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SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN IN AHMEDNAGAR DISTRICT OF MAHARASHTRA: A GEOGRAPHICAL STUDY



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ABSTRACT

women constitute about half of the total population of the world or any nation, but their share in fruits of development is abysmally low not only in developing countries but also countries of developed world. The status of women is unequal and varies from caste to caste, religion to religion and region to region. In this paper it is attempted to analyse spatial patterns of socio-economic status of women at tahsil level in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra and changes therein from 1991 to 2011. The present study is based on the secondary sources of data, which is mainly derived from District Census Handbook 1991, Primary Census Abstract of Ahmadnagar district 2001 and 2011. For measuring the comparative status of women in respective years, Prof. Kundu's (1980) method of normalization has been used and further more composite indexes are computed. It is revealed that Nagar tahsil was consistently identified with highest level position of women during 1991 and 2011, whereas Jamkhed and Shevgaon tahsil was left behind and identified with lowest level position of women in 1991 and 2011 respectively. It is also explicit that, though there is remarkable spatial variation in women's status at tahsil level, but those tahsil having progress in urbanisation and industrialisation also having better off with respect to women's status during 1991 to 2011. It is inferred here that women's socio-economic status has improved during the last two decade and suggested that priority for raising their status should be given to the most lagging tahsils to slash the gap between their statuses and regional disparities.

KEYWORDS :Socio-economic, Gender, Discrimination, Women status.

1. INTRODUCTION

Though women constitute about half of the total population of the world or any nation, their share in fruits of development is abysmally low not only in developing countries but also countries of developed world. Gender discrimination remains pervasive in many dimensions of life in world-wide. Though there is considerable increase in gender equality in recent decades, the nature and extent of the discrimination vary considerably across countries and regions. Gender gaps are widespread in access to and control of resources, in economic opportunities, in power, and political voice. Women and girls bear the largest and most direct costs of these inequalities, but the costs cut more broadly across society, ultimately harming everyone (World Bank, 2001).

The status of women is a recently emerged complex, dynamic and multi-dimensional concept. The 'status of women' has been defined by scholars putting different emphasis to its various dimensions. It is used as an access to resources such as education, employment and health services. Sometimes, it is also used to indicate the position (power, prestige and authority) that a women has in various situations in the society (Mahadevan et al., 1989). The status of women is unequal and varies from caste to caste, religion to religion and region to region. Since this age of reform, world-wide the position and status of women in society is undergoing a vast change. So there is a need today for a dispassionate and impartial study of the position of women at micro level and from different space and time.

2. OBJECTIVES

To appraise the decade-wise socio-economic status of women and changes in it from 1991-2011 at tahsil level in Ahmadnagar district of Maharashtra.

3. STUDY AREA

Ahmadnagar district is situated partly in the upper Godavari basin and partly in the Bhima basin occupying a somewhat central position in the Maharashtra state. It lies between 18° 2' and 19° 9' north latitude and 73° 9' and 75° 5' east longitude. It is surrounded by Nashik and Aurangabad districts to the north, Beed and Osmanabad districts to the east, Solapur and Pune districts to the south and Pune and Thane districts to the west. Topographically the district can be divided into three parts, viz. the Sahyadri ranges, plateau region and Bhima, Godavari basins. It is the largest district of Maharashtra state in terms of area. It covers an area of 17413 sq km which is about 5.66 per cent area of the state.

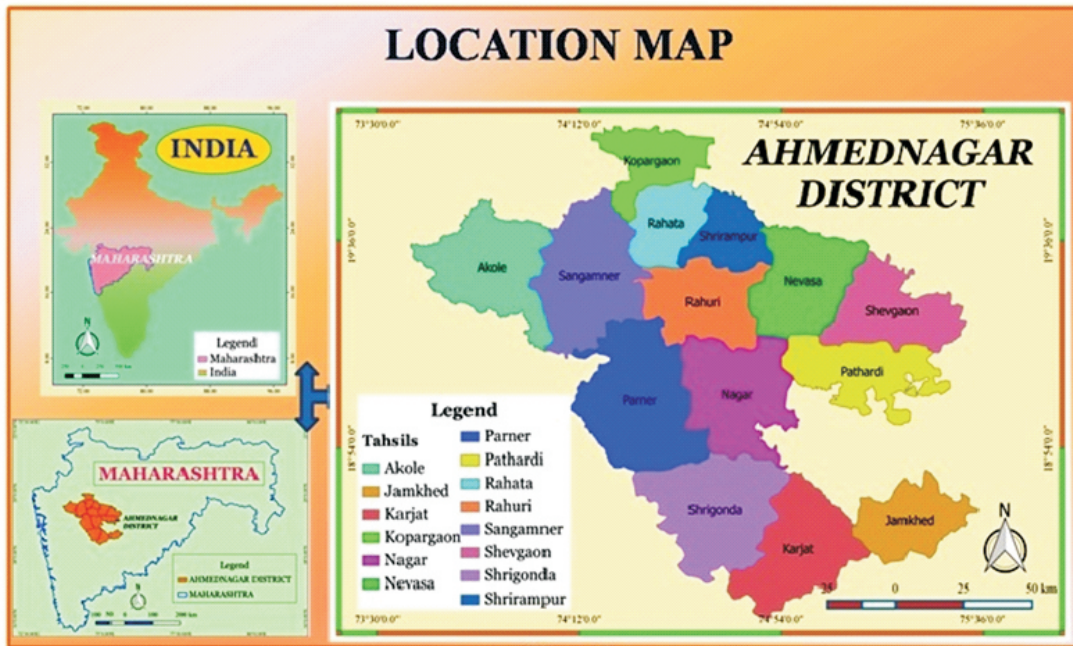


Fig. 1

4. DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on secondary sources of data, which is mainly derived from District Census Handbook 1991, Primary Census Abstract of Ahmadnagar district 2001 and 2011. For the present study, six socio-economic indicators like general sex ratio, child sex ratio, female literacy rate, female work participation rate, female workers in non-agricultural sector and proportion of urban female etc. are taken in to consideration separately to assess the socio-economic status of women concerning to the respective decades. For measuring the comparative status of women in respective years, Prof. Kundu's (1980) method of normalization has been used. Herein we have been computed the mean of the mean of each indicator comprising with two decades from 1991 to 2011. Accordingly each observation of each indicator has been divided with their respective mean of the mean so as comparative analysis of women's status have been done at tahsil level, for the year of 1991, 2001 and 2011. As far as weightage is concerned, equal weightage has been assigned to all selected indicators to compute the status of women during 1991 to 2011. Thereafter, the transformed values of each indicator are added up linearly and lastly the scored values of composite index put into descending order and lastly, on the basis of composite index value, women's status has been classified into following four categories.

- I. Very High Level Status of Women (Above 7.00)
- II. High Level Status of Women (6.00-7.00)
- III. Moderate Level Status of Women (5.00-6.00)
- IV. Low Level Status of Women (Below 5.00)

5. SPATIAL PATTERNS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN (1991 -2011)

5.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN, 1991

The composite index of socio-economic status of women indicates (Table 1 and Fig. 2A) that, the

status of women's index is highest in Nagar tahsil (8.90) whereas lowest in Jamkhed (4.16) and Nevasa tahsil (4.16) during the year 1991. Women's status is much higher in the Nagar tahsil, because it is a district headquarters, mostly urbanized and industrialized tahsil. There is also progress in educational, health and infrastructural facilities. On the other hand Jamkhed as well as Nevasa tahsil is far off regarding socio-economic status of women because of low female literacy rate, and significant proportion of female workers engaged in agricultural activities rather than non-agricultural activities and also these tahsil are entirely rural in nature.

I. Very High Level Status (Above 7.00)

Very high level status of women was identified in Nagar (8.90) and Shirampur tahsil (7.25). It is because of Nagar tahsil having a district headquarters and centrally located in the district. Both the tahsils are mostly urbanized and industrialized. There is also significant progress in basic infrastructure, like education, health, transportation and communication. Hence, there is found better level of living, higher female literacy rate, higher proportion of urban females and higher female workers in non-agricultural sector.

II. High Level Status (6.00-7.00)

In 1991, high level of women's status was found in as many as 3 tahsils viz. Sangamner (6.11), and Rahuri (6.07) and Kopargaon (6.05). High level of women's status was closely related with the urbanization, industrialization and agricultural development. Further, better standard of living, better female literacy and raise in participation of female workers in non-agricultural sector rather than agricultural sector are major responsible factors.

III. Moderate Level Status (5.00-6.00)

Only Rahata (5.43) tahsil was witnessed with the moderate level status of women. It is adjacent to the developed tahsil and also urbanized one. Therefore, there is observed moderate level of female literacy (52.73 per cent), female work participation (33.34 per cent), proportion of urban females (14.46 per cent), sex ratio (930 females per 1000 males) and child sex ratio (922 girls per 1000 boys) which leads to indicate moderate level socio-economic status of women in 1991. Declining sex ratio is concerned with the level of urbanization. Therefore herein it is observed that higher is the level of urbanization lower is the sex ratio. It is because of the fact that there is rural-urban sex selective migration.

Table 1
Ahmadnagr District: Socio-Economic Status of Women (From 1991 to 2011)

Sr. No.	Tahsil	1991							2011						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	*WCI	1	2	3	4	5	6	*WCI
1	Akole	996	986	33.9	49.7	9.44	0	4.62	974	894	65.5	50.5	9.76	3.34	5.3
2	Sangamner	953	946	46.5	43.1	17.5	13.7	6.11	943	856	72	42.9	16.8	18	6.67
3	Kopargaon	941	946	49.1	36.7	8.15	24.8	6.05	942	888	71.7	35.8	17.5	21.9	6.84
4	Rahata	930	922	52.7	33.3	10	14.5	5.43	940	845	75.1	32.5	28.2	18.1	7.3
5	Shrirampur	950	945	53.5	27.1	16.5	35.5	7.25	962	865	74.8	30.8	28.4	31.5	8.22
6	Nevasa	945	953	41.2	45	4.23	0	4.16	934	847	70.1	44.4	12.4	0	5.1
7	Shevgaon	954	950	36.4	47.7	4.69	0	4.18	953	843	63.4	46.8	9.28	0	4.83
8	Pathardi	957	950	36.3	49.9	3.3	10.2	4.82	926	827	63.9	50.4	8.72	10.5	5.55
9	Nagar	912	941	61.1	26.8	29	45.2	8.9	931	866	80.9	27.6	44.3	62.6	11.51
10	Rahuri	943	969	48.5	37	11.4	21.1	6.07	934	838	71.7	37.9	16.4	21.6	6.73
11	Parner	1017	956	40.7	50.3	3.14	0	4.27	955	844	66.8	52.7	8.84	0	5
12	Shrigonda	949	951	43.5	46	4.57	9.11	4.87	923	835	67.9	50.5	8.74	9.95	5.6
13	Karjat	939	936	38.1	48.3	4.64	0	4.19	914	823	65	49.9	7.54	4.98	5.08
14	Jamkhed	955	937	34.7	46.6	5.41	0	4.16	920	820	62.3	45.6	11.4	21.9	6.38
Weight		1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1	1	1	1	1	1	6

Source: 1) District Census Handbook of Ahmadnagar District 1991.

2) Primary Census Abstract of Ahmadnagar District 2011.

Note: *WCI - Composite index, Women

1) General Sex Ratio 2) Child Sex Ratio 3) Literacy Rate 4) Work Participation Rate

5) Workers in Non-Agricultural Sector 6) Urban Population.

IV. Low Level Status (4.00-5.00)

Lower level socio-economic status of women was observed in remaining 8 tahsils, for instance, Shrigonda (4.87), Pathardi (4.82), Akole (4.62), Parner (4.27), Karjat (4.19), Shevgaon (4.18), Nevasa (4.16) and Jamkhed (4.16). It is explicit that, all these tahsils are located in drought-prone area, agriculturally less developed, less urbanized or un-urbanized, while the remaining Akoleis hilly and tribal tahsil (47.86 per cent, 2011). Further, lower level of literacy, higher female workers are engaged in agriculture sector all these factors are concerning to the inferior status of women.

5.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN, 2011

The spatial pattern of socio-economic status of women show (Table 1 and Fig.2B) that the composite index value of women's status was found highest in Nagar tahsil (11.51), whereas lowest was found in Shevgaon (4.83) tahsil during the 2011. Nagar is one of the highly urbanized, industrialized and modernized in nature, on the other hand Shevgaon tahsil is one of the backward tahsils in nature.

I. Very High Level Status (Above 7.00)

Women's very high class position was observed in Nagar (11.51), Shrirampur (8.22) and Rahata (7.30) tahsil. These tahsils are prosperous concerning to the innovation in agriculture, industrialization

and urbanization as compared to the rest of the tahsils. There is also much of the progress in social and infrastructural facilities, like health, education, road and rail transportation, communication, banking, etc.

II. High Level Status (6.00-7.00)

Women’s high level status was identified in Kopergaon (6.84), Rahuri (6.73), Sangamner (6.67) and Jamkhed (6.38) tahsil. All these tahsils are urbanized as well as industrialized, except Jamkhed. On the other hand there are found higher level of female literacy, higher proportion of female workers in non-agricultural activities and higher proportion of females residing in urban area, these are the major causes behind the higher level status of women.

III. Moderate Level Status (5.00-6.00)

There are as many as six 6 tahsils identified with moderate level status of women. These tahsils are Shrigonda (5.60), Pathardi (5.55), Akole (5.30), Nevasa (5.10), Karjat (5.08) and Parner (5.00). All these tahsils indicate the improvement in modern facilities like, education, health, transportation and communication, etc.

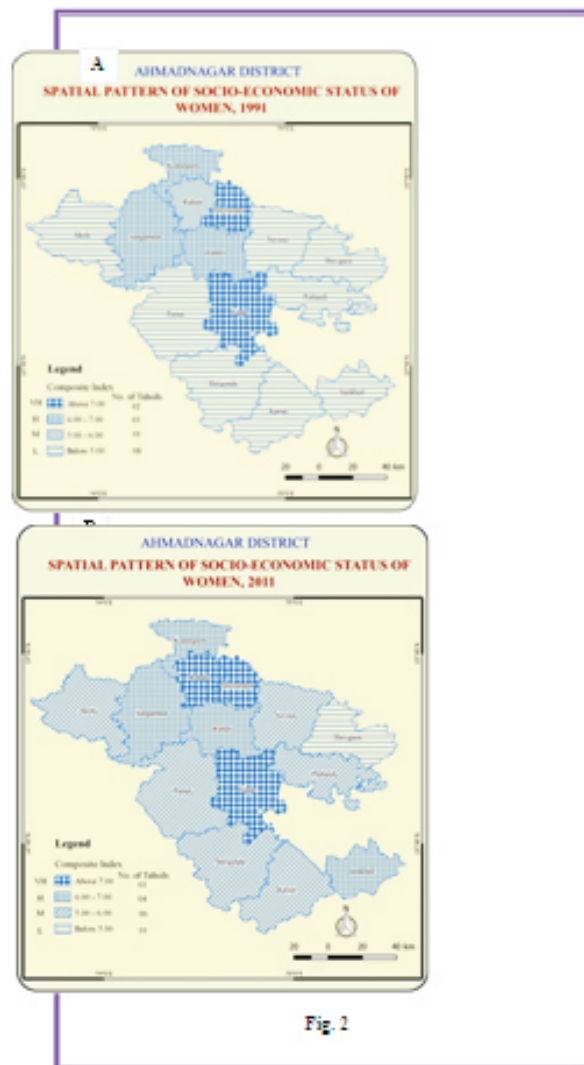


Fig. 2

IV. Low Level Status (4.00-5.00)

Low level of socio-economic status of women was recorded only in Shevgaon (4.83) tahsil. In fact, there is progress in women's status in 2011 over the year 2001, but this progress is very slower rate as compared to the other tahsils of district. Therefore, it remains at the bottom in terms of women's status.

The low sex ratio is taken as a stark indicator of the inferior position of women in India (Miller, 1981; Basu, 1992; Mayer, 1999). There is no doubt that sex ratio is certainly one of the important indicators of equity between sexes in society, but it is not to be taken as the sole indicator of the status of women in society. Shevgaon is one of the drought-prone and socio-economically backward tahsils, further, not only lower female literacy, paucity of females in the non-agricultural sectors as it is entirely rural. It is very interesting to know that increasing trend of overall sex ratio at state and national level whereas it remains declined in the study region in the last decade (Pawar, 2013). At the same time declining child sex ratio is negatively influencing their status. Therefore, status of women is much lagging behind as compared to other tahsils.

5.3 CHANGES IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN FROM 1991 TO 2011

The highest change in composite index value of women's status was observed in only Nagar tahsil (2.61), whereas lowest change was observed in Sangamner (0.56) tahsil (Fig. 3). The economic aspect has perhaps received greatest attention; it is being asserted that industrialization is the hallmark of modernity, that without the economic advance that goes with industrial growth, there can be no modernity (Rostow, 1971).

I. Changes in Very High Level Status Category (Above 7.00)

During the period of 1991, very high level status of women was found in Nagar and Shrirampur tahsils whereas three tahsils like Nagar, Shrirampur and Rahata were found in the same category in 2011. These tahsils are mostly prosperous in case of agriculture, industrialization and urbanization as compared to the rest of the tahsils.

Nagar and Shrirampur tahsils maintained their place of status and ranking also, both tahsils indicate the improvement in composite index value i.e. 2.61 and 0.97 respectively, regarding women's status during 1991 to 2011. It is observed that Rahata tahsil has shifted from moderate to very high level status as their value of index has also increased in 2011 over 1991.

II. Changes in High Level Status Category (6.00-7.00)

There were as many as three tahsils like Sangamner, Rahuri and Kopergaon recorded with high level status of women during 1991. Surprisingly, Jamkhed tahsil has shifted from a low level status to a high level status in 2011. Remaining Kopergaon, Rahuri and Sangamner tahsils have consistently maintained their higher level status during 2011 over 1991.

Above mentioned tahsils are urbanized and industrialized, except Jamkhed. Furthermore, the high female literacy, high proportion of female workers in non-agricultural occupations and high proportion of females residing in the urban areas.

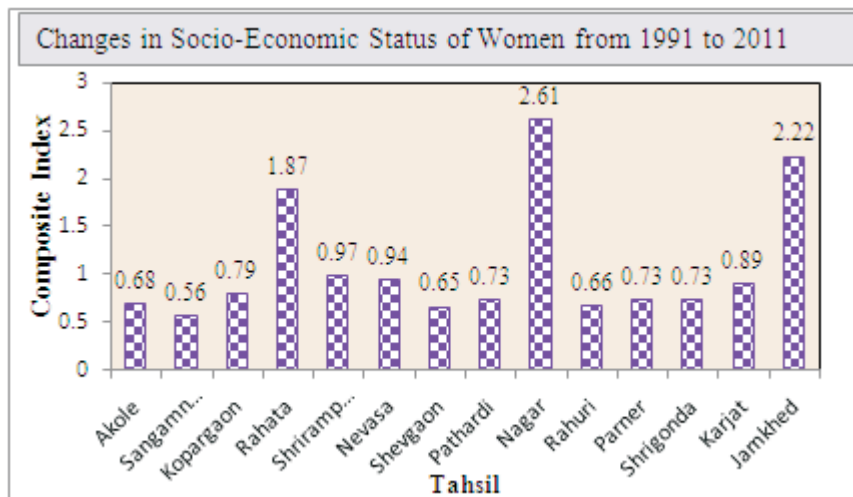


Fig.3

III. Changes in Moderate Level Status Category (5.00-6.00)

Only Rahata tahsil was fall in the category of moderate level status of women during 1991, while six tahsils like, Shrigonda, Pathardi, Akole, Nevasa, Karjat and Parner lie in this category during 2011. All these tahsils in the lower level status category was shifted in moderate level status of women’s category by raising the composite index values i.e. 0.73, 0.73, 0.68, 0.94, 0.89 and 0.73 respectively during the last two decades. It is because of continuous increase in female literacy rate and participation in non-agricultural sector in these tahsil during 2011 comprising the year of 1991.

IV.Changes in Low Level Status Category (4.00-5.00)

During 1991, low level status of women was recorded in as many as eight tahsil, viz. Shrigonda, Pathardi, Akole, Parner, Karjat, Shevgaon, Nevasa and Jamkhed. The Shevgaon tahsil fall in the category of lower level status in 2011, but it indicates positive changes in composite index value of women’s status (i.e. 0.65) from 1991 to 2011. The remaining 6 tahsils have shifted from lower level to moderate level status, while single Jamkhed tahsil was jumped in women’s high level status category in 2011 as compared to 1991. In fact, there is much progress in women’s status in all the tahsils of Ahmadnagar district in 2011 over the year 1991, but their slower rate of progress is found in drought-prone and backward tahsils while higher rate of progress in the urbanized and developed tahsils in the district.

6. CONCLUSION

Foregoing analysis revealed that Nagar tahsil was consistently identified with highest level position of women during 1991 and 2011, whereas Jamkhed and Shevgaon tahsil was left behind and identified with lowest level position of women in 1991 and 2011 respectively.

It is also explicit that, though there is remarkable spatial variation in women’s status at tahsil level, but those tahsils have made the progress in urbanisation and industrialisation are also better off in respect of women’s status during 1991-2011.

It is found that entire district has experienced a positive change and improvement regarding women’s status. It is found that a significant change in their status has taken during 1991 and 2011. Nagar tahsil consistently occupies very high level status of women whereas Shevgaon remained with the low level status of women during the last two decades. Tahsils like Kopargaon, Rahuri and

Sangamner have consistently maintained their higher status during this period.

It is also explicit that, Jamkhed tahsil has made bit fast progress as compared to the other tahsils and jumped to high level status category from low level status, while Nevasa, Karjat, Pathardi, Parner and Akole tahsils entered into the moderate level status category, over the last 20 years. It is mainly because of improvement in female literacy rate and simultaneously increase in the proportion of female workers in non-agricultural sector, but on the other side discrimination against women viz. declining sex ratio and child sex ratio are major obstructs in the progress of women's status. The child sex ratio of these tahsils significantly low as compared to the district average (849 girls per thousand boys). It is found that the progress in literacy and work participation rate, their status are relatively low in drought affected and backward tahsils as compared to the irrigated and relatively advanced tahsils.

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