

# ROLE OF GEM (GOVERNMENT E MARKETPLACE) GATEWAY IN EMPOWERING MSMEs IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

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## Abstract

*The core of the Indian economy is made up of MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises). An improvement in MSMEs' performance will help to boost the economy as a whole. The Government e Marketplace (GeM) is an online platform for public procurement in India. The Government of India's Ministry of Commerce and Industry launched the GeM initiative on August 9, 2016, with the goal of giving government buyers access to an open and transparent procurement platform. By introducing new Rule Number 149 to the General Financial Rules, 2017, the Ministry of Finance has authorized and mandated purchases made by government users through GeM. In this article, an attempt is made to provide an overview of the Government of India's initiatives to empower MSMEs through GeM, to evaluate how well MSMEs are using the GeM platform and to investigate the application of GeM's Public Procurement Policy for MSEs. GeM has brought about a significant revolution in government offices' public procurement practices over the past seven years. From the Buyer and Seller's registration in GeM to the sale through GeM, it has consistently grown. The Government has made a number of efforts to enable MSMEs, startups, and women entrepreneurs to enter and compete with other suppliers in GeM. These new initiatives, especially through GeM, have benefited a great deal of people, and there will undoubtedly be a surge in the number of startups and MSMEs in GeM in the upcoming years. Convenience sampling method and structured questionnaire technique was used to collect the primary data. Kendall's tau-b, Chi-Square Tests, Frequency and Percentage analysis were used to analyse the data collected. The study shows that 72.5% of the respondents opine that GeM platform has helped in increasing their sales, majority of the respondents benefited from exemption from tender fee and EMD. It is seen that 72.5% of the respondents face the difficulty of price and margin pressure in GeM due to the huge competition. There is a significant association between type of enterprise and exemption benefit from tender fee, earnest money deposit, bidder turnover and experience. Further the study suggests that the government should lead campaigns in local languages to educate sellers about the GeM portal and also make GeM portal registration mandatory for MSMEs at the time of Udyam registration.*

## Keywords:

*GeM, MSME, Public Procurement Policy for MSEs*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The role of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in the economic development of a country cannot be overlooked. These enterprises are not only the backbone of industrial economies but also pivotal in fostering innovation, employment, and growth at a local level. Recent developments have shown a shift towards more structured support for MSMEs, especially with the introduction of online platforms like the Government e-Marketplace (GeM). These platforms offer MSMEs unprecedented access to government procurement, which is often a significant source of revenue.

According to the Ministry of MSME's report (2023), GeM has streamlined the procurement process, allowing businesses to

bypass intermediaries and directly engage with government entities. This development, along with initiatives to enhance digital literacy and ease access to capital, has helped MSMEs become more competitive in both domestic and international markets. GeM is integrated with Udyam Registration Portal, which enables the MSMEs to have access to their Market Place, e-Tender process and other benefits and services. GeM platform has provided wide opportunity for MSMEs to participate in Government procurement process on Pan India. Due to the rise in the importance of buying Make in India product, more privilege has been given to MSMEs. "Make in India" acknowledges that the most crucial element in encouraging entrepreneurship is "ease of doing business." Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance on 23rd January 2020 has made procurement of common goods and services through GeM mandatory for those product/service categories available on GeM in compliance with Rule 149 of GFR 2017.

This research aims to explore the current challenges and opportunities for MSMEs, particularly focusing on how digital platforms like GeM are shaping their future and contributing to their economic sustainability.

## 1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To summarize the initiatives taken by the Government of India in empowering MSMEs through GeM.
- To study the implementation of the Public Procurement Policy for MSEs on GeM.
- To assess the utilization of the GeM platform by MSMEs.

## 1.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Primary data were collected for the study using structured questionnaire. Convenience sampling method was employed and data were collected from 40 MSMEs. Kendall's tau-b, Chi-Square Tests, Frequency and Percentage analysis were used to analyse the data collected. Secondary data were collected from the databases of the GeM portal, MSME portal and from various related articles.

## 1.3 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

- The study has employed a small sample size due to time constraint.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mohammad Abdallah Ali Alryalat et al. [1] examined the barriers to Business-to-Government (B2G) e-commerce adoption, focusing on the cause-and-effect relationships among these barriers using the DEMATEL (Decision Making Trial and Evaluation Laboratory) method. The study identified five major barriers: lack of expertise, perceived information security risks,

inadequate IT infrastructure, high technology costs, and lack of awareness. These barriers hinder the effective adoption of e-commerce platforms like GeM and require strategic attention to enable smoother integration.

Farhat Perveen et al. [2] provided an overview of the Government e-marketplace (GeM) implemented in India. The study highlights that within two years of its launch, GeM achieved over Rs. 10,000 crore in Gross Merchandise Value, with 40% of transactions involving MSMEs. It found that GeM has opened new market access for MSEs and significantly reduced the lead-time in government procurement by eliminating manual verification processes. Additionally, the platform ensures price reasonableness through various analytical tools and competitive bidding.

Devendra Pai [11] discussed the GeM initiative in India, aiming to enhance transparency and efficiency in government procurement processes. The study found that GeM has played a crucial role in improving transparency and accountability in government procurement, ultimately reducing corruption. The researcher highlights GeM as a significant advancement in modernizing procurement practices and streamlining government purchasing operations.

Kapil Patil [12] analyzed the impact of India's small and medium enterprise-oriented procurement policy on public sector enterprises' purchasing practices. The study revealed uneven performance among Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) in meeting SME procurement targets, indicating serious shortcomings in policy implementation. Patil suggests that public sector procurers and SME suppliers need more commitment and training to ensure the success of government procurement policies related to MSMEs.

## 2.1 RESEARCH GAP

Several past literatures focused on the impact of public procurement policy on Micro, Small and Medium enterprises (MSMEs) and overview of Government e Marketplace (GeM) platform since its inception. But in this study, an attempt is made to access the benefits of implementation Public Procurement Policy (PPP) through Government e Marketplace (GeM) platform for MSMEs in public procurement.

## 3. AN OVERVIEW OF GEM PLATFORM

### 3.1 PROCUREMENT THROUGH GEM

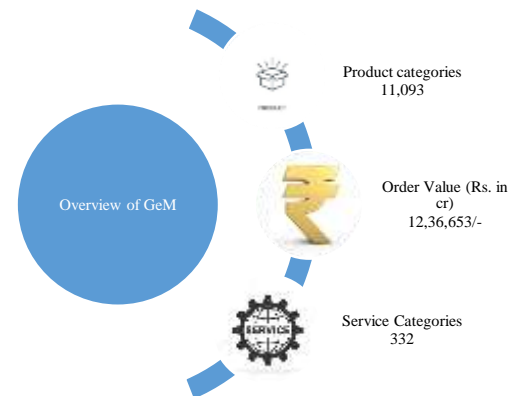
GeM (Government e-market place), was launched on 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2016, for online purchases of Goods and Services for all the Central/State Government Ministries, Departments and Public Sector Undertakings. The main motive for the introduction of GeM is to bring transparency in purchases and to give opportunity to all the sellers on Pan India basis for the purchases made by the Government offices. GeM is a user-friendly portal and the purchases made through this portal fulfils all the conditions laid down in the General Financial Rules (GFR), which helps the officers to avoid litigations. Digital technology also results in transparency and helps in eliminating corruption through innovation such as the Government e Marketplace or GeM. It is an integrated platform for purchases by Government agencies. It provides services such as search and comparison, tender, online

ordering, contract generation and payment. GeM has transparency, empowerment, entrepreneurship, that it is an excellent example of Minimum Government and Maximum Governance. GeM has helped MSMEs to find big customers, reduced scope for corruption, boosted transparency.

### 3.2 KEY FEATURES OF GEM

1. **Transparency:** On GeM, buyers cannot directly refer a specific seller, which allows sellers to compete fairly across India. This creates equal opportunities for all sellers to participate in the marketplace.
2. **Efficiency:** GeM simplifies the entire process, from purchasing to updating payment status, making it easier for both buyers and sellers to track the progress of their transactions.
3. **Security and Safety:** GeM ensures a secure platform for buying and selling, with all supplier and buyer information automatically verified through Aadhaar and PAN databases, ensuring authenticity.
4. **Savings:** GeM operates as a nationwide platform for buying and selling goods and services. The increased competition on GeM leads to more competitive pricing, which results in lower prices compared to other purchasing methods.
5. **Support for "Make in India":** GeM encourages the sale of Indian-made products, helping to boost the visibility and sales of locally manufactured goods in the market.

GeM offers most of the items including lab consumables, stationery, furniture, computer, vehicles, etc.,



Source: GeM portal data retrieved on 18.02.2025

Fig.1. Overview of GeM

Table.1. Registered Buyers, Sellers and Service Providers on GeM

Sl. No	Particulars	Registered in GeM
1	Primary Buyers	1.63 lakhs
2	Secondary Buyers	2.28 lakhs
3	Sellers and Service Providers	More than 58 lakhs

Source: GeM Portal data retrieved on 18.02.2025 and Ministry of Commerce & Industry press release dt:08.02.2023

### 3.3 INITIATIVES TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT FOR EASE OF DOING BUSINESS BY MSMES IN GEM

- **Easy Registration in GeM:** Government has simplified the registration process, which is integrated with Udyam registration portal.
- **Supports MSME in bidding:** Any clauses incorporated by the buyer against MSME policy and preference to Make in India policy shall be treated as void.
- **Exemption from “Bidder Turnover and Experience Criteria” in bidding:** MSE bidder is exempted from the “Turnover” and “Experience” criteria in bidding subject to fulfilling the technical and quality requirements in line with the applicable General Financial Rules (GFR) provision.
- **The GeM Bidding Module, which facilitates the efficient implementation of MSEs’ public procurement policies:** In GeM, purchase preference is given to MSEs as defined in Public Procurement Policy for MSEs order issued by Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises on 23.03.2012. MSEs registered under Udyam registration portal are eligible to avail the benefits under this policy.

Many new initiatives have been taken by GeM for empowering the Startups, MSMEs and Women Enterprises.

### 3.4 STARTUP RUNWAY 2.0

This platform gives startups a chance to display their cutting-edge goods and services in GeM and the main objective is to spur “MAKE IN INDIA” procurement from Indian Startups. As per GeM statistics, in total, 15665 Startups have registered on GeM and processed orders with a gross merchandise value of Rs. 9512.07 Crore as per the data available in GeM as on 18.02.2025.

### 3.5 MSME SC/ST ENTREPRENEURS ON GEM

GeM focuses on helping all government departments and public sector enterprises fulfil the Public Procurement Policy of

MSEs, which seeks to meet two objectives: the sub target of 4% goods and services purchased from MSE entrepreneurs within SC/ST communities, and the mandatory procurement goal of 25% from MSEs. The goal of this program is to promote the MSE sector’s active involvement in public procurement.

As per GeM statistics, Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) of the orders processed by the nearly 8.16 lakh sellers who have registered on GeM to date has been recorded at Rs.152888.19 Crore. Of these, roughly 68,286 are MSME sellers who have facilitated orders totalling Rs.20,263 Crore as per the data available in GeM as on 18.02.2025.

### 3.6 WOMANIYA

The “Womaniya” initiative gives women the chance to sell their goods to different government agencies, departments, and institutions in an effort to encourage female entrepreneurship. Additionally, it seeks to highlight goods produced by female self-help groups and entrepreneurs (WSHG).

For ease of procurement, GeM has categorized products such as office furnishings, jute and coir products, bamboo products, organic foods, spices, handicrafts and handloom, accessories, and organic foods into specific categories. Womaniya offers enormous procurement potential and is in line with the government’s initiative to reserve 3% of public procurement from women MSME entrepreneurs.

### 3.7 SALIENT FEATURES OF THE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT POLICY

- **Annual procurement Target:** Every Government organisation should set an annual target for 25% procurement from MSE sector which comprises 3% from MSEs owned by women entrepreneurs and 4% from MSEs owned by SC/ST. If any subcontract is given to MSEs, it will be considered as procurement from MSEs.

Table.2. Procurement by Central Ministries / Departments / CPSEs from MSEs Financial Year Wise

Financial Year	Total Procurement (Rs in Cr)	Procurement from MSEs (including SC/ST & Women MSEs) out of the total procurement (Rs in Cr)	Number of MSE beneficiaries benefited	Percentage of procurement from MSEs out of the total procurement	Procurement from MSEs owned by SC/STs out of the total MSEs procurement (Rs in Cr)	No of SC/ST MSE beneficiaries benefited	Percentage of procurement from MSEs owned by SC/STs out of the total MSEs procurement	Procurement from women MSEs out of the total MSEs procurement (Rs in Cr)	No of Women MSEs beneficiaries benefited	Percentage of procurement from MSEs owned by women out of the total MSEs procurement
2023-24	169165.28	73843.74	258633	43.65	1707.02	11593	2.31	3054.37	21162	4.14
2022-23	174316.30	64721.65	236433	37.13	1546.91	10354	2.39	2318.99	16725	3.58
2021-22	165383.04	53778.58	227049	32.52	1302.50	10437	2.42	1713.27	11383	3.19
2020-21	139419.81	40717.67	177594	29.21	768.53	6870	1.89	749.20	5140	1.84
2019-20	131460.68	39037.13	157770	29.69	691.43	6341	1.77	393.51	3666	1.01
2018-19	153484.51	40399.70	128152	26.32	824.71	4587	2.04	232.56	1410	0.58
2017-18	114042.05	26357.46	89631	23.11	544.72	2255	2.07	0.00	0	0.00

Source: MSME Sambandh Portal data retrieved on 18.02.2025

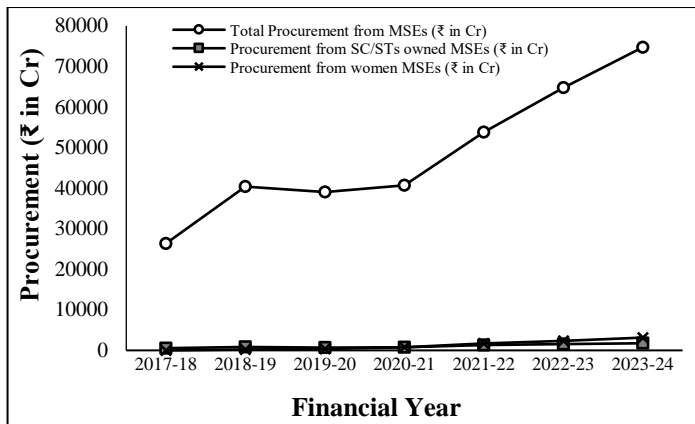


Fig.2. Trend of procurement status by Central Ministries / Departments / CPSEs from MSEs

Source: MSME Sambandh Portal data retrieved on 18.02.2025

From the above exhibit, it is clear that there is an increasing trend of purchases. Due to COVID there is a dip in purchase in the financial year 2019-20 and 2020-21 and there is an increase trend of purchase from MSEs in subsequent financial years.

- **Exemptions from Tender Fee and EMD:** The tender fee and earnest money deposit (EMD) are not required to be paid by MSEs. MSEs are required to submit the necessary documents to prove their eligibility for particular category of benefit.
- **Price Matching Clause:** In any purchase, if L1 (Lowest price quoted vendor) is not an MSE and MSE seller have quoted price within price band L1+15%, a contract for 25% of the total quantity will be awarded to such a seller, who will have the opportunity to match the L-1 price., if the MSE supplier agrees to match with L1 rate.

GeM has accomplished this by adhering to the government's Make in India initiative and policy to support regional MSMEs, and by employing a strategic approach that is multifaceted. As most Indian MSMEs do not have a digital footprint and only a small portion of MSMEs sell or advertise their businesses online, it is critical that GeM helps MSMEs for easy access to the market.

## 4. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The researcher inquires about the type of enterprise and gender of the respondents to understand the demographic distribution and diversity within the sample. This helps in identifying patterns and differences based on enterprise size and gender, providing insights into the characteristics of the respondents.

Table.3. Profile of the Respondents

Factors	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Type of Enterprise	Micro	23	57.5
	Small	14	35.0
	Medium	3	7.5
Gender	Male	24	60.0
	Female	16	40.0

Source: Primary Data

The Table.3 shows that majority of the respondents are from Micro enterprise (57.5%) and majority of the respondents are male (60%). The Table.3 shows that majority of the respondents are from micro-sized (57.5%), followed by 35% being small enterprises and 7.5% being medium-sized. In terms of gender, 60% of the respondents are male, while 40% are female.

### 4.2 MEDIUM OF AWARENESS ABOUT GEM

To determine how information about the platform is reaching businesses, the medium of awareness about GeM to respondents is assessed. It allows for better-targeted strategies to enhance GeM adoption among MSMEs and helps to identify the most effective communication channels for spreading awareness and engagement.

Table.4. Medium of awareness about GeM

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Through other enterprises	16	40.0
Through Government	14	35.0
Through Website	10	25.0
Total	40	100.0

Source: Primary Data

The Table.4 indicates that the maximum number of respondents (40%) came to know about GeM platform through other companies. Around 35% of the respondents through the government and 25% through website.

### 4.3 ASSESSMENT OF UTILISATION OF GEM PLATFORM BY MSMEs

To evaluate how well these businesses are leveraging the platform for procurement and sales, the effective utilization of the GeM platform by MSMEs is assessed. This helps to identify the challenges and opportunities in maximizing GeM's potential. The assessment also provides insights into the actual impact of GeM on MSMEs' operational efficiency and growth.

Table.5. Assessment of utilisation of GeM platform by MSMEs

Factors	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
(i) GeM is user friendly	8	20.0	3	7.5	5	12.5	8	20.0	16	40.0
(ii) GeM have increased your sales	0	0	11	27.5	0	0	8	20.0	21	52.5
(iii) GeM have created PAN India Platform to participate from the earlier mode of sales	7	17.5	6	15.0	8	20.0	10	25.0	9	22.5
(iv) Sales procedure Comfortable in GeM comparing to earlier mode of sales	0	0	10	25.0	6	15.0	16	40.0	8	20.0
(v) Exemption from Tender fee & EMD is helpful	0	0	0	0	10	25.0	11	27.5	19	47.5
(vi) Price matching clause as per PPP	3	7.5	16	40.0	8	20.0	13	32.5	0	0
(vii) Exemption from bidder turnover & experience is helpful	0	0	0	0	13	32.5	20	50.0	7	17.5
(viii) PPP is helpful in getting orders	3	7.5	3	7.5	16	40.0	13	32.5	5	12.5

Source : Primary Data

The Table.5 shows that majority of the respondents agree or strongly agree that exemption from Tender fee and Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) is beneficial in tender participation (75%), followed by increase in sales through GeM platform for 72.5% of the respondents, 67.5% benefited on exemption from bidder turnover and experience, 60% are comfortable in GeM sales procedure comparing to earlier mode of sales and user friendly to work, 47.5% responded that GeM created PAN India platform to participate from the earlier mode of sales, 45% agree or strongly agree that Public Procurement Policy (PPP) is helpful in getting orders for MSEs and 32.5% respondents agree that price matching clause as per Public Procurement Policy benefited in receiving orders.

To know the association between type of enterprise and increase in sales through GeM platform, Kendall's tau-b used, the result shows that the value = -0.489, N=40,  $p < 0.05$ . Since the p value is 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ) and the value is -.489, there is a moderate negative relationship between type of the enterprise and increase in sales through GeM platform.

To know the association between type of enterprise and exemption benefit from tender fee and earnest money deposit (EMD), Chi-square test was used. The result shows Chi-square = 0.008,  $df = 4$ ,  $N = 40$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Since the p value (0.008) is lesser than 0.05, there is a significant association between type of enterprise and exemption benefit from tender fee and earnest money deposit (EMD).

To know the association between type of enterprise and exemption benefit from bidder turnover and experience, Chi-square test was used. The result shows Chi-square = 0.015,  $df = 4$ ,  $N = 40$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Since the p value (0.015) is lesser than 0.05, there is a significant association between type of enterprise and exemption benefit from bidder turnover and experience.

To know the association between type of enterprise and price, margin pressure in GeM platform Kendall's tau-b used, the result

shows that the value = .503, N=40,  $p < 0.05$ . Since the p value is 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ) and the value is .503, there is a moderate relationship between type of the enterprise and price, margin pressure in GeM.

#### 4.4 PROBLEMS / DIFFICULTIES FACED IN GEM BY THE USERS

The following factors have been highlighted as issues or challenges encountered in the operation of GeM, and the respondents' opinions are tabulated below:

Table.6. Problems / Difficulties faced in GeM

Factors	No		Yes	
	No.	%	No.	%
(i) Registration Process	37	92.5	3	7.5
(ii) Technical issues	12	30.0	28	70.0
(iii) Limited access to opportunities	19	47.5	21	52.5
(iv) Price and Margin Pressure	11	27.5	29	72.5
(v) Payment and dispute resolution delays	27	67.5	13	32.5
(vi) Compliance and documentation requirements	24	60.0	16	40.0
(vii) Customer service	31	77.5	9	22.5
(viii) Poor knowledge on Government Policy/Rules	37	92.5	3	7.5
(ix) Others	33	82.5	7	17.5

Source : Primary Data

From the Table.6, it is seen that 72.5% of the respondents reported that price and margin pressure is one of the difficulty faced in GeM due to the huge competition, followed by technical issues in operation (70%) and 52.5% reported that GeM has limited access to opportunities since all the government organisations are not fully utilizing the GeM platform for their purchases.

#### 4.5 AREA OF IMPROVEMENT IN GEM

Area of improvement required in GeM requested by the respondents is given below:

- Complaints from the Seller must be acted upon and Government Agencies should be made accountable for compliance issues and fair deal. Separate Contact Agreement with arbitrary clauses to subdue the Seller should be avoided
- Quadrant 2 (Q2) on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) is for products offered by Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEMs) and their authorized resellers. There are many Q2 categories, an ordinary vendor cannot be registered and sell products Q2 category products in the Q2 category.
- All Public Sector Undertaking are not following Public Procurement Policy in GeM portal.
- Gem user training guide and programmes required in tamil and English language preferred
- Support needed to solve the Technical issues in GeM portal.

## 5. SUGGESTIONS

- The Indian government and the state governments ought to take the lead and launch various campaigns to educate the sellers about the GeM portal in their local language.
- The GeM portal registration should be made mandatory by the government to the MSMEs at the same time of registration in the Udyam registration portal.
- Price Matching Clause may be reviewed since majority of the respondents feel it is as a pressure to accept the contract at lower rate.
- It is suggested to provide better customer service to solve the technical issues on time to avoid delay in process.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Thus, this research highlights the significant role of the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) in empowering MSMEs by providing them with a transparent, efficient, and accessible platform for government procurement. In the last 8 years, GeM has made a big revolution in the public procurement made by the Government offices. It has seen a consistent growth from the registration of buyer and seller in GeM and its sale through GeM. From the foregoing, it is evident that the government has taken a number of steps to allow women entrepreneurs, MSMEs, and startups to enter and compete with other suppliers in GeM. Many people have benefited from these new initiatives, particularly through GeM, and it is certain that the coming years will see a boom in the number of startups and MSMEs in GeM. The study shows that 72.5% of the respondents responded that GeM platform has helped in increasing their sales and majority (75%) of the respondents agree or strongly agree that exemption from Tender fee and Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) is beneficial in tender participation. However, 72.5% of the respondents face the difficulty of price and margin pressure in GeM due to the huge competition. The study concludes by suggesting that the government should organise campaigns in local languages to educate sellers about the GeM portal and also make GeM portal registration mandatory for MSMEs at the time of Udyam registration. It also suggests possible improvements in the GeM portal for long term feasibility.

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