

## Educational Development in Odisha; A bird's eye view

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### Abstract

All individuals have a fundamental right to receive a quality education despite their gender and caste. Women play a prominent role in a country's social, cultural, religious, and political norms; most importantly, they constitute half the population. They also play various roles as friends, daughters, sisters, wives, daughters-in-law, etc. So, educating all women has become the call of the day, and the Government is also taking this seriously and working out on various programs to make all women and girls educated. This article will deal with multiple steps the Government undertook before independence for women's education in Odisha, and also it will deal with the recent programs of action.

**Keywords:** development, education, rights, women, independence.

*"I ask you all so earnestly to open girl's schools in every village and try to uplift them. If the conditions of women are raised, then their children will, by their noble actions, glorify the name of the country".*

- Swami Vivekananda

A woman has maximum impact on the economic and social decision-making of the family. At the micro level, an educated woman can make the whole family understand the value of education. At the macro level, an educated woman adds to the social and economic development of the country. Educating a woman is like sowing a seed that, in the future, would turn into a cheerful, green, and fully grown family plant. Our ancestors understood this well, so, in ancient times, girls' education occupied a significant societal position. Maitreyi and Gargi played a considerable role in representing that era.

The twentieth century brought all the hope, confidence, and aspiration for the women of Odisha. Despite all the hardship, the rule of the British Government, and the situation of the people, Odia women foresee their future in the new education system introduced by the British Government in Odisha. Gandhiji also became the spokesman and advocated women's education.

*"I am strongly in the opinion that women should have the same facilities as men and even special facilities where necessary."*

The progress of women's education in Odisha can be well understood during the British and post-British periods.

**British Period**

Odisha came under British rule in 1803; before that, there was an indigenous education system consisting of “chat sales” and “make tabs.” The missionaries, who had come with the British, took the initiative to introduce institutions and schools for educating women of Odisha. Still, Hindu girls were reluctant to join the institution for fear of proselytizing. In 1822, the first native school was established by the Baptist mission in Cuttack. The Baptist missionary ladies of Cuttack and Balasore were the first agencies that took steps to educate the women of Odisha. Female missionaries like Mrs. Sutton and Lacy made extensive trips with their husbands to observe the condition of Odisha and took steps to educate women of Odisha. In 1836 a boarding school for natives was established where only three girls were enrolled. At that time first middle school for girls was established in Cuttack.

To add to all this developmental work, missionaries opened orphanages, which subsequently developed into women’s education centers. A missionary lady Mrs. Smith established a Zenana Association in April 1869 at Balesore to educate homemakers. Initially, there were only six women, but gradually the number increased. By 1872 it reached 126. Mrs. Smith appointed a native Christian woman as a Zenana teacher in Bhadrak. Orthodox Hindus couldn’t accept this system, and eventually, a girl’s school was established at Balesore, managed by Hindu gentlemen, with 38 girls. In 1869 a gentleman Abhinash Chatarjee opened a school in his house at Cuttack. He named Cuttack Hindu Girls School, which had only six girl students then, and eventually, it became the hub of women’s education in Odisha, named Ravenshaw Hindu Girls School. By the end of 1873-74, there were seven schools in Puri dist. And 39 schools in Cuttack dist. As per the resolution 1876, the proposal of establishing separate schools for girls was carried on to encourage girls to attain schools. Mr. J.A Hopkins, the inspector of schools, proposed different primary schools for girls. S.N Dey published the first Odia book for girls to attract them to school, named “Balika Pathe.”

In 1887, the Government nominated Madhusudan Das as the Vice-Chairman of the Cuttack District Board. He tried his level best to improve women’s education not only in coastal districts of Odisha but also in feudatory states. Many noble persons contributed a lot towards improving the education system in the state. Some of the noble souls were, The Maharaja of Keonjhar, Raja of Hindol, the Rani of Talcher, Raja Syamananda De, and Baikunthanath De (Zamindar) Choudhary Krutibas Das, Pranakrushna Roy, Baidyanath pandit donated money for the construction of girl's schools. The Maharaja of Keonjhar offered scholarships to deserving girls to advance their education. In 1884, two students at Ravenshaw Hindu Girl's school got a scholarship for their results. These women were Nisamani Devi and Basanti Devi.

The Odia journals, published during the late 19th century, also advocated raising the Odia women’s status. On 12th November 1882, 'Utkal Dipika,' an Odia magazine, published one article on Female education, in which the writer approached the people in words.

*“If you want to raise the country, and if you want to give education to your children, you should give attention to the upliftment and education of the women in the country. We hope the educated Odisha will try their utmost to give education to their daughters, sisters, and wives.”*

1882-83 Hunter commission gave a new dimension to girls’ education. Women teachers and inspectors were appointed in schools, encouraging girls to attend school. In the same year, the number

of girls students was 2416; 823 attended unique girls' schools. At that time, there were only 33 girls' schools in Odisha. In 1889-90 first Odia girl Saraswati Bai passed the middle school scholarship examination in Cuttack, and in 1902, missionaries established a training school to train the primary women's teachers.

In 1906 Reba Roy, niece of Madhusudan Rao, opened a girl's school in Cuttack with only seven students, and subsequently, it became a full-fledged school named Ravenshaw Girls School. In 1907 it increased to 45 students. Mission Girls School was opened in Cuttack in 1920 to provide professional training to the girls. In 1915-16 intermediate classes were opened, and in 1922-23 IA Classes were opened at Ravenshaw Girls School.

In 1934 there were eight girl students in collegiate degree classes. In 1930 five women were admitted to Ravenshaw College, a milestone in the history of women's education in Odisha. In 1936 only 4 P.G. Lady Students were there in Ravenshaw College. The Ravenshaw Girls' High Schools was raised to the Degree status in 1946. It was the only women's college during the pre-independence era. It was named Shailabala Women's College. By 1936 when Odisha became an independent province, there was no degree women's college. About sixty thousand Odia girls and women out of around four million females could come for education from elementary to college.

With the progress of education, there was also progress in literary productions. Women with talent started to produce writing in Odia. Poetess like Sulakshana Devi and Suchitra Devi wrote poems of a high order. Reba Roy wrote prolific writings. Her contribution was significant in reforming society and raising Odia women's education standard to the level of the educated class of men. She was the editor of the Odia monthly named 'Prabhat.' It was visible that women education made satisfactory progress in Odisha by the end of the 19th century. The Government reported, 'Female education made a remarkable advance during the quinquennium, the number of girls under institution, both in the girl's schools and boy's schools having doubled.'

Govt of Odisha and Bihar appointed a female education committee under resolution No. 1284E, dtd. 8/6/1914 for the promotion of female education. The Committee of 1914 suggested to the Government that some measures be adopted for the expansion of Female education. Firstly, the committee did not wish to discourage co-education but opined that if funds permitted, a separate girl's school should be opened when the number of girls in a boy's school reached. Secondly, they stressed that the appointment of female teachers in girls' schools should be avoided. Thirdly, they said that a quarter of the total number of lower primary scholarships should be reserved for girls, together with a certain number of upper direct scholarships, in districts where meritorious candidates were likely to be forthcoming.

Fourthly, they wished to see a survey of places where training classes of the different grades could be opened with a reasonable prospect of success. Fifthly, they considered that a considerable increase was necessary for the staff of Inspectors and Asst. Inspectors. Finally, they prepared a draft curriculum for girls' primary schools. An essential feature of the new curriculum was the provision for the study of such subjects as needlework, cooking, and first aid.

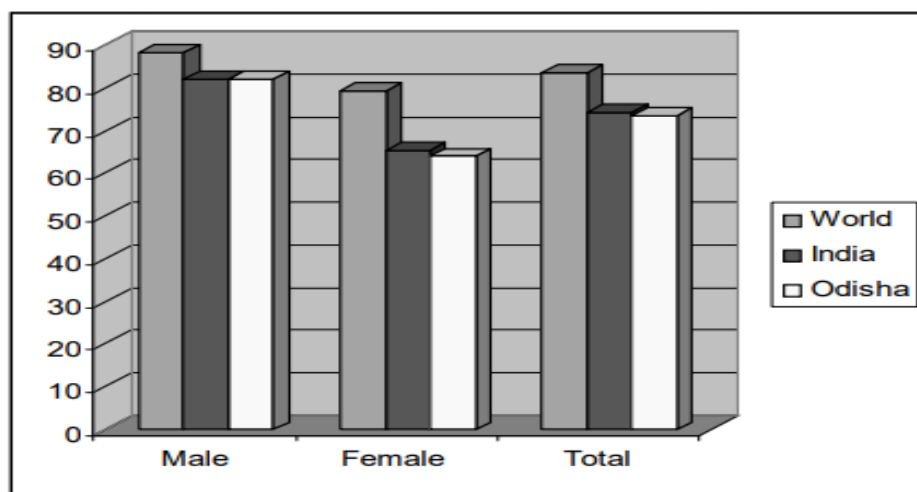
The missionary work was not only for the cause of education but also for the closure of social evils like infanticide, child marriage, Sati, etc. The missionaries worked very hard. They rescued girls

sold away by their poor fathers who would have taken them either to beggary or to prostitution or for sacrifice by the Khonds. These girls rescued by the missionaries were brought up with great care and economic security. These missionaries also started some institutions for women's welfare. Here, they were trained in various Arts and draft work. To relieve poor parents, the apostles began Christian marriage without any expenses. The missionaries were the pioneers to raise their voice against 'Sati' and advocate widow marriage and the abolition of child marriage. In this way, we can see that despite all other untoward situations, Christian missionaries undoubtedly tried their utmost to move the blind customs relating to the Odia women and tried to bring about new light to Odia women folk.

**Post British Period**

After India gained independence, various steps were taken in the form of multiple programs to develop the educational sector of the country as well as the state. Some of the major programs have been stated below.

Literacy Percentage of World, India, and Odisha (2011)



	Male	Female	Total
<b>World</b>	<b>88.03</b>	<b>79.2</b>	<b>83.7</b>
<b>India</b>	<b>82.14</b>	<b>65.46</b>	<b>74.4</b>
<b>Odisha</b>	<b>82.04</b>	<b>64.04</b>	<b>73.5</b>

The following programs were undertaken for the welfare of the girls and women.

1. District Primary Education Programme (DPEP).
2. Sarva Sikshya Abhiyan (SSA)
3. Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS)
4. National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)
5. Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE)
6. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)
7. Condensed Course of Education for Adult Women.
8. Mahila Mandal Programme

9. Short stay Homes
10. Rehabilitation of Women in Distress.
11. Central home for Women.
12. Swadhar
13. Working Women's Hostel
14. Balika Samriddhi Yojana (BSY)
15. Rajiv Gandhi National Crèche for the Children of Working and Ailing Mothers.
16. Awareness generation program
17. Family Counseling Centres
18. State Old Age Pension Scheme (SOAP)
19. National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAP)
20. Mahila Vikash Samabaya Nigam (MVSAN)
21. Mission Shakti
22. Swabalambana Scheme
23. National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFDCC)
24. Swayamsidha
25. Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS)
26. Kishori Shakti Yojana. Committees and Commissions On Women's Education

Following Committees and Commissions have discussed the various issues regarding women's education.

1. University Education Commission - (1948-49)
2. Secondary Education Commission (1952-53)
3. Smt Durgabai Deshmukh Committee (1959)
4. Smt Hansa Mehta Committee (1962)
5. M. Bhaktavatsalam Committee (1963) looks into the causes of public support for girls' education, particularly in Rural Areas, and enlists public cooperation.
6. Indian Education Commission (1964-66)
7. National Policy on Education (1968)
8. Committee on the status of women in India (1974)
9. Challenges of Education (1985)
10. National Policy on Education (1986)
11. Program of Action 1986 and 1992

**Conclusion:**

Education is not purely a matter of literacy or paper qualification. It is an exercise to be dignified, austere, self-controlled, and above all, humane. Gandhiji said, "if you educate a boy, you educate only one individual, but if you educate a girl, you educate the whole family. Education is regarded as an essential instrument and means for generating awareness and adequate knowledge and skills. So, to uplift women's status, attention is needed, and that could only be possible through education.

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