

## Gender Disparities: A Nation State Comparative Study

Jagannathbiswal\*

*“When women thrive, all of society benefits, and succeeding generations are given a better start in life,” by Kofi Annan.*

Corresponding Author: Jagannathbiswal

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Gender issues are received a lot of emphasis in recent times. To promote gender equality, Government have been playing major role in spreading education, health and empowerment for women. The proportion of women constitutes half of the total population in Orissa. But they are faced with many issues with present set up of societies. The Constitution of India not only provides equal rights and privileges for women and men but also making special provision for women. A series of social legislations have been enacted from time to time for raising the status of women in the country. The Five-Year Plans have consistently placed special emphasis on providing minimum health facilities integrated with family welfare and nutrition for women and children, acceleration of women’s education, their increase in the labour force and welfare services for women in need.

In the decade of 1960’s, the policy of the government aimed at the welfare of the women. In 1970’s there was a shift from the welfare, to the development of women. In 1980’s and onwards, the shift took place from the development to the empowerment of women. Women’s empowerment refers to the ability of women to transform economic and social development. Whenempowered to fully participate in the decisions, that affect their lives, through leadership training, coaching, consulting and the provision of enabling tools for women to lead within their communities, regions and countries. Despite all the development measures and the Constitutional legal guarantees, women have lagged men in many sectors. There still exist gaps and inconsistencies in the march of women towards equality. Gender inequality has its adverse impact on development goals which reduces economic growth.

The present paperanalyses various gender issues in the State containing a comparison of sex ratio between India and Odisha, Literacy, Work participation rate, and the beneficiary of the women population in the Economic programme especially in the MGNREGS.

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### I. SEX RATIO COMPOSITION

To establish the importance of gender in the socioeconomic front it is necessary to know sex ratio composition of population in the society. The following table depicts the sex ratio in India and in a backward state like Odisha.

**Table:1 Sex Ratio of India and Odisha since 1951**

| Sl. No. | Census Year | India | Odisha | Gap between India & Odisha |
|---------|-------------|-------|--------|----------------------------|
| 1.      | 1951        | 946   | 1022   | 76                         |
| 2.      | 1961        | 941   | 1001   | 60                         |
| 3.      | 1971        | 930   | 988    | 58                         |
| 4.      | 1981        | 934   | 981    | 47                         |
| 5.      | 1991        | 927   | 971    | 44                         |
| 6.      | 2001        | 933   | 972    | 39                         |
| 7.      | 2011        | 940   | 979    | 39                         |

Source: Various Censes Data

### II. LITERACY

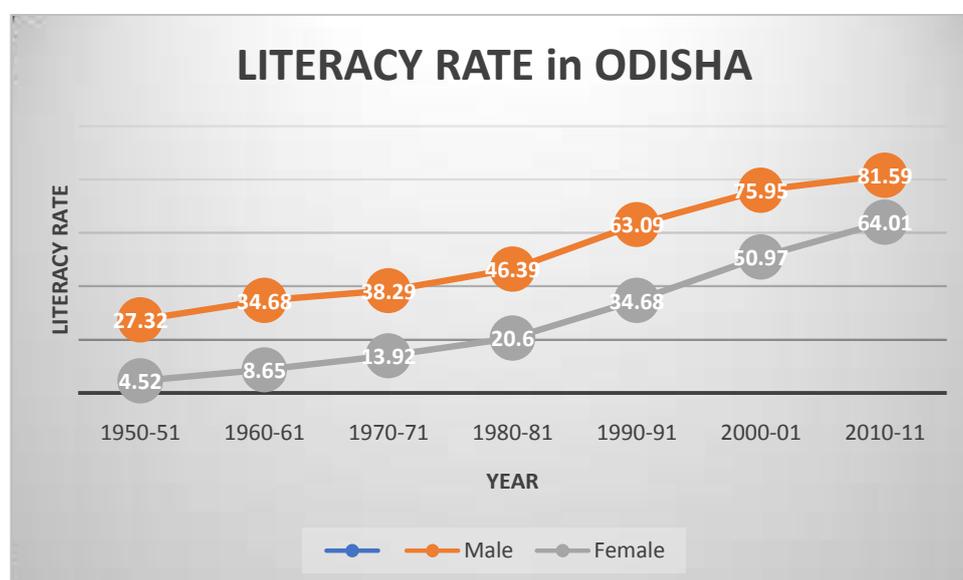
Literacy level, if increases, it brings with a higher level of quality of living in the society. It is of greater importance if female literacy registers a positive growth. It is one of the vital ingredients to achieve economic growth / development. Female education is seen to be important in process of lowering fertility and mortality. Higher literacy rate brings higher life expectancy by reducing risk of health hazards. The following table shows the literacy rate (in percentages) both for male and female in the state level as well as the national level for the period from 1951 to 2011.

**Table 2: Literacy rate in India and Odisha (in percentages)**

| Year | Male  |        | Female |        | Male-Female Gap |        |
|------|-------|--------|--------|--------|-----------------|--------|
|      | India | Odisha | India  | Odisha | India           | Odisha |
| 1951 | 27.16 | 27.32  | 8.86   | 4.52   | 18.3            | 22.80  |
| 1961 | 40.40 | 34.68  | 15.36  | 8.65   | 25.05           | 26.03  |
| 1971 | 45.96 | 38.29  | 21.97  | 13.92  | 23.99           | 24.37  |
| 1981 | 56.38 | 46.39  | 29.76  | 20.60  | 26.62           | 25.79  |
| 1991 | 64.13 | 63.09  | 39.29  | 34.68  | 24.84           | 28.41  |
| 2001 | 75.85 | 75.95  | 54.16  | 50.97  | 21.69           | 24.98  |
| 2011 | 82.14 | 81.59  | 65.46  | 64.01  | 16.68           | 17.58  |

Source: Various senses data

It is clear picture of education in India as well as in Odisha where female education has always been lag behind male education. In Odisha both male and female education rate has been indicating a lower trend than India, but female education percent is more backward than males. The literacy rate gap between male and female show a decreasing trend in India after 1981 census but in case of Odisha the gap decreased consistently after 1991. It has been realised that literacy is one of most required input to achieve development goal. Specifically female literacy bears greater importance to combat the ill impact of superstition, socio-cultural hazards, at the same time improving health, nutrition and quality of living standard of the family in particularly and society in general.



This graph is a comparison between the literacy rate among male and female in Odisha. From the figure, the gap between male and female literacy rate remains almost same throughout the years from 1950-51 to 2010-11. Thus, this clearly indicates that the gender disparities remain almost same even after the 63-34 years of independence. Without proper steps to fight the menace of female illiteracy and equalizing their literacy at par with males it would be remote possibility to attain growth. Therefore, it is required to know the age group composition of female population in order to focus target to improve their health, education, skill, and building their career during various stages of life. In addition to literacy rate, to make the analysis more clear we have here introduced the literacy growth rate also.

**Literacy Growth Rate:**

| Year | Odisha |        | India |        |
|------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
|      | Male   | Female | Male  | Female |
| 1951 | 27.32  | 4.52   | 27.16 | 8.86   |
| 1961 | 34.68  | 8.65   | 40.40 | 15.35  |
| 1971 | 38.29  | 13.92  | 45.96 | 21.97  |
| 1981 | 46.39  | 20.60  | 56.38 | 29.76  |
| 1991 | 63.09  | 34.68  | 64.13 | 39.29  |
| 2001 | 75.35  | 50.51  | 75.3  | 53.7   |
| 2011 | 81.59  | 64.01  | 80.89 | 64.64  |

Source: Census data of various Year

From the table it is clear that the literacy growth rate has increased both for male and female in case of state level as well as the state level. But the growth rate in female literacy is lagging behind the growth of the

male literacy rate both in the national and state level. And with in the female literacy growth rate between India and Odisha, the state is once again behind the national level.

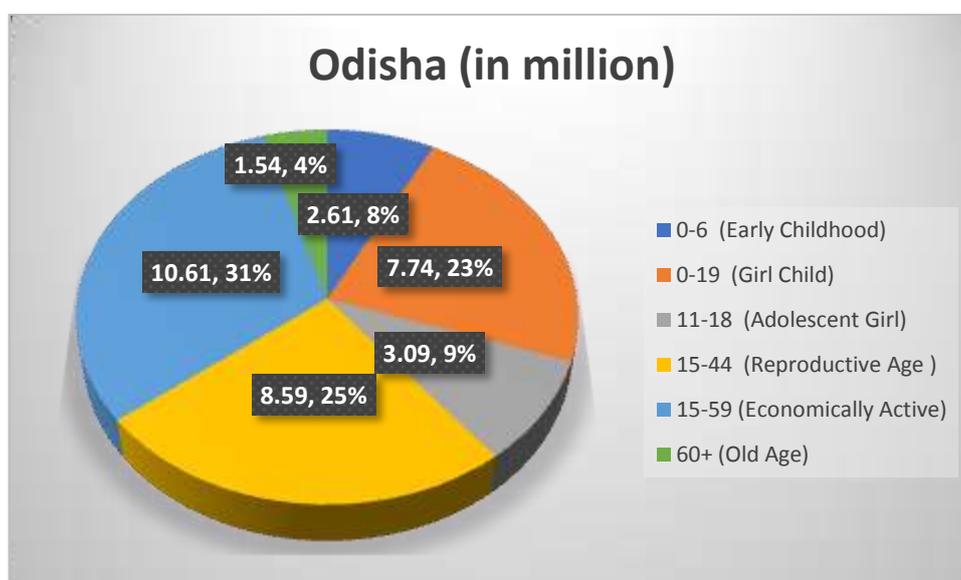
### Age Composition

**Table 3: Age composition (In millions)**

| Sl.No | Age Group (Stages)          | India  | Odisha |
|-------|-----------------------------|--------|--------|
| 1.    | 0-6 (Early Childhood)       | 78.82  | 2.61   |
| 2.    | 0-19 (Girl Child)           | 220.40 | 7.74   |
| 3.    | 11-18 (Adolescent Girl)     | 83.19  | 3.09   |
| 4.    | 15-44 (Reproductive Age )   | 228.89 | 8.59   |
| 5.    | 15-59 (Economically Active) | 282.24 | 10.61  |
| 6.    | 60+ (Old Age)               | 38.85  | 1.54   |

Source: C.S.O (2007) Women and man in India

Age group distribution of females in various stages of life requires different program and plan to be implemented in order to enhance their capabilities through improvement of education, provision of nutrition, medical aid ensuring better health services, developing skill, making them capable to carry out self-employment avenues effectively, steps to prevent maternal and infant mortality, security against physical and mental abuse and providing old age beneficiary schemes to those needy aged women under various schemes need to be evaluated. From the table, it is clear that in total population of the females the economically active population occupies the most share. The other composition of the female population is illustrated in the following pie chart.



### III. WORK PARTICIPATION RATE

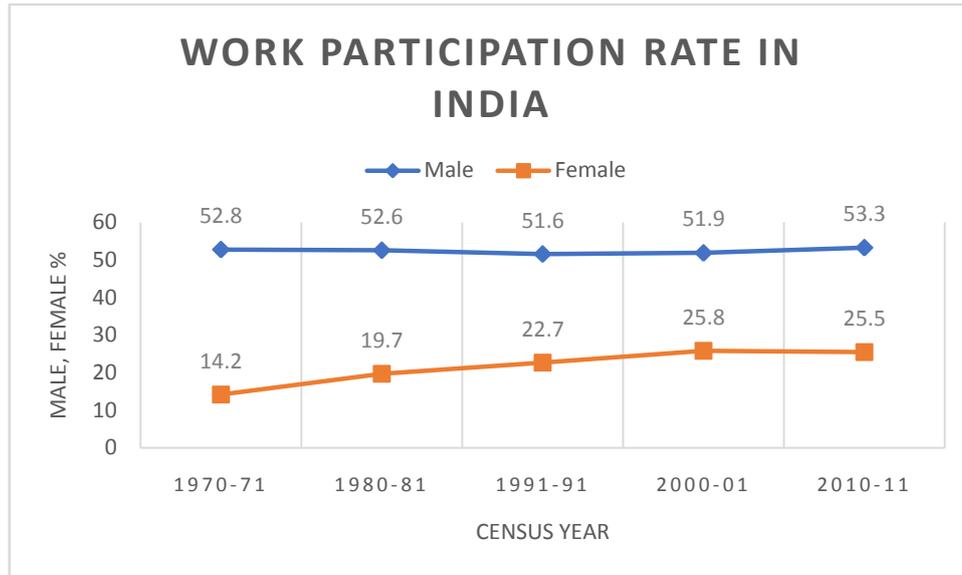
Work participation rate among females in different activities is one of best indicator to explain their economic condition in which they are contributing their might to lead the country towards economic prosperity as well as their social-economic status in prevailing society. Workforce participation rate in India during different census years is depicted below in the table.

**Table-4 Work Participation rates in India & Odisha (Figures in %)**

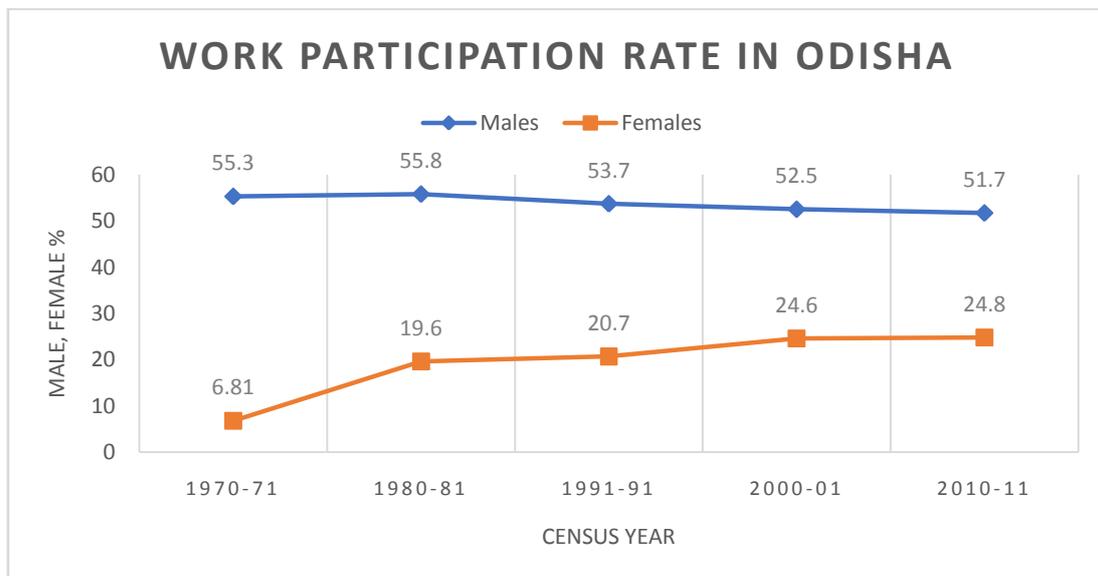
|        | Census Year | 1971 | 1981 | 1991 | 2001 | 2011 |
|--------|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| India  | Male        | 52.8 | 52.6 | 51.6 | 51.9 | 53.3 |
|        | Female      | 14.2 | 19.7 | 22.7 | 25.8 | 25.5 |
| Odisha | Males       | 55.3 | 55.8 | 53.7 | 52.5 | 51.7 |
|        | Females     | 6.81 | 19.6 | 20.7 | 24.6 | 24.8 |

Sources: Various Census Publications.

From the above table it is quite evident that the work participation both for male and female remain almost same in each and every year. The result will be quiet convent if we represent the above data in a graph which we have done here.



From the figure it is clear that the work participation rate of the males remain almost same over the years around 50 percentage points. It lies in between 51.6 in 1990-91 and 53.3 in 2010-11. So the range within which it lies is only 1.7. Nut in case of female whose participation rate was very low in 1990-91 at 14.2 % it gradually increased to a level of 25.5 in the year 2010-11. The rate was highest in 2000-01. So far as female participation is concerned it shows a improvement trend over the year except the last year i.e. 2010-11. Thus there seems a improvement in gender disparity in the national level.



The picture in Odisha is quite similar to that of the national level with the difference that the male participation rate decreases over the period of time while the female participation rate increases during the same period. Therefore, the gender disparity so far as work participation is concerned is improved in case of Odisha which is a good sign for the gender development of the state economy.

#### IV. FEMALE BENEFICIARY UNDER THE MGNREGS IN ODISHA

The plethora of such programmes is distinctly visible since the adoption of Sixth Five Year Plan period. A couple of such programmes adopted by the State includes National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) 1980-89; Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) 1983-89; JawaharRozgar Yojana (JRY) 1989-99; Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) 1993-99; Jawahar Gram SamridhiYojana (JGSY) 1999-2002; SampoornaGrameenRozgar Yojana (SGRY) 2001-08; and National Food for Work Programme (NFFWP) 2004-08. These programmes in rural areas have no doubt benefitted many ruralites improving their socio-economic status, still lack of inclusive characters of these

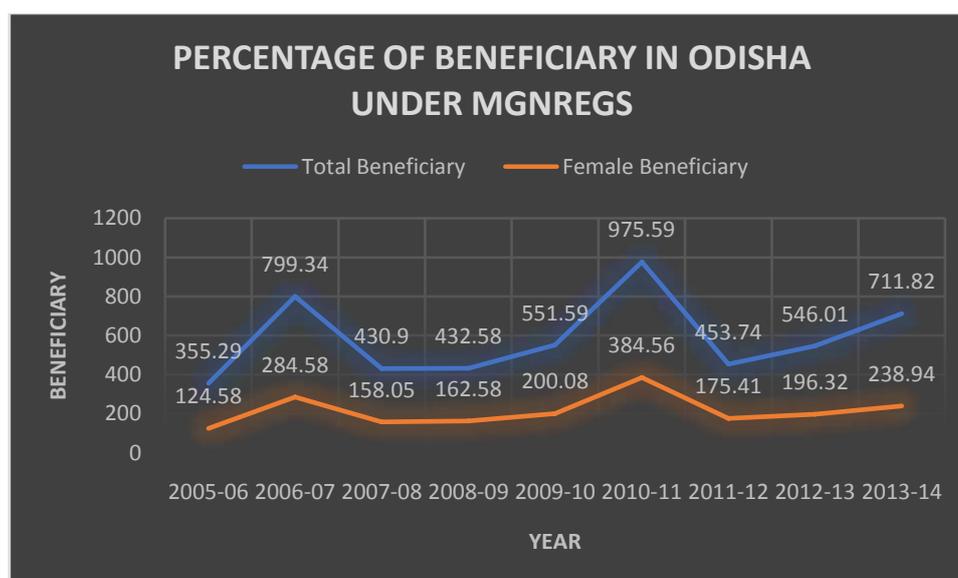
programmes left many common groups behind. A review of these programmes shows that all of them aim at bringing relief type of employment opportunities, rather than creating productive and durable assets. These employment generation programmes have suffered from many structural and operational constraints. A few of them were of limited coverage; less self-targeting, follow traditional top-down planning and lacking community participation at various levels. Here we have discussed one of such programme i.e. MGNREGS, the beneficiaries of the women as a percentage of the total beneficiaries.

**Table 5: Female beneficiary as a percentage of the total beneficiary**

| Year    | Total Beneficiary | Female Beneficiary | % of female beneficiary to total beneficiary |
|---------|-------------------|--------------------|--|
| 2005-06 | 355.29            | 124.58             | 35.06  |
| 2006-07 | 799.34            | 284.58             | 35.60  |
| 2007-08 | 430.90            | 158.05             | 36.68  |
| 2008-09 | 432.58            | 162.58             | 37.58  |
| 2009-10 | 551.59            | 200.08             | 36.27  |
| 2010-11 | 975.59            | 384.56             | 39.42  |
| 2011-12 | 453.74            | 175.41             | 38.66  |
| 2012-13 | 546.01            | 196.32             | 35.66  |
| 2013-14 | 711.82            | 238.94             | 33.57  |

Source: Panchayat raj Department, Government of Odisha.

Female beneficiaries under MGNREGA constituted 33 to 40 percent of total person days of work. Their contribution to the households at micro level and to the Nation at the macro level is definitely a positive indication for future building of the nation. Here we have found that the percent of beneficiary has increased from the year 2005-06 to 2010-11 (except 2009-10) which is a good indicator so far as gender development is concerned. But it is also very much important to note here that the percentage has declined during the last three years. So proper incentives should be taken in order to normalize the gender equity in the state. This can be more clearly visible from the following graph.



## V. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the above six indicators the following conclusions are drawn.

- ❑ In almost all the indicators the female index is less than the male index both at national level and the state level.
- ❑ In Odisha the male-female literacy gap has decreased over the years i.e. from 1950-51 to 2010-11 which means there is an improvement in the female literacy and which alternatively leads towards gender development.
- ❑ In case of workforce participation the male-female participation which stood at first 8:1 now in the latest census year it was 2:1. That means there is progress in work participation so far as females are concerned.
- ❑ So far as female beneficiary is concerned the female beneficiary as a percentage of total beneficiary has decreased from 2010-11 to 2013-14 though it increased in the first phase.

Despite, various administrative measures undertaken by governments to correct the gender bias and achieve the goal of development with equity, it is yet to realize its impact at each and every sections of society

In order to make women more effective agent of development performance, their specific health hazards, lower literacy rate, social obstruction of keeping woman confined to kitchen and domestic affairs, discrimination in labour market and employment need proper monitoring to address those hurdles prevailing in societies since time immemorial. Mere enactment of law cannot deliver the desired results unless concerned society conscience prevailed with good sense of equality. The post-liberalisation period require more effective and assertive measures to eradicate the gender discrimination and ensure sustainable inclusive development and leading life with dignity. The ultimate aim of achieving happiness can be assured , if equal opportunity to develop each and every individual is ensured by the system in which we are living together.

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