Introduction

Rapid economic growth and various community programs have not been sufficient to lift poverty, eliminate social discrimination, and support female employment in rural areas. Access to resources, employment, and education is limited, causing tremendous suffering to millions of people across the globe (Dees, 2007). One potential strategy for implementing social and economic progress is to encourage and support social entrepreneurs in local communities. Organizations and various volunteer groups take action to address social problems through the determination, creativity, and resourcefulness of local communities. Social entrepreneurship is seen as differing from other forms of business entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship programs could be a catalyst of social changes and address important social needs (Mair and Marti, 2004). The study aims to conceptually evaluate the literature on social entrepreneurship and provide insight into the role of self-help groups (SHGs) in women empowerment in India. Social entrepreneurship is widely spread across India in the form of SHGs. It is therefore important to evaluate the growth of SHGs in India and the role of social enterprise in supporting local communities.

According to Goyal and Prakash (2011), the role of women entrepreneurs in the economic development of the Indian economy is being
recognized and steps are being taken to promote women’s entrepreneurship. A revival of women’s entrepreneurship is the need of the hour, with an emphasis on educating women’s strata of the population, spreading awareness and consciousness among women to shine in the enterprise field, and making them realize their strengths and important position in society and the great contribution they can make in their industry as well as the entire economy. Women entrepreneurship must be molded properly with entrepreneurial traits and skills to meet the changes in the trends and challenges of global markets, and also be competent enough to sustain and strive for excellence in the entrepreneurial arena. SHGs have been encouraging and empowering women social entrepreneurs, aiming to lift poverty and enable women to take action to influence their educational and social status. Nazri (2012) argued that the SHG movement started more as the “social mobilization” of women to improve their place in the family and society rather than a microfinance movement. It is observed that financial inclusion through SGH efforts has a tremendous potential. Financial inclusion is the delivery of banking services at an affordable cost to the vast section of disadvantaged and low-income groups.

It is therefore important to debate key arguments around social entrepreneurship and examine whether social programs promote inclusion, social development, and economic development in India. Many social programs have been increasingly promoted for their positive social and economic impact, and the belief that they empower women. This study contributes to this discussion by developing a critical theoretical framework on women’s empowerment and challenging existing social norms on how to effectively improve social inclusion and employment prospects. Quasi-experimental household sample data was used to examine the impact of social entrepreneurship on women’s lives, with a particular emphasis on the Shri Mahila Griha Udyog Lijjat Papad (SMGULP) social program. The results strongly demonstrated that there is a significant increase in the empowerment of women in the SHG members’ group. The elegance of the result lies in the fact that the group of SHG participants shows clear evidence of a significant and higher empowerment, while allowing for the possibility that some members might have been more empowered than others.

Theoretical background

Background of entrepreneurship in India

Entrepreneurship and innovation are important for the growth of any economy, in an increasingly competitive world. The Industrial