs gain financial independence and agency over their livelihoods, enabling them to support themselves and their families. Moreover, street food vending offers flexible working hours and low barriers to entry, making it accessible to women from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Through their entrepreneurial endeavours, these women not only generate income but also inspire others to pursue their passions and realise their full potential.

Community Building and Social Cohesion: Women Street food vendors serve as focal points for social interaction and community engagement, fostering a sense of camaraderie and belonging among residents, neighbours and consumers. They create inclusive and welcoming spaces where people from all walks of life can come together to enjoy delicious food and meaningful conversations. By breaking down social barriers and promoting cross-cultural exchange, these entrepreneurs strengthen social cohesion and solidarity within their communities, contributing to a more inclusive and harmonious society.

In conclusion, the notion of food justice in the Pondicherry bio-region is intrinsically linked to the efforts of women entrepreneurs who are reshaping the food industry through their commitment to equitable access, fair treatment, sustainability, and community engagement. By harnessing their creativity, resourcefulness, and resilience, these entrepreneurs are not only transforming local food systems but also inspiring a broader movement towards a more just

and sustainable food future. women street food entrepreneurs in the Pondicherry bio-region play a vital role in promoting food justice by preserving cultural heritage, providing nutritious and affordable food, empowering women economically, and fostering community building and social cohesion. Through their culinary skills, entrepreneurial spirit, and commitment to their communities, these women exemplify the transformative potential of street food vending as a catalyst for positive change in the local food industry and beyond.

B. Recommendations

Policy recommendations for supporting women food entrepreneurs in the Pondicherry Bio-region:

Access to Financial resources: Implement policies that ensure equitable access to financial resources for women food entrepreneurs. This could involve establishing dedicated loan schemes, grants, and subsidies specifically targeted towards women-owned food businesses. The policies should provide women food entrepreneurs with access to affordable credit, grants, and financial assistance programs to start and expand their businesses. This could involve creating special loan schemes tailored to the needs of women entrepreneurs and ensuring that banking services are accessible to women in rural and marginalised communities.

Training and Capacity building programs: Develop and implement capacity building programs aimed at enhancing the entrepreneurial skills and knowledge of women in the food sector. These programs should cover areas such as business management, marketing strategies, food safety standards, and sustainable farming practices. Collaborate with local institutions, NGOs, and industry experts to design training modules and online marketing that are relevant and accessible to women entrepreneurs. Develop training programs and workshops focused on business management, marketing, food safety, and culinary skills specifically tailored to women food entrepreneurs. Collaborate with local organisations and institutions to offer these programs free of cost or at very subsidised rates, ensuring that women from all backgrounds have the opportunity to enhance their entrepreneurial skills.

Gender Responsive Regulatory frameworks: Advocate for the implementation of gender-responsive policies that address the unique challenges faced by women in the food sector, including gender-based discrimination, unequal access to resources, and balancing caregiving responsibilities with business ownership. This includes streamlining licensing procedures, reducing bureaucratic hurdles, and ensuring that regulatory requirements are transparent and non-discriminatory. Government representatives should actively engage with women

entrepreneurs to identify regulatory barriers and implement reforms that promote a conducive business environment for women.

Future avenues for research in empowering women in the food sector.

Gender dynamics in food value chain: Investigate the role of gender in shaping power dynamics, decision-making processes, and resource allocation within food value chains. Examine how gender norms and stereotypes influence women's participation in different segments of the food sector and explore strategies for promoting gender equity and inclusivity. Conduct research on the gender dynamics within food value chains to understand how power relations, decision-making processes, and resource allocation affect women's participation and opportunities in the sector. Explore strategies for promoting gender equity and inclusivity across different stages of the food supply chain, from production to consumption.

Impact of technological innovations: Explore the potential of technological innovations, such as e-commerce platforms, mobile applications, and digital payment systems, in empowering women food entrepreneurs. Assess how access to digital tools and information technology can enhance market access, improve supply chain efficiency, and facilitate business growth for women-owned food enterprises. Explore how technological advancements can bridge the gender gap in the food sector and create new opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

Intersectionality and women's empowerment: Take an intersectional approach to understanding the experiences of women food entrepreneurs, considering factors such as age, ethnicity, caste, religion, and socio-economic status. Examine how multiple forms of discrimination intersect to shape women's opportunities and constraints in the food sector and identify strategies for addressing intersecting inequalities. Identify strategies for promoting inclusivity and addressing the unique needs of marginalized women in the Pondicherry bio-region.

Social and Cultural dimensions of Entrepreneurship: Focus on the social and cultural factors that influence women's entrepreneurship in the food sector, including family dynamics, community networks, and cultural norms surrounding women's roles and responsibilities. Explore how women navigate these socio-cultural contexts and leverage cultural assets and traditions to build successful food businesses.

Sustainability and resilience: Examine the contributions of women food entrepreneurs to sustainable food systems, food justice and democracy including practices such as organic

farming, agroecology, food sovereignty, and climate change adaptation and food waste reduction. Assess the resilience of women-owned food enterprises to environmental shocks, economic crises, and other challenges, and identify strategies for promoting sustainable livelihoods and food security among women in the food sector. Investigate how women's knowledge, practices, and innovations contribute to environmental sustainability, food security, and community resilience.

These policy recommendations and avenues for research, stakeholders can work towards creating an enabling environment for women food entrepreneurs in the Pondicherry bio-region, fostering their economic empowerment, resilience, leadership and contribution to sustainable development. Women food entrepreneur as discussed elaborately above, are witnessing huge gap between their expected work-income balance as compared to other sectors and above that the legitimate expectation from females is harped upon in name of work-life balance. Hence as it can be concluded that the women food entrepreneur are lacking cultural freedom and peace to work in their field of interest. Apart from overall marketing challenges, a patriarchal approach in this venture is promoted without recognising the primary food maker in the family. Justifying such social actions and curbing these limitations in the culinary discipline these women food entrepreneur prove themselves to be erudite and motivated in their field, completely empowered and fascinated by the way they work which discloses that respect for work is more important than its nature or importance. Making every limitation their stepping stone to the pinnacle of expertise, these women food entrepreneur are exemplary ideals for those women who think and restrict themselves from working and helping family only on the grounds of limited educational qualification. These women food entrepreneur thus empower other women to have faith and belief in themselves to curb all limitations as against their aspirations to be one amongst them.

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