

# **ABSTRACT**

## **TRENDS OF CHANGE IN THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN ORISSAN SOCIETY SINCE INDEPENDENCE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

With an aim to explain and explore the nature of trends reflected in the change in 'Women-Situation' in Orissa, the present study has undertaken. In this context, it may be said that the 'Women-Situation', not only in India but also throughout the world, is in a marginalized state since ancient days which has gradually undergone a change due to the impact of era of humanism and consequently advancing through modernism to post-modernism. Obviously, a spectacular change is noticed in 'Women-situation', though a considerable part of women considered themselves as subalterns as they themselves are bound with prevailing social traditions, customs usages and beliefs, which one is based upon blind beliefs, superstitions, orthodoxy and conservatism. It is due to the impact of socio-cultural programmes and governmental initiatives, a trend, i.e. 'to awake with own conscience and effort', is emerging in the society. This brought a dynamic change in the women situation in Orissa.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- ① To know what changes has been made between pre-colonial and colonial days on women situation.
- ② To trace out when and how the changing trend in women situation emerged in the Oriya Society.
- ③ What are the leading factors to break down the subaltern mentality of women.
- ④ Emerging trend of self-awareness and self-consciousness to create the field for self help and self effort to overcome all the hurdles.

- ⑤ To evaluate the role of government and other public and private agencies to create awareness among women resulting in their rise from slumber.
- ⑥ Analyzing the factors leading to drop outs.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

The methodology that are adopted for reconstructing the work is followed by the visitation to the Orissa State. Archives, Orissa State Museum, State Library, Bhubaneswar, Parija Library, Bhubaneswar, Kanika Library, Ravenshaw University, Cuttack, Pandit Biswanath Central Library, Cuttack, District Library of Cuttack, National Library, Kolkata, States Archives Situated in different Provinces of Orissa for collection of the sources. All genuine documents like Governmental Proceedings, Gazettes, Records and News Papers are consulted. Besides, personal interviews are taken from different women belonging to different strata of society who has already experienced the changing trend in their own life. They are treated as genuine sources where as books, magazines, journals, proceedings, etc are treated as the secondary sources.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

The Oriya society, like other societies in India, is generally victimized by the gender bias, since ancient times and even in 21<sup>st</sup> century the society is not free from discriminating between men and women. A lots of proverbial sayings in Oriya language seem to be legalized the theory of inequality: '*Abala Durbala*' (Women is generally weak); '*Binasraye na Vartanti Kabita, Banita, Lata*, (The poetry, the dame and the creeper would not survive without a support), '*Jhia Janama ta Chulimunda Ku*' (a girl is born for serving hearth), '*Jhia Gheea*' (daughter is like Ghee). A further saying i.e. '*Duhita Duikula Ku Hita Duhita Dui Kula Ku Pita*'\* (a daughter is either beneficial or non-beneficial for two lineages), '*Jhia Janam ta Para Gharaku*' (a girl is born for other family). It

indicates the subaltern status of a woman in the society. Attempts were made to uplift the women situation from the day of medieval India by certain enlightened persons like Giasudin Balban, Allaudin Khilij, Sri Chaitanya and Akbar etc. But due to hard-core social stigma and mild measures it was not possible to emancipate

\*(a daughter is born in one dynasty and permanently settle down in her own husband dynasty for which she belongs to two lineages.)

women from the thralldom of domestic walls. In medieval Orissa, one of the great poets of the '*Pancha Sakha*' group called Balaram Das took a vigorous attempt to declare equality between men and women. In the voice of Goddess Laxmi, the poet was found to take a promise from Lord Jagannath, the Lord of Universe, to declare men and women equal in all spheres of life.

The Indian society must be thankful to Raja Ram Mohan Roy who gave a clarion call in the early thirties of 19<sup>th</sup> century for the emancipation of women and to extend them equal rights like that of the men. The impacts of socio cultural movements led by '*Brahmo Samaj*', '*Arya Samaj*' and '*Prathana Samaj*' were felt in different parts of India creating consciousness among women in India in general and Orissa in particular. Kuntala Kumari Sabat, an eminent physician by profession and a laureate by taste, tried to portrait the subaltern mentality of the women and called them 'Subalterns', which was again re-echoed in the voice of Gayatri Spivak calling the women as Subaltern (An easy in Geraldine Forbes, Women in modern India, 1996).

The emergence of Oriya women in the national scene was attested to Christian Missionarie's effort to educate the Oriya girls. The promotion and spread of women education, which was carried out through revolutionary writings (like Fakir Mohan Senapati's '*Rebati*' and '*Patent Medicine*' etc.) and opening up of girl's schools and colleges brought a dynamic change in them. On the other hand, the Gandhian movement

virtually brought the women to walk shoulder-in –shoulder with the male counterparts during the time of freedom struggle of India. The emergence of Oriya women in the national scenario during colonial period was judged from environmental situation and ‘self-determined-will’ perspectives of the women. This feeling got gradually intensified as the women themselves exercised their talents and genius on equal footing with the men for an all-round societal development from constitutional perspectives. As legislators, bureaucrats, judges and lawyers, physicians, technicians, educationists and laureates and in other fields related with different professions, the Oriya women had created a place for themselves.

About the changing trend in women situation, it is minutely and critically examined which is reflected in the following six chapters.

The **first chapter** throws light on ‘*Women in Gandhian Constructive Work*’, i.e. during post independence era and after the death of Mahatma Gandhi a number of women have come forward to translate Gandhian ideology in to action and spirit. They carried out wonderful works reforming societal development works in different sphere, eliminating blind beliefs and superstitions, abolishing custom and traditions that are unwholesome to the society, carrying out prohibition, trying to eradicate caste system and establishing communal harmony for the welfare of the mankind. These women, are hailed both from aristocratic and humble families who dedicated their lives and service for the cause and welfare of the mankind. Even if, some of the women are found to participate in the freedom struggle of India courting arrest from time to time at the cost of their own family interests. The names are to be highlighted here, they are Rama Devi, Malati Devi, Annapurna Moharana, Pravati Giri etc. Those who are attracted and influenced by the work of these ladies are: Tulasi Munda, Dhobendri Mohapatra, Rambha Devi, Pramila Swain, etc.

It is essential to highlight that these women carry out their works for the upliftment of the society for both men, women, young and old irrespective of caste, creed and religion. Rama Devi renounced politics only to spread Gandhian message in the society. Her aim was to establish a '*Rama Rajya*' in India by educating and awaring the people about their rights and privileges and instructing them how to elevate their economic status by self-help and self-effort. She taught the people to be self-dependent, self-confident, self-reliant and self-efficient through hard practice only to establish a society free from violence corruption, exploitation, humiliation and untruth. Her dedication to *Sarvodaya* work teaches the people to be socialist in mind. The measures she had taken during the flood and famine by distributing relief was really praiseworthy. During communal riots in Assam and in East Pakistan which was held after independence, her daring venture for establishing peace and serving to the refugee is really a land mark in History.

Malati Choudhury, a Bengali by birth and Oriya by marriage, is a rare example who dedicated her life for the cause of Orissa. She is a freedom fighter but after independence her principal object was to eliminate poverty and illiteracy from the social sphere. She was an ardent solidier of *Sarvodaya* movement and a socialist in action who always instigated the Schedule Tribes and Schedule Castes to fight against '*Muthadari*', '*Bethi*', '*Jungle Panu*' and '*Hata Panu*'. And it is due to her sincere effort, this practice is abolished for ever from Oriya society. Her fight against the blind beliefs and superstitions was superb. The Ranathalei incident in which she slapped Nepali Baba who pretended to cure of malignant diseases through human indoctrinations was praiseworthy. Her work to engage people in different economic activities relieving them from taking wine was really an adventurous step. It was due to her sincere effort that the spread of leprosy was checked in Bellagad region. Whenever and wherever she found injustice, illegality, and untruth activities, she protested like a tigress for which the officers and the police were afraid of her. She is like Goddess Saraswati to the

people of Orissa who devoted her best energy and time for the spread of education for the Scheduled Tribes and undeveloped regions in Orissa.

Annapurna Moharana, the daughter of Rama Devi Choudhury and Gopabandhu Choudhury followed the footsteps of her parent who worked till her death for the welfare of mankind. As a symbol of peace, nonviolence, truth and mutual harmony she became an active member in *Sarvodaya* movement. Wherever famine and drought occurred, her presence was found everywhere with relief materials. As a harbinger of peace, she meddled in the communal tensions created in Rourkela and Cuttack incident.

Pravati Giri, a lady from Western Orissa who was fondly called by Biju Pattnaik, the then Chief Minister, of Orissa, as '*Little Mother Tressa*' is in true sense known as Mother Teresa of Orissa. She was a living symbol of service, love, affection, sympathy, kindness and virtue that never broke down in severe hazardous situations. Beginning her carrier as a freedom fighter, she worked sincerely in *Bhoodan* movement after independence of India. She played a significant role with Rama Devi and Malati Choudhury to settle down communal issues that occurred in Rourkela in 1968. She was a lady who moved from village to village by ridding on the by cycle to distribute relief in flood and famine affected areas from 1967 to 1968 in Kalahandi, Cuttack, Balasore and Puri districts of Orissa. Then she took up the cause of orphanage for the settlement of orphan children especially in Western Orissa. It is due to her interest '*Kasturiba Matru Niketan*' and '*Bala Niketan*' were established. She worked for prohibition, upliftment of women, maintenance of health and hygiene, sanitation and cleanness of the villages. In the orphanages, she introduced schemes to train boys and girls in tailoring and Anganabadi works. As '*Badama*' she exercised a great influence on the children of the orphanages.

Dhobendri Mohapatra, a product of Malati Choudhury who has dedicated her life for the development and welfare of the tribes is also working now a day at the age of 71 in Kandhamala district of Orissa.

Influenced by the Gandhian principle of truth and non-violence, Annapurna Das after being graduated from Ravenshaw College in 1947 got attached to '*Kasturiba Trust*' under the guidance of Rama Devi. Her principal objective was to serve the people suffering from illness for which she moved from village to village along with the boarders of the '*Kasturiba Trust*'. During outbreak of communal riot in East Pakistan, her association with Rama Devi to serve the wounded persons and for the establishment of the peace was really commendable.

Prabhabati Devi, an associate of Pravati Giri really implemented Gandhian ideology by instructing the people to earn their livelihood by self-effort and to wear clothes by self weaving and self spinning; to boycott the foreign goods; to use swadeshi goods and also try to popularizes and promote the swadeshi goods; and to carry out prohibition. She was a true follower of Rama Devi and got determined with much enthusiasm to carry out social service by participating in the *Bhoodan* movements. Seeing the worst political situation in post independent India, she said in an exclamation; "To whom we would grieve. It is a matter of shame that our freedom fighters after assuming political power have opened the gateway to injustice and corruption. This corrupted ministers and politicians are from among us".

Mangala Sengupta, a great freedom fighter, who left Dacca for Cuttack with her own uncle Satyanarayan Sen Gupta during freedom struggle days of India virtually dedicated her life for the *Sorvodaya* movement, upliftment of Harijans, Promotion of *Kadhi* and the management of Kasturiba Gandhi Memorial Trust after independence.

There are also other women who mostly dedicated their lives for eradication of wine and drugs. They realize that the addiction to drugs and



wine create domestic violence, unethical behavior and loss of morality. With their persistent effort, they try to redress the worst situation of a women who always suffer from domestic violence and became a victim of social norms and traditions. Some names are to be illustrated here; they are Nayana Gamango a little educated tribal lady of Kandhamala, Tejeswari Sahu of Tileibari Block, Nargis Bahhar of Puri, Macha Baga of Visam Cuttack etc.

In the **second chapter**, the dynamic role played by the women in state politics is vividly described. Orissa as a colonial state witnessed the participation of women in direct politics in this context. The name of Sarala Devi should be highlighted who got elected to Orissa Legislative Assembly of 1936 after the formation of State of Orissa. As legislature she worked from 1936-1941 and mostly worked for the upliftment of the women in the society. She became the speaker for one day in Orissa Legislative Assembly. Sarala Devi was followed by Abarti Laxmi Bai who got elected to Orissa Legislative Assembly in 1937. Further, she was also elected in 1946 and appointed as Deputy speaker of Orissa Legislative Assembly. After independence, the women politicians who had achieved a spectacular success in politics is Nandini Satpathy, a fire band leader and eloquent orator and an uncompromising administrator. She was the daughter of famous Oriya literateur Kalandi Charan Panigrahi. She was the first lady Chief Minister of Orissa. She was bold, daring and extremely competent Chief Minister of Orissa.

V. Sugayan Kumari Deo, is the most senior most women of Orissa of Legislative Assembly who has been elected ten times inclusive of the last election. Bijay Laxmi Sahu, is a prominent Congress leader who serves the State of Orissa as a Minister of Women and Child Development and had achieved spectacular success. Besides, she is a social activist who is one of the pioneering authorities of the famous orphanage '*Basundhara*' in Cuttack.

With Drupadi Murmu, as Governor of Jharkhand, Orissa has created history of success in women empowerment especially on marginalized section of the society. Obtaining graduate degree from Rama Devi Women's college Bhubaneswar, she served as a teacher for some period. Her political carrier began as counselor of Rairangpur Nagar Panchayat in 1997. After serving as vice president of BJP's Schedule Tribes Morcha she was elected as legislature from Rairangpur constituency in 2005. During the BJP and BJD coalition Government in Orissa, she was the Minister of States with independent charge for Commerce and Transport Department from March 6<sup>th</sup> 2000 to August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2002 and Fisheries and Annual Resources, Development from August 6<sup>th</sup> 2002 to May 16<sup>th</sup> 2004.

Jayanti Pattnaik, the wife of Janaki Ballav Pattnaik, the former Chief-Minister of Orissa served as the member of Rajya Sabha from 1980-89 and 1998-99. She is highly educated.

Sushila Tiriya, a lady from tribal background excelled in political carrier by dint of her dynamic activities. Obtaining graduation degree from Utkal University, she started her political carrier at the age of 24 after joining the Youth Congress and became its vice president and president in 1983-84 respectively from Mayurbhanj district of Orissa. In 1986, she was elected to Rajya Sabha. During her term, she served as a member in the Consultative Committees of Ministry of Science and Technology, Atomic Energy and Ocean Development in 1986-87, Minister of Civil Aviation in 1987-88, and Ministry of Communications in 1988-89. From 1987 to 1993, she served as the General Secretary of the Indian Youth Congress. She was a member of the committees on Government Assurances (1988-89) and Welfare of Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes (1989-92). In 1994 she contested in the tenth Lok Sabha election from S.T seat and won from Mayurbhanj. During that term, she served as member of Consultative Committees of Ministry of Science and Technology, Forest and Environment, and Ministry of Food and Civil

Supplies from 1994 to 1996. From 1995 onwards, she served as the joint secretary of All India Congress committee, along with getting re-elected as a Lok Sabha member in 1996.

Sushree Devi, of Kendrapada district belongs to Royal family; she joined in state politics in 1971 and elected as a member of Legislative Assembly of Orissa for 10<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly Election (1990-1995) with Janata Dal ticket. As a member of committees on Industry and Water Resources, she carried out dimensional reforms.

Sanchita Mohanty, joined in B.J.P. and became General secretary of BJP Mahila Morcha, State Vice President of BJP etc. She is also associated with number of institutions both educational and non-educational. She was once elected as the member of Legislative Assembly Orissa from Korai constituency in BJP ticket for the 30<sup>th</sup> (2004-2009) General election of Orissa.

During 9<sup>th</sup> Assembly election (1985-90), two ladies Smt. Chandrama Santha and Bhagawati Pujari were elected from Pottangi and Podanga constituencies of Koraput districts respectively. Both of the ladies put their interest on development of women education, upliftment of Adivasi and *Harijana*, women etc.

The other ladies those who were elected as a members to the Orissa Legislative assembly were Premalata Mohanty, (1995-2000 Kamakhyanagar), Bijay Laxmi Pattnaik, (2004-2009, Khandapada) Indurani Mohapatra (1995-2000, Sora), Bishnu Priya Behera (2000-2004, Phulbani), Rani Jyotimanjari Devi (1957-1961, Deogarh), Anandamanjari Devi (1967-71, 1977-80 Sukinda) etc.

Mainly, discussions are carried out on the ladies who are active in social works in the **third chapter**. The name Saila Behera illumines brightly in the star studded bright sky of social activists who dedicates her life for '*Basundhara*' (an orphanage) and '*Sukanya*' (a master tailoring

unity) providing home, assurance and shelter to the women and orphan children. Being influenced by the Marxist ideology, she led a very simple and placid life working for the orphan, destitute, physically handicapped persons, beggars, and for the women who suffered in numerous ways.

Kavita Mohapatra a name to be remembered for ever is credited as the highest blood donor among the women of Orissa. For more than fifty times, she had donated blood and to serve the mankind. Her organization '*Sakha*' tirelessly work for serving the diseased and destitute human beings suffering from extreme pain and misery. Banker by profession, she is in the habit of extracting time for serving the needy and destitutes.

The name Bijoyeen Das symbolizes, on one side, the word love, sympathy and compassion who dedicates her life for the welfare of mankind and on the reverse, she illuminates her name as a prolific and lucid writer in the literary world. She is a rare combination of multifaceted genius who excelled in both the activities. As a principal editor of '*Jeevana Ranga*' (a literary monthly magazine) since 1970, she entertains the people with a number of reformatory ideas in one hand and on the other as a secretary of '*Sanjog*' (adoption co-ordinating agency, Orissa), she works for the care, protections and rehabilitation of disadvantage children.

Making Rama Devi and Annapurna Moharana's absolute dedication for the service of mankind as a principal *mantra*, Pramila Swain has started her carrier from *Sarvodaya* movement in 1970 to 1976. She first put her attention to work for women empowerment which is subsequently changed in 1978. Henceforth, she dedicates her life and energy for the promotion and welfare of innocent poor tribes, living in different parts of Orissa. Seeing the exploitation, torture, suffering, humiliation, poverty and hunger of the tribes, she got determined to do something for them and established a voluntary organization called 'Friend's Association for Rural Reconstruction' (FARR) in 1988 in Biswanathpur of Kalahandi. Her effort to create unity and integrity among

the tribes living in different parts of Orissa is really praiseworthy. She teaches them how to raise their voices against the corruption and tyranny of the higher caste people. It is due to her effort that the forcibly occupied lands of the tribes were returned back to them. For eradication of gender discrimination, she voluntarily heads 'National Alliance of Women' (NAOW) organization in Orissa which worked for political empowerment, health, human rights and violence against women.

Goddess Saraswati manifests herself in Bidut Kumari Lala, who is a versatile genius having proficiency as a prolific writer, fine dramatist, melodious singer, great organizer and above all a '*Messiah*' of women empowerment. Her Professional carrier as a teacher never obstruct to carry out philanthropic work as she is spiritually embedded to God. Much before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's *Swacha Bharat Abhiyan*' she has carried out cleanliness of the environment with her own effort. She has carried out different awareness programmes for saving environment from pollution hazards. She is not only confined to establish temples for the spiritual authority, (a temple at Benirampur in the district of Cuttack and other one is Harianka in the district of Kendrapada), she is also the pioneering authority to promote education by establishing a school named after '*Sri Maa and Sri Aurobindo Purananga Sikshya Kendra*' at Kakadiapad in Benirampur of Cuttack district at her own cost. She has donated her landed property for this noble cause. Besides, she promotes awareness programmes on different issues like Law and Legal, HIV-Aids, anti dowry, cancer and health etc. To help the people and to educate the people an organization called 'Sunaduba' is founded by her whose principal objective is to fight against, illiteracy, injustice, orthodoxy, blind beliefs etc, to built up the carrier and character of men and women for breaking down gender bias form the society.

Lalita Satpathy of Jagatsingpur is a dynamic and fire brand lady who went to Moscow in Russia during International Youth Movement for six months after completion of Post Graduate study. She has voluntarily

opted for a career of social activist being influenced and encouraged by her parent, husband, own uncle Prof. Babaji Charan Panda and other luminaries like, Saila Behera, Bijay Laxmi Sahu, Dr. Niruypama Rath, Prava Patel, Advocate Prabir Palit etc. Realizing the essence of women empowerment, she involved herself in multi-faceted programmes to awaken the women and the society from the age-long marginalised attitude towards women: for this purpose she has become one of the co-founder of '*Nari Surakshya*' organization and has become its principal secretary. Side by side, this organization published monthly magazine entitled '*Nari Surakshya*' reflecting the various issues and problems that are associated with women in the society. She is the principal editor of this magazine. In the initial days, the publication of the magazine was not so easy as it faced numerous obstacles both from the male and female folk as it gave a clarion call for the abolition of gender discrimination and the domestic violence on women.

Urmila Kuanar, is a rare example of unique energy and spirit who attained martyrdom only to save the tribe from drinking wine. Educationally, she was just a lower primary but by knowledge and thought she could surpass all the highest degree holders. Though she was murdered on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1988 by the local *Goonads* for her staunch opposition for sale and manufacture of wine, but she remains alive in history and has become a source of inspiration for other women.

Rani Majhi's fight against '*Bethi*' system proves to the fact that how the women of subaltern background has raised their voice of protest against the age-long tradition and customs. It is due to Rani Majhi's effort the '*Bethi*' system abolished in 1990. Further, her effort to unite the women of her village (Lanjiguda) to fight against drinking wine has brought a grand success. It is due to her effort, a school is also established in her village.

Kesabati Pradhan, is working hard for the upliftment of the tribes of her region. She always tries to change the life pattern of the tribes by teaching them to practice saving, not to borrow, to generate fund by own effort, to put interest in small-scale industries and to carry out women empowerment. Her childhood and married life has virtually become worst due to extreme wine addiction of her father and husband. An organization called '*Nipidita*' only to check on the wine selling and drinking in her region is established. She had survived the onslaught of death that was supposed to be inflicted on her by the *Goondas*.

Andhari Majhi's, brave, bold and daring spirit, who could even in one occasion (1993) asked Biju Pattnaik the then Chief Minister of Orissa that, "how much revenue has been derived from breweries for which you make the whole state drunkard", put a great pressure on the State Government and finally the sale of indigenous wine was prohibited in 1994 and the tribal women were entrusted with police power.

The **fourth chapter** reflects on the women who have made an outstanding and unique contribution in different fields. Boldly defying and ignoring the social customs and traditions in the then period, Dr. Bina Dei emerged as a revolutionary '*Messiah*' in the early decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to liberate women from the thralldom of the domestic walls. She was bold and adamant and promised to carry out her studies at adverse situations by hook or crook. Though she was born in an aristocratic family, but, she faced strong opposition from her family members for pursuing higher studies. Not disheartened by this negative attitude, rather, she took strong resolve that made her to be the first lady MBBS doctor of Orissa. Virtually, she had opened the way for other girls to be educated and it was due to her effort her own younger sister Jyostna Dei obtained MBBS degree and both the sisters got the credit of being the first MBBS lady doctor's of Orissa.

Dr. Jogamaya Pattnaik and Dr. Mahamaya Pattnaik, the two siblings of Khurda was the product of colonial India. Inspite of the opposition of family members to carry higher studies, they proceeded to continue with higher studies with the support of their own parent especially of their mother. They obtain MBBS degree from SCB Medical College Cuttack, in 1956. While continuing their studies in SCB Medical College, they started to teach the old people in the night holding latterns in their hands in the canal side of nearby college square of Cuttack. Both the sisters served different medical colleges and hospitals as a teacher after obtaining diploma course in *Gynaecology* and *Obsetrics* and also Master in Surgery. While serving in different hospitals both sisters started to look after the deserted children mostly left by unmarried girls after birth. Besides, Jogamaya Pattnaik who is alive now is still continuing to treat the people requiring medical help and also serve the needy and poor as and when it required. Mahamaya Pattnaik, the younger sister of Jogamaya Pattnaik is the pioneering authority of the foundation of '*Basundhara*', CDA in Cuttack which gives asylum to orphan, poors and old ladies. She was a silent worker who involved in multifarious social activities without much publicity.

Dr. Seba Mohapatra, who after completion of MBBS degree in 1968 in MS (O&G) in the year 1973 served under the State Health Services as Medical Officers, Specialist in O & G, Chief District Medical Officer and also as chief District Medical officer and also as Joint Director of Health services (Family Welfare) in the state Health Directorate. She also held the office as 'Director of Health Service, Orissa till her retirement in the year 2003, she is a dynamic lady who is thrilled to work in certain adventures projects. She took a great challenge to work under World Bank Project in Supervisory of and consultant of Directorate of State Institute of Health and Family Welfare, Orissa, Bhubaneswar for about four years. She had published a number of articles for safe motherhood. She believed that by following the duty sincerely in one's own respective work field is the true '*Dharma*' of a man.



It is known that Parbati Devi was the 1<sup>st</sup> lady actress of Orissa who performed the role of Sita in the film '*Sita Bibhaha*' in 1936, Produced by Mohansundar Dev Goswami. She was followed by others actresses. Manimala, was famous for her acting who started her carrier as a stage artist in Annapurna theatre in Puri in 1947. She was a fine artist. Her debut in the Oriya film '*Srilokanatha*' endowed her with the President's award. Besides, she acted in different Oriya films in different roles which touched the minds and heart of the people.

Jharana Das, a dynamic lady, has broken down the Oriya conservatism by joining in the filmdom. Her first picture '*Mala Jahna*' released in 1965 received the President award in the same year. This picture created a sensation stir in the minds of the Oriya people for its true reflection of societal behavior depicting utter neglect of a woman because she is a woman. Though, there were other lady actresses before her, but she is the 1<sup>st</sup> one to be credited to join in the film after completion of her graduation. Even doing job in All India Radio and becoming a mother, she has carried out acting in the films and Radio dramas. Even in the present day inspite of her old age her voice is as sweet as a sixteen years girl.

Mahesweta Roy (1962) a product of an elite family, made her first debut in '*Sesa Srabana*' in 1975. Her acting is superb and lively for which she is awarded many times with awards and honors. She is versatile and befitting for any type of role i.e. entrusted to her.

Aparajita Mohanty, (1965) the dream girl of Oriya cine worlds is a living symbol of communal-harmony a child of Hindu-Muslim Parent.

Renouncing technical Profession, Anu Choudhury (1978) had made her carrier in the filmdom. She is a beautiful damsel. Starting her carrier as a child artist, she did her first lead role in '*Maa Gojabayani*' in 2003. In the same year she also acted in a Bengali film '*Bhaire Sapatha*'. Her picture '*Kathanatara*' has credited her to win the best actress award in

the 4<sup>th</sup> cine Indian International Film, Noida. She also acted in Telugu, film. The beauty with a brain, has successfully established in her. She reigns not only in Oriya film industry, but also in the hearts of Oriya people.

Nandita Das, (1969), the daughter of Jatin Das, the famous painter of International repute, is a signing star who got international Award for her excellent and mind blowing acting. Starting her carrier with '*Jananatya Mancha*', a stage theater group in the capital of Delhi she entered into the filmdom with the film '*Parineet*' directed by Prakash Jha in 1987. Her picture '*Fire*' (1996) created great stir and sensation in the mind and heart of the people. She has shown her excellent debut in Oriya film '*Biswa Prakash*' and in a English movie '*Rockfort*'.

Kumkum Mohanty, is an excellent Orissi dancer who received '*Padama Shree*' award in 2005. She is the lady to be credited to handle very smoothly two affairs which are poles apart from each other. She is a fine classical Orissi dancer and a very good Indian Civil Servant who administered very finely Culture Department of Government of Orissa as special secretary.

Sanjukta Panigrahi, (1944), a well known Orissi classical dancer who won the hearts of millions both in the native land and from abroad, was a precious daughter of Orissa. She had brought into real life what the temple architecture of Orissa inscribed on its limbs. She was born in Berhampur of Ganjam district in Orissa to a traditional Brahmin family of Abhiram Mishra and Shakuntala Mishra. In recognition of her outstanding contribution to dancing and associated activities, she was honored with one of India's highest civilian awards, the '*Padma Shree*' in 1975. She was also recipient of the Sangeet Natak Academy Award in 1976.

Priyambada Mohanty Hejmadi, (1939) is a memorable mile stone in the field of Orissi Dance. She has written many articles about Orissi Dance which has earned both national and International reputation. She

has published most useful book called '*Orissa ra Nrutya*'. Priyambada Mohanty was awarded '*Orissa Sangeet Natak Accademy*' honor in 1980, '*Utkal Sangeeta Samaj*'. Award (1981) and '*Kalakar*' Award (1982). A large number of cultural organizations have honorarily appointed her in different positions, they are Orissa Sangeet Natak Academy; The Board of Studies of Dance, Drama, and Music of Utkal University; The Orissa Dance Research centre Bhubaneswar and the Dance Committee of All India Radio Cuttack.

Dynamism, charisma and astounding talent makes Aruna Mohanty one of the finest Orissi dancers in the field of classical art. Her perception of dance and choreography is unconventional. Aruna has considered dance to be the essence of her soul. She has received many awards and accolades for her contributions to the arts, including the Mahari Award (1997), Sanjukta Panigrahi Memorial National Award (2001), Fellow ship by ministry of HRD, Government of India, and the prestigious Sangeet Natak Akademi Puraskar Award in 2010 and finally *Padmashree* Award (2017).

Manorama Mohapatra (1936) a social activist, educationist, former Journalist and writer was born in Athagarh, Orissa. Manorama Mohapatra has greatly contributed towards the development of slum areas in the city by way of women empowerment and children education. At present she is the founder of President of '*Lok Sevak Yuva Mandal*' of Cuttack, President of Orissa '*Nari Sevak*' Sangha and a life member of the '*Kabir*' Peace Mission.

Sailabala Hazra, was adopted by Utkal Gourav Madhu Sudan Das and was known as Sailabala Das in Orissa. Under the guidance of Madhu Sudan Das she took interest in women education and women's placement in politics and in the executive services of Orissa. Under her guidance and effort Sailabala Women's College was established in her father's house in the year 1913. She also convinced Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime

Minister of India to appoint lady inspectress of school and in other posts of government. In a nutshell, she is the pioneer of women empowerment in Orissa.

Sunanda Pattnaik, (1934) is an Indian classical singer of Gwalior Gharana from Orissa Popularly known as the '*Guruma*'. She is considered one of the great dames of Hindustani music. She is the daughter of legendary Oriya Poet Baikunthanath Pattnaik. The great cuckoo of Orissa was endured with numerous awards, prizes and degrees for her valuable and unique contributions to the music world. They are Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1970 and 1971, Indian Life Time Achievement Award in 2009 and life time achievement award from the Orissa Society of the Americas (OSA) in 2012.

Soumya Mishra, the First Lady IPS officer from the state of Orissa is the cadet of 1994 batch IPS officer and has held several position and taken charge as special secretary of Home in state Government of Telangana. She served in various parts of Andhra Pradesh like Vijayawada, Karimnagar, Vishakapatnam, Vijayanagara and Warangal during her carrier as police officer. Soumya Mishra is currently posted as the Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of police, Vishakapatnam in Andhrapradesh.

Roopa Mishra, (1977) is the sixth All India Civil Service Examination topper from the state of Orissa. She is the topper of the Indian Administrative Service examination conducted by UPSC in the year 2003.

A Social activist by perception but an advocate by profession Mrs. Sujata Jena (1960) is a classic example of self empowered women who believes in morality and principle. She is in this profession since last thirty three years mainly dealing with civil matters. To change mind of the Oriya society, she wrote a book entitle '*Ama Adhikara Ama Aian*'.

Srabani Nanda, (1991) is an Indian woman sprint runner athlete from Orissa specialized in 4×100 relay, 100 meter and 200 meter sprint events. She belongs to Kandhamala District of Orissa. She won a gold medal and silver medal in 200 and 100 meter sprint respectively at the 2016 South Games in Assam.

Namita Toppo, (1995) is an Indian women hockey Player from Orissa. She belongs to Jaurmal Village, Rajgangpur Block, Sundargarh district of Orissa. She was a part of the Indian team that made history by winning the bronze medal for the country. She represented the country in third women's Asian Champions Trophy in Japan in 2013.

Dutee Chand, (1996) is an Indian professional Sprinter and current national champion in the women's 100 meters event. She is the third Indian women who have ever qualified for the women's 100 meters event at the summer allspice Games having qualified for the event 2016.

Anuradha Biswal, (1975) is an Indian track and field athlete from Orissa who specializes in 100 meter hurdles. She holds the current national record of 13.38 seconds for 100 hurdles. Anuradha set this record on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2002; during the DDA-Raja Bhalendra Singh National circuit meet held at the Nehru Stadium National in Delhi, she won a bronze medal for her performance in Jakarta. She is working with NALCO in Bhubaneswar, Orissa.

Giribala Mohanty, (1932) was the first Oriya lady pilot of Orissa. Her father was Natabar Mohanty and mother was Indubala Mohanty. After Passing B.A. from Ravenshaw College in Oriya (Hons) and obtaining Law Degree from Madhusudan Law College, Cuttack, she became a commercial pilot having 'B' License.

Padmalaya Das (1931) was born in Brahmin family in Brahamapur. Her father was Ramesh Chandra Ratha and mother was Rama Ratha. She is the first lady Reporter of Orissa. She started her column writing in

*'The Hindustan Standard'* relating to the cultural and current News of Orissa. She became famous for her writing in different English News Paper.

Sudhira Das is the first lady Engineer of Orissa. After completing Engineering, she joined as Lecturer in a Private Engineering School at Berhampur. After selection of Public Service Commission, she worked as a District Industrial officer from 1959 to 1963 and also worked as a Lecturer at Berhampur and Cuttack Engineering School in deputation.

The **Fifth Chapter** highlights on Women Empowerment. Gender equality is the latest phenomenon which creates awareness in different parts of the world because gender-base violence is a Global issue inclusive of health, human rights and developmental strategy that transcends geography, class, culture, age, race and religion to affect every corner of the world. U.N has also taken a number of steps for the eradication of gender based discrimination from the society. In India and in Orissa its impact had been felt. If it would have been judged from societal perspectives, it would be found that, now a days, people are getting conscious and aware to educate their girl child. Mostly the people of the urban areas are seemed to treat equally to their girl child with that of the boys. But in most cases, even if in enlightened family, the boys are in more advantageous position rather than that of the girls. Considering about the rural situation, it is found that the girls are mostly neglected and, even if, from the tender age the girls are used as a domestic help to their parents instead of going to the school for education. The concept is that "A girl is others property" makes some family members to be apathetic to rear up their girl child in an enlightened way. However, there are some other factors that stand as a great obstruction for the girl's education. The reasons are absence of proper toilet inside the school for the use of the girl; the use of torn clothes during the period of menstruation which cause great disturbance during that period; eve-teasing of girls by the boys and others; and the pecuniary trouble in the family. For promoting women

education and checking the abortion of female foetus our Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave a clarion call '*Beti Bacho Beti Padho*'. The government of India has taken a number of measures for women empowerment and for the birth of girl child safely. The State Government Schemes are: '*Mamata*' (scheme for pregnant women and lactating women, Orissa financial incentive); '*Biju Kanya Ratna Yojana*', (*Ama Kanya Ama Ratna*); Women Helpline (WHL), '*Swadhara Shelter Home*', (Food, Clothing for Women of Orissa), and 'Women Empowerment Programme (Technical Support, Market and Credit linkage) etc.

In conclusion, it is to be told that it is a great challenge to the present situation that how a women is trying to cope with the changing scenario of the environment. Though the government, some social activists and NGOs are formulated certain principles as it is discussed in the conclusion, it is exclusively depended on a women to empower herself: though from the above discussion it is found that even if some women of marginalized section by their self-courage, self-confidence and self-effort rose into prominence but their numbers are few. Most of the women from the elite society are found to be busy with their own affairs without trying to contribute a little for the women upliftment. The need of today is that each one, be a man or a woman, must try to empower himself/herself and at the same time must try to empower the other persons by creating zeal and convincing them that they have enough potency to make themselves empowered. Debate, discussions, seminars and conferences etc, should not be confined to certain days, but its spirit must be carried in everyday life so that a woman could release herself from the confinement of blind belief, superstitions, customs and traditions, etc. So long the feeling of recognizing one's own spirit and potentiality is not done, there is little chance of obtaining women empowerment. It is not wise to think that it is the sole responsibility of the government to make plans and programmes for women empowerment, rather, the society as a whole must shoulder the responsibility.

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