

**CHRIST**(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)
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Notice for the PhD Viva-Voce Examination

Ms Ipsita Sarkar, Registration Number: 2090043, PhD Scholar at the Department of Economics, School of Social Sciences, CHRIST (Deemed to be University) will defend her PhD thesis at the public viva-voce examination on Friday, 05 December 2025 at 11.00 am in Room No. 044, Ground Floor, R & D Block, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru – 560029, Karnataka, India.

Title of the Thesis	:	Women's Involvement in Non-Farm Businesses: Aspirations, Drivers and Constraints
Discipline	:	Economics
External Examiner - I	:	Dr Dhanya M B Associate Professor V.V. Giri National Labour Institute (VVGNI) Sector 24, Noida Uttar Pradesh - 201301
External Examiner - II	:	Dr Anant Kamath Associate Professor National Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS) IISc Campus Bengaluru - 560012 Karnataka
Supervisor	:	Dr Divya Pradeep Associate Professor Department of Economics School of Social Sciences CHRIST (Deemed to be University) Bengaluru - 560029 Karnataka

The members of the Research Advisory Committee of the Scholar, the faculty members of the Department and the School, interested experts and research scholars of all the branches of research are cordially invited to attend this open viva-voce examination.

Place: Bengaluru
Date: 18 November 2025

Registrar (Academics)

ABSTRACT

The study attempts to examine women's involvement in non-farm businesses with respect to their business participation and business decision making. In recent years, an increase in women's non-farm self-employment has been observed. There has been a 10-percentage point increase in rural women's non-farm self-employment across the manufacturing sector (from 71.7 to 81.8 percent) and a 6% point in the service sector (from 23.1 to 29.1 percent) between 2017-18 and 2022-23 (Deshpande, 2023). Therefore, this study aims to trace various contextual factors, the role of various forms of capital, and gender norms which either facilitate or impede women to engage in non-farm businesses. The study also explores how women exercise their agency and negotiate through various constraints to establish their presence in these informal businesses. The outcomes of such negotiation in terms of improving their role in the business has also been explored. Since much of these enterprises are operating as informal household enterprises, with intersecting spaces of business and family sphere, traditional gender norms and gender normative roles continue to exist. Women in these businesses have to bargain and negotiate in order to overcome the patriarchal structures of constraints. However, these decisions are not made independently but rather interdependently with other members involved in the business whose influence may be positive or negative. Therefore, the study also explores the processes by which women negotiate in the business sphere by employing different forms of capital. We explore whether push factors operate in influencing women's involvement in business such as the economic condition of the household and the educational level of the women. A sequential research design comprising of quantitative and qualitative phase of data analysis has been undertaken. The quantitative phase uses the IHDS data to understand the determinants of women's non-farm business participation, the specific role they assume in the business and business decision making. Regression models have been used to predict the determinants of women's non-farm business participation and their business role. The qualitative phase encompasses in-depth interviews to unveil the agency processes undertaken by women. An interpretive approach of analysis has been undertaken and a thematic narrative analysis has been performed. The findings highlight that women's non-farm business participation is distress driven and even in such scenario, agency indicators have a significant role in determining women's non-farm business participation and business decision making agency. The narratives also suggest that women's ability to exercise agency with both the family members and external business stakeholders help them in overcoming the structures of constraints. Moreover, such agency exercise has implications on the business decisions and business strategies. The study, interestingly, finds that self-efficacy is an important cognitive component that enables women to bargain over the constraints in the business sphere and also accomplish the business goals. This corroborates with the finding from the quantitative analysis in which women's agency in household decision making is found to influence their participation. Their ability to decide in household matters is also associated with their decision making in the non-farm business. Women's agency manifestations have also been found to have an influence on intra-household family dynamics.

Keywords: *Women's self-employment, Women's labour market participation, Women's Decision Making, Women's Agency, Self-efficacy*

Publications:

1. **Sarkar, I., & Pradeep, D. (2025).** 'Opportunity-driven' Entrepreneurship among Women. *Economic and Political Weekly*.
2. **Sarkar, I., & Pradeep, D. (2025).** Marital Arrangements and Women's Autonomy: The Narratives of Tibetan Women in Exile. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 32(2), 178-198.