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“WOMEN AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN HYDERABAD-KARNATAKA REGION: A HISTORICAL STUDY”

Sharanappa Basavaraj Goni

Faculty, Department Of History,

P.G. Centre, Yelaburga, Koppal University Koppal, Karnataka, India.

ABSTRACT

Women have been important in the social, cultural and economic development of Indian society. However, their status has been traditionally determined by social customs, economic conditions and political institutions. The study of women and social change has become important in the regional historical research in recent years, especially in historically marginalized regions like Hyderabad-Karnataka. The unique historical background of the region under the Nizam rule and the relatively backward socio-economic condition of the region make it imperative to understand the historical transformation of the status and social roles of women.



In this study an attempt is made to study the historical status of women in Hyderabad-Karnataka region and to analyze the major factors contributing to social change and women empowerment. The study uses a qualitative and historical research method. It is based on secondary data from books, research articles, government reports, census data and historical records. Special emphasis is laid on the role of education, social reforms, welfare measures and economic participation.

The findings suggest that despite disadvantages such as illiteracy, patriarchy, poverty and gender inequality, slow progress has been achieved through educational opportunities, awareness campaigns and greater socio-economic involvement. However, the overall development of women continues to be hampered by regional backwardness and unequal access to resources. The study concludes that education and social awareness are still important factors in promoting women's empowerment and sustainable social transformation in Hyderabad-Karnataka region.

KEYWORDS: Women, Social Change, Hyderabad-Karnataka, Women Empowerment, Gender Studies, Regional History.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women have been an important player in social, cultural, economic and political development of society. In the past, though, their status and participation has been influenced by social norms, education, economic factors, and regional culture. In India, the field of research on women and social change has become a significant subject as gender related issues like gender inequality, education, empowerment, and social transformation are being studied in the context of historical and social research. (Sharma 2021)

The districts in Hyderabad-Karnataka region like Koppal, Kalaburagi, Ballari, Bidar, Raichur and Yadgir have their own unique historical and socio-economic background due to the rule of Nizams of Hyderabad. The literacy, health and women's welfare development was found to be slower in the region

as compared to the other parts of Karnataka (Rao, 2020). The social status and development of women in the region were influenced to a great extent by traditional patriarchy, illiteracy, and low economic opportunities.

But, in the last few decades, there have been some social changes that are discernible in the area of education, government welfare measures, women's self-help groups and involvement of women in social and economic activities. It has been found that education and awareness may be one of the very important factors contributing to the empowerment and social mobility of women (Patil & Kumar, 2022). However, barriers like gender discrimination, poverty, joblessness and lack of access to resources persist to impact women's progress.

While many studies talk about the empowerment of women and social development in India, studies that are region-specific and talk about women and social change in Hyderabad- Karnataka are limited (Mehta, 2021). Hence, the current research will focus on the historical role of women and the prominent reasons behind the social transformation and empowerment in Hyderabad-Karnataka region.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Recent studies on social change and women in India highlight the significance of education, economic engagement, and social reforms for women's empowerment and status. It has been noted that women's education has played an important role in raising awareness, empowering them to take decisions and improve their economic self-reliance, especially in the rural and backward areas (Sharma 2021). Other research also indicates that social changes among women are also strongly associated with women's access to education, health facilities, employment opportunities, and government welfare benefits (Patil & Kumar, 2022). Researchers have observed that in the context of Karnataka, the involvement of women in social and economic activities has been significant due to their self-help groups and awareness promoting activities in the rural areas (Rao, 2020).

Meanwhile, a few studies indicate that women in backward areas still encounter problems including gender discrimination, poverty, lack of education and employment, and male-dominated social norms (Mehta, 2021). It is also highlighted that regional disparities have a strong impact on the progress of women's empowerment and social mobility. Women's studies have come into prominence in Indian historiography but the existing studies have been confined to macro-national or contemporary viewpoints of socio-economic processes, and there is little attention to long term involvement of the region.

Research Gap: Although there are many literatures available on women empowerment and women social change in the Indian context, there were not a lot of region specific historical studies on women of Hyderabad-Karnataka region. Studies undertaken so far have focused primarily on the current socio-economic situation and have tended to pay less attention to the processes of social change and the evolution of the role of women in the region. Hence in the present study, an attempt is made to analyse social change and women in the historical perspective of Hyderabad-Karnataka.

3. THE STUDY AIMS TO:

- To explore the historical role of women in Hyderabad-Karnataka area.
- To examine the key factors that have led to social change and the empowerment of women in the region.
- To explore the importance of education and social changes in the empowerment of women.
- To find out the key problems that women are encountering in the social transformation.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative and historical research in nature to study women and social change in Hyderabad-Karnataka region. The study mainly focuses on secondary data which were gathered from

books, research articles and government reports regarding the women studies and regional development, from census data, journals, historical records etc.

Descriptive and analytical techniques have been adopted to comprehend the women's position in history, the role of education and social changes, and the social change process experienced in the region. The study also looks at questions of gender inequality, economic participation, and women's empowerment using existing scholarly and institutional sources.

The study is restricted to the region-specific historical data available, but has been made as reliable as possible using several trusted academic and government resources.

5. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF HYDERABAD-KARNATAKA REGION

The Hyderabad-Karnataka region or Kalyana Karnataka region comprised of the districts of Koppal, Kalaburagi, Ballari, Bidar, Raichur, Yadgir. The area was ruled by the Hyderabad Nizam until the independence of India and had a profound impact on the social, economic and educational development of the region. Infrastructure, literacy, health and social welfare were other areas where the region lagged behind other areas of Karnataka (Rao, 2020).

The status of women in the region was greatly shaped by traditional social norms and gender order. For the most part, women were restricted in their activities to domestic affairs, and had little access to education, property rights or employment opportunities. Social factors such as early marriage, illiteracy and economic dependency of women's status were prevailing social conditions, especially in rural areas (Sharma, 2021). The social norms and traditional values continued to limit women's roles in public and educational life.

Following the establishment of India and the merger of Hyderabad-Karnataka with Karnataka state, there were some shifts in social and educational norms, which had a positive impact on the situation of women. The government welfare schemes, literacy programmes, and reservation policies, along with rural development programmes have led to enhanced educational access and awareness among women (Patil & Kumar, 2022). However, over the past few decades there has been a significant rise in the involvement of women in education, self-help groups, political activities and job opportunities, which has resulted in a gradual change in the social landscape of the region.

However, the area still has poverty, gender disparity, unemployment and unequal access to resources issues. Hence, a knowledge of the past is significant in the study of social transformation and empowerment of women in Hyderabad-Karnataka.

6. WOMEN AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Traditional social systems and patriarchal practices have been a force for women in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region. The role and status of women in society were largely dependent on social norms, family structures, religious beliefs and economic factors. Women in rural areas had several roles, including household work, agricultural work, and family care, but their education status and involvement in ownership and decision making were less (Sharma, 2021). The patriarchal beliefs and constraints were a significant factor in limiting women's freedom and social mobility.

- A. The family and social customs are as follows:** The family was an important factor in determining women's social status in the area. Women's access to public life was still limited by traditional practices like early marriage, gender division of labour and relying on male family members. Domestic duties were more important than education and work for women in various contexts of social life. In many communities women's social identity was linked to family honor and cultural practices (Mehta, 2021). These practices had led to the unequal social status and restricted personal autonomy of women.
- B. Education and Awareness:** Education has emerged as one of the most important factors contributing to women's social change and empowerment. The Hyderabad-Karnataka region has historically had lower levels of female literacy rates compared with other regions, stemming from low socio-economic status, social conservatism and a lack of educational infrastructure (Rao, 2020). But once independence came, government educational policies, literacy drives, scholarships and

awareness drives slowly enhanced the education of the women. Higher Education opportunities led to higher awareness, self-confidence and social participation of women in social and economic activities (Patil & Kumar, 2022).

C. Economic Participation: Traditionally, women have participated in the regional economy through farming, household industries and informal labor activities. In rural areas, women played an active role in farming and livestock keeping, and in small-scale economy—where their contribution was not always valued. Over the last few decades, self-help groups, microfinance programs and employment schemes have enhanced the economic participation and financial independence of women. Women's role and decision-making power has also increased with economic empowerment in their families and communities (Sharma, 2021).

In spite of these encouraging progress, it is notable that women in the region still have to deal with problems like unequal wages, unemployment, limited access to higher education and social discrimination. Thus, education, employment and social awareness should be strengthened to realize gender equality and sustainable social transformation in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region.

7. SOCIAL REFORM AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Social reform movements, education programs and government welfare schemes have helped to significantly fill the gender gap in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region. Since independence, several policies and development programmes were formulated to address gender inequality and to promote the education, health status and economic participation of women. These reforms over the years brought about a shift in traditional social values and awareness of women's rights and empowerment (Sharma, 2021).

Education was one of the most powerful tools for social change. The government schemes like free education scheme, scholarships, hostel facilities, and literacy programmes helped in the enrolment of women in the schools and colleges, including in rural areas (Patil & Kumar, 2022). Educational development enhanced women's awareness, confidence and participation in social and economic events. Higher education also provided opportunities for women to enter professional work and into public life.

Other initiatives, such as women's self-help groups and rural development, also contributed to women's empowerment in the region. In many cases, women became financially independent and empowered with decisions making powers in their households and communities through microfinance and skill development initiatives and community engagement (Rao, 2020). Moreover, awareness campaigns on health, sanitation, legal rights and gender equality helped to drive shifts within society.

In the last few decades, the engagement of women in politics has also grown. Local Women's representation in Panchayati Raj bodies and local administration was supported by the Reservation policies in Local Governance Institutions. Through this participation women were more involved in decision making processes and community development activities (Mehta, 2021).

While some positive shifts have occurred, barriers like social discrimination, employment opportunities, unequal pay and access to higher education remain pertinent issues impacting women's empowerment in the region. Thus, continuing policy support, education and social awareness initiatives are still crucial to inclusive and enduring social development.

8. CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN

Although education, employment and social awareness have improved considerably, women in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region are still having to deal with many social and economic difficulties. Women's overall development and empowerment is affected by gender inequality, which is one of the major challenges. Women remain under-represented in decision making, education and employment opportunities, in rural areas especially, due to the legacy of the patriarchy (Sharma, 2021).

Women's social status in the region is also greatly influenced by poverty and illiteracy. Women, particularly those in economically deprived areas, are less likely to access higher education, health care services, and have access to financial resources. Women are still being prevented from achieving education and economic empowerment by marriage at an early age, dropping out of school, and relying

on informal employment (Patil & Kumar, 2022). These challenges are compounded in rural areas by poor awareness and poor infrastructure.

Economic inequality, unemployment is another significant issue. Women play an active role in agriculture and informal sector activities, but their contribution is not well valued, remunerated, and paid. Women still face wage discrimination, job insecurity, and limited access to skill development opportunities, impacting their financial independence (Rao, 2020). In addition, the pressure of household duties and work on working women is increased by balancing their roles.

Social discrimination and gender-based violence continues to be of serious concern. Women still suffer from social constraints, domestic violence and unequal access to social and economic opportunities in parts of the region (Mehta, 2021). These issues have a negative impact on women's confidence, movement and ability to engage in public activities.

Despite the introduction of welfare schemes by the government and social reform, the status of women in the Hyderabad Karnataka region is yet to take a significant leap forward, due to residual regional inequalities and traditional social attitudes.

9. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study observed that women in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region have been undergoing a slow social transformation over the years through education, social reforms, economic participation and government welfare initiatives. Historically, women in the area were subjected to various social constraints such as limited educational opportunities, domination by the patriarchy, economic dependence, and restricted involvement in public life. Women's status and development opportunities were heavily influenced by traditional customs and conservative social structures (Sharma, 2021).

One of the study's key findings is that education has become the most important factor contributing to women's empowerment and social mobility. The increased participation of women in social, economic and political activities has been due to increased educational opportunities, literacy programs and awareness campaigns (Patil & Kumar, 2022). Women with education have become more confident, able to make decisions and more aware of their health, legal rights and employment opportunities.

The study also shows that women's participation in the economy has increased considerably over the last few decades by way of self-help groups, agricultural activities, microfinance programmes and employment opportunities. Economic independence has raised the social status of women in families and communities. The government welfare schemes and reservation policies have also motivated women to participate in local governance and community development activities (Rao, 2020).

But the findings show multiple challenges continue to beset women's overall progress in the region. Gender inequality, unemployment, wage discrimination, poverty and unequal access to higher education and health care continue to be major hurdles. Poor infrastructure, low awareness levels and traditional attitudes continue to pose more challenges for rural women as compared to urban women (Mehta, 2021).

The discussion highlights the gradual but uneven nature of the social transformation among women in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region. Social and economic disparities, deeply entrenched, continue to affect women's lives despite significant progress in education and awareness. Thus, sustainable women's empowerment should be supported by policy and educational development, but also by wider social awareness and community participation.

10. SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study findings offer the following suggestions and recommendations for the empowerment of women and for the social transformation in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region:

- **Improvement in Women's Education:** There is a need to do more towards the improvement of female literacy and greater access to higher education particularly in the rural and economically weaker sections of the society.

- **Increasing Awareness Programs:** Government agencies and educational institutions should conduct awareness programs on women's rights, health, legal protection and gender equality
- **Creation of Economic Opportunities:** Enhance women's financial independence and economic participation by scaling up programs for skill development, self help groups and employment initiatives.
- **Improving Healthcare and Social Welfare:** Better healthcare facilities, nutrition programmes and welfare measures should be provided to improve the overall wellbeing of women in the region.
- **Promoting Political and Community Involvement:** Women should be encouraged to actively participate in local governance, community based organizations and social development activities.
- **Sex Discrimination and Reduction:** Social awareness campaigns should target patriarchal attitudes, child marriage, wage inequality and discrimination against women.
- **Improvement of Policy Execution:** Effective implementation and periodic monitoring of existing government schemes on women's empowerment and rural development at regional level. If implemented, these measures can play a major role in sustainable social development and improving the status of women in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region.

11. CONCLUSION

In the Hyderabad-Karnataka region, women have made significant contributions to social and economic development despite historical barriers such as illiteracy, poverty, patriarchal restrictions and limited access to opportunities. The study indicates that education, social reforms, government welfare schemes and economic participation have been instrumental in women empowerment and social change in the region.

The results show that women's status has improved slowly through awareness, literacy, and involvement in social and economic activities but a number of issues such as gender inequality, unemployment, and social discrimination are still affecting their overall development. Rural women, in particular, remain more vulnerable due to poor infrastructure and limited access to resources.

The study concludes that sustainable women's empowerment needs to be a combination of educational development, economic opportunities, effective implementation of policies and social awareness. Collaboration between government institutions, educational organizations and local communities is essential for inclusive and sustainable social transformation in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region. Future research may explore the district level variations in more detail and the influence of specific welfare programmes on the development of women in the region.

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