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The Socio-Economic And Political Status Of Women In Rural Governance Of Odisha

Jina Mohapatra

Research Scholar

Utkal University

Abstract

The moment a woman is born into this world, she is granted the exact same legal rights as a male. Everyone living in the country, both men and women, should have the same opportunities to advance their careers and hold public offices, positions, and jobs. These opportunities should be awarded solely on the basis of an individual's qualifications, with no consideration given to anything other than their innate skills and qualities. In recent decades, the topic of expanding women's participation in all parts of life has dominated the conversation surrounding economic and social growth. This shift in focus can be attributed to the fact that more women have entered the workforce. The status and progress of women in a country are directly linked to its growth and prosperity. Not only do they account for almost half of the total population, but they also have an influence on the way the other half is increasing in number. A woman can fulfil several responsibilities within the context of a family, including those of mother, sister, and wife, provided that she does it with loyalty, affection, love, sincerity, obedience, and, most significantly, esprit de corps. In addition to doing other kinds of housework, she is responsible for interacting with, teaching, feeding, and taking care of each family member in other ways.

Key words: Global, Rural governance, women, Social and Economic

Introduction

Early Indian history saw women valued for their great contributions to Vedic civilization and treated with equal respect to males. She had equal access to the right to an education as well as marriageability. Rumor has it that the horrible lot of Indian women was to be shackled in shackles for both social and religious purposes; this quickly became a legendary practice. These women were regarded as having lesser social status;

hence their life became more and more limited by religious taboos, monetarily dependent, and socially subservient. Their problems in the classroom began to show. Young folks were urged to get married right away in the first century A.D. Like education, pre-pubescent marriages were a common occurrence for the whole third century. Each human community is marked by social disparities. An instance is gender differentiation. Men were responsible for earning income, whereas women were tasked with reproduction and domestic management. An examination of women's standing in early Indian culture indicates a decline in their position. A historical analysis of women's roles in ancient India indicates that they were not afforded equal status as men. Women were solely recognized as wives and mothers. They exhibited submissiveness towards men. The Indian patriarchal society, which governs the nation's social, political, and economic spheres, has consistently discouraged women from pursuing careers outside the domestic sphere. Within The roots of women's political participation can be traced to the reform movement of the eighteenth century. Societal reformers assert that social revolution may be launched through the education of women and the enactment of progressive legislation. Social issues can be addressed by enhancing individuals' awareness and sensitivity to injustices perpetrated against women. Women in India receive lesser earnings and experience a lack of empowerment.

Perspectives on Women's Status from Around the World: During the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century, women were typically considered to be of lower importance than males and were required to submit to their authority. All the way up until the twentieth century, this continued. Women in Greek nations were expected to subordinate themselves totally to the rule of men, despite the fact that they were held in high favor for their beauty and the maternal traits they had. It was the well-known Greek philosopher Plato who was the first person to propose that there should be perfect equality between the sexes. During the time of the Roman Empire, there was not really much of an improvement in the situation of women. On the other hand, it is evident that women in feudal civilizations have a different position than men in those countries. The establishment of this resulted from the cultural norms that existed in the past, such as chivalry. In the ancient civilizations of China, India, and Rome, as well as during the various Renaissance periods in Western Europe, there were pockets of women who acquired unusually high levels of education. These pockets of women were also present during the Renaissance. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, significant advancements have been made in a variety of areas, including education, suffrage, property rights, employment equality, and the freedom to pursue professions and public office. The elimination of prejudice and discrimination has made it possible for these changes to take place here. In certain cases, industrialization was a driving force behind the formation of two distinct social movements: one that was opposed to natural justice and advocated for democracy and equality, and the other that advocated for socialism. Democratic principles and the pursuit of natural justice were the goals of these movements. Beginning in the eighteenth century and continuing into the nineteenth century, waves of these beliefs spread across society and spread

all over the world. It is vital to investigate the political status of women in order to have a proper appreciation for the position that women occupy in society. On the other hand, despite the fact that socioeconomic position is inextricably related to political status, political status can nevertheless have an impact on the manner in which the socio-economic system evolves. Whether or not a woman is able to vote and hold elected positions is the primary factor that determines her status, according to the majority of people today.

For a long time, women in this country were not permitted to participate in any part of the political process. This was the case in the past. It is possible to trace the origins of the first advocacy for women to be granted equal political rights all the way back to the 18th century. Changes in status occurred far before laws were passed in Western Europe and North America, which are the places where the concept of gender equality was initially conceived. The only notable exception to this rule was the right of women to vote. Women were granted the right to vote for the first time in New Zealand in 1893, making it the first country in the world to do so. In 1908, Canada and Australia followed following with their actions. In the years running up to World War I, there were a number of attempts made in the United Kingdom to ensure that women were granted the right to vote. However, their attempts were not successful in any way. On the other hand, after the war, women were able to undertake such responsible labor in such a wide variety of sectors that by 1928, they were granted the right to vote. All women who had reached the age of 21 were granted the right to vote, which was expanded to include all women. Specifically, in order to achieve political equality in a number of countries, including the United States and France were compelled to participate in a laborious and drawn-out conflict. It was not until 1944 that women in France were granted the right to vote, although in the United States, this right was originally granted in 1920. Immediately following the conclusion of World War II, a number of nations in Western Europe, such as Greece, Italy, and France, passed laws that granted women the right to vote. After the Weimer Constitution was ratified in 1919, female citizens of Germany were given the ability to vote. This decision was made possible by the constitution. In 1913, Norway became the first country to allow women the right to vote. Denmark followed suit in 1915, and Switzerland did too in 1971. The Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which was enacted in 1936, stipulated that no legislation or accord may be in conflict with the fundamental principle that establishes gender equality. A condition that was comparable to this one was experienced by a number of countries, including Poland, Bulgaria, and Hungary. The only countries in which women are allowed to vote are Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Jordan, Kuwait, and Yemen. In all other countries, women are not allowed to vote. By the time the 1960s came to a close, a sizeable number of Arab nations had enabled women to exercise their right to vote in some or all of their territories.

Global Perspectives

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Review of literature

Prof. Dr. Aparna Srivastava, Sejal Saxena (2024): Political Participation of Women in India: According to the findings of the research conducted on women in Indian politics, the environment is complex and dynamic, and although women have made significant advancements, they continue to confront a great deal of resistance. The current analytical study has explored a variety of aspects of women's participation in Indian politics. It has provided insightful viewpoints on the historical context, representation, difficulties, strategies for empowerment, and remarkable accomplishments of women in Indian politics.

Chaturvedi and Chaturvedi (2024) By analysing people's names use machine learning techniques to ascertain their religious affiliation. Their research shows that Muslim involvement in Indian elections has decreased, which could be a sign of a global trend towards using comparable approaches to identify different ethnic groups

Findings

The socio-economic status of women in India has seen significant improvements over the years, but persistent challenges remain in achieving gender equality and empowerment. In the area of education and literacy, although the female literacy rate has increased, it still lags behind that of men, particularly in rural areas where access to educational facilities remains limited. Urban women have better educational opportunities, but rural-urban disparities continue to affect overall progress. In terms of economic participation, women's labor force participation rate remains low, with most women engaged in informal or unpaid domestic work. Wage disparity is another major issue, as women continue to earn less than men in almost all sectors, and their representation in leadership and managerial positions is limited.

Health and nutrition have shown improvement, with declining maternal mortality rates and better access to healthcare facilities. However, malnutrition and high rates of anemia among women, especially in rural areas, remain significant concerns. Reproductive healthcare services are also limited, restricting women's control over their health and family planning decisions.

Political participation has improved with the introduction of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, which mandate the reservation of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). This has increased women's involvement in local governance and decision-making at the grassroots level. However, at the state and national levels, women's political representation remains low.

Social and cultural barriers continue to limit women's autonomy and decision-making power. Gender-based violence, dowry practices, early marriage, and patriarchal norms restrict women's freedom and opportunities for growth. Despite these challenges, financial inclusion has improved through government initiatives like the Jan Dhan Yojana, which has increased women's access to banking and credit services. Women-led self-help groups (SHGs) have also played a key role in promoting financial independence and economic stability for rural women.

In the 2024 Odisha Legislative Assembly elections, women's political representation experienced a notable decline. Out of 147 seats, only 12 women were elected, accounting for approximately 8.16% of the Assembly. This marks a decrease from previous years, where women's representation had been higher. Despite this decline in elected positions, female voter turnout was notably high. In the 2024 elections, female voters recorded a higher turnout compared to their male counterparts, signaling a significant participation of women

in the democratic process. In terms of candidacy, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) fielded 12 women candidates in its first list of 72 for the Assembly polls, representing 16% of their candidates. However, the overall success rate of women candidates across major parties was low, contributing to the reduced representation in the Assembly. A historic milestone was achieved with the election of Sofia Firdous from the Barabati-Cuttack constituency. She became the first Muslim woman to be elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly in Odisha, reflecting a significant step towards inclusive representation. Overall, while women's active participation as voters remains strong, their representation in elected positions within Odisha's political landscape has faced challenges, indicating a need for continued efforts towards gender parity in political representation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while the socio-economic status of women in India has improved in terms of education, health, and political representation, deep-rooted structural and social barriers persist. Achieving true gender equality requires comprehensive efforts to address wage disparities, increase political representation, and ensure greater access to education and healthcare. Financial independence and social empowerment through policy support and community engagement are essential for enhancing the overall socio-economic status of women in India.

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