



## Contribution of the BJD government towards rural women development in Odisha

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### Abstract

Empowering women is necessary for socioeconomic growth and rural development. The Biju Janata Dal government's contribution to the development of rural women in Odisha is analyzed in this study, with an emphasis on Mission Shakti and Self-Help Group (SHG) initiatives. Using descriptive and analytical research techniques, the study was carried out in a few rural villages in the districts of Kalahandi, Bargarh, and Subarnapur between April 2025 and February 2026. While secondary data came from official publications, government reports, and journals, primary data was collected through surveys, interviews, group discussions, and field observations. The findings showed that women's savings practices, financial independence, social involvement, and opportunities for employment were greatly enhanced by government welfare programs and Self-Help Groups. Financial aid was utilized by women for food preparation, handicrafts, vegetable growing, goat keeping, poultry farming, and mushroom cultivation. Additionally, the study revealed improvements in decision-making skills, healthcare awareness, and involvement in community development initiatives. SHG-based firms benefited greatly from government support in the form of revolving funding, bank-linked loans, training initiatives, marketing help, and growth in entrepreneurship. However, certain beneficiaries continued to face hurdles such as limited market access, transportation issues, ignorance, and illiteracy. Overall, the study comes to the conclusion that the welfare programs put in place during the BJD administration helped rural women in Odisha achieve sustained development and socioeconomic empowerment.

**Keywords:** Women empowerment, mission shakti, Self-Help groups (SHGs), socio-economic empowerment, biju janata dal, odisha

### Introduction

In today's world, empowerment of women has emerged as a key component of development in rural areas and advancement in society. Women play significant roles in local economic activities, household management, family welfare, and agriculture in rural areas. Many rural women continue to struggle with issues like poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, lack of financial independence, and limited access to healthcare and decision-making chances despite playing a significant role in society. Therefore, attaining sustainable development requires empowering rural women with social involvement, employment, education, and financial support (Kabeer, 1999) [7].

In Odisha, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) government has undertaken several initiatives to improve the socio-economic condition of rural women. Under the leadership of Naveen Patnaik, women empowerment became an important component of state development policies. Various welfare schemes and developmental programs were introduced to encourage women's participation in economic, social, and political activities.

Among these initiatives, Mission Shakti emerged as one of the most successful programs for rural women empowerment in Odisha. The program focused on organizing women into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to promote savings, financial inclusion, entrepreneurship, and livelihood opportunities. Through government support, training programs, bank linkages, and skill development activities, rural women were able to improve their economic condition and gain greater self-confidence and social recognition (Mission Shakti, 2023) [11].

The BJD government also implemented several schemes related to rural employment, healthcare, education, nutrition, and social security that directly benefited women in villages. These initiatives helped increase women's awareness, decision-making capacity, and participation in community development activities. Women gradually became active contributors to family income generation and local governance processes (Ministry of Rural Development, 2022) [9, 10].

This research paper aims to examine the contribution of the BJD government towards rural women development in Odisha. The study mainly focuses on the impact of government schemes, Mission Shakti, and Self-Help Group activities on the socio-economic empowerment of rural women. It also attempts to analyze how these initiatives have improved the living standards, financial independence, and social status of women in rural society.

### Review of Literature

Women empowerment has emerged as an important area of research in the fields of rural development, sociology, economics, and public policy. Various studies have highlighted the role of education, employment, financial inclusion, and government welfare programs in improving the socio-economic condition of women, especially in rural areas.

Kabeer, Naila (1999) [7] stated that women empowerment is closely associated with access to resources, decision-making power, and social participation. The study emphasized that economic independence and educational opportunities are essential for enhancing the status of women in society. According to the author, empowerment enables women to

gain confidence, self-reliance, and control over their lives. A report published by UN Women (2020) [20] highlighted that women empowerment plays a significant role in poverty reduction, sustainable development, and family welfare. The report observed that women's participation in economic activities contributes positively to household income, children's education, and overall community development. Studies conducted under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (2021) [13] revealed that Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have become an effective tool for empowering rural women in India. SHGs promote savings habits, access to credit facilities, entrepreneurship, and skill development among women. The study further reported that participation in SHGs improved women's financial independence and leadership qualities. In Odisha, Mission Shakti has played a major role in strengthening rural women empowerment. According to the Mission Shakti Annual Report (2023) [11], the initiative successfully organized millions of women into SHGs and provided financial assistance, training, and livelihood support. The program significantly enhanced women's participation in economic and social activities and improved their self-confidence and community involvement.

The Government of Odisha Economic Survey (2022) reported that the Biju Janata Dal government implemented several welfare schemes related to healthcare, nutrition, education, entrepreneurship, and rural employment that directly benefited women in villages. These schemes contributed to improving the living standards and socio-economic conditions of rural women. NITI Aayog (2021) [14] emphasized that financial inclusion and women entrepreneurship are important factors for rural development. Access to bank accounts, loans, and government subsidies enabled rural women to become economically active and self-dependent.

Although several studies have been conducted on women empowerment, SHGs, and rural development in Odisha, limited research has specifically focused on the overall contribution of the BJD government towards rural women development. Therefore, the present study attempts to analyze the role of government initiatives and welfare schemes in improving the socio-economic status and empowerment of rural women in Odisha.

## Materials and Methods

### Study Area

The present study was carried out in selected rural villages of Kalahandi district, Bargarh district, and Subarnapur district (Sonapur) in Odisha. These districts were selected due to their significant rural population and active participation of women in Self-Help Groups (SHGs), agriculture, small-scale enterprises, and government welfare programs. The study mainly focused on rural women beneficiaries associated with Mission Shakti and various developmental schemes implemented by the Biju Janata Dal government.

### Study Period

The study was conducted from April 2025 to February 2026. During this period, field visits, questionnaire surveys, interviews, and data collection were carried out in selected villages of the study area.

### Research Design

The study followed a descriptive and analytical research design to evaluate the contribution of the BJD government

towards rural women development. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to understand the socio-economic impact of government schemes on rural women.

## Sources of Data

### Primary Data

Primary data were collected directly from respondents through:

- Structured questionnaires
- Personal interviews
- Group discussions with SHG members
- Field observations

The questionnaire included information regarding education, occupation, income level, participation in Self-Help Groups, awareness about government schemes, financial independence, social participation, and livelihood activities.

### Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from:

- Government reports and publications
- Mission Shakti documents
- Odisha Economic Survey reports
- Research papers, journals, and books
- Official government websites and related literature on women empowerment and rural development

### Sampling Method

A simple random sampling method was adopted for selecting respondents from different villages of the three districts. Rural women associated with SHGs, Mission Shakti, and beneficiaries of various government welfare schemes were selected for the study. The respondents represented different age groups, occupations, and socio-economic backgrounds.

### Data Analysis

The collected data were systematically organized, classified, and analyzed using simple statistical methods such as percentage analysis, tabulation, and graphical representation. The analyzed data were interpreted to understand the effectiveness of government initiatives in improving the socio-economic condition of rural women.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To study the contribution of the BJD government towards rural women development in Odisha.
2. To examine the role of Mission Shakti and Self-Help Groups in women empowerment.
3. To analyze the socio-economic condition of rural women participating in government welfare schemes.
4. To evaluate the impact of government initiatives on women's livelihood, financial independence, and social status.

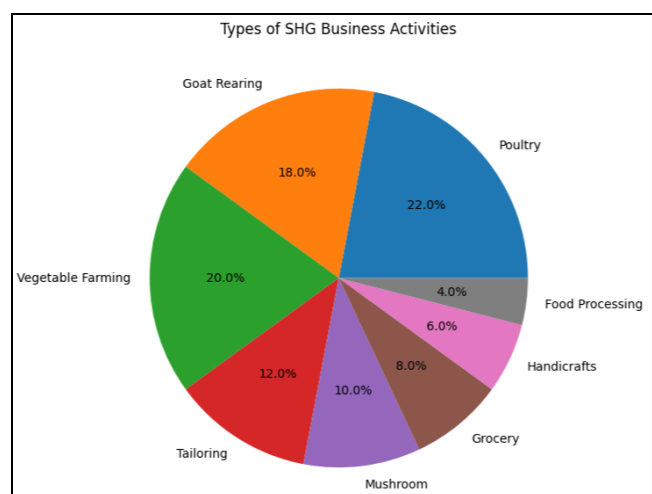
### Results

The study conducted in selected villages of Kalahandi district, Bargarh district, and Subarnapur district revealed that various welfare schemes implemented by the Biju Janata Dal government positively influenced the socio-economic condition of rural women. The majority of respondents were associated with Mission Shakti and Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Most women reported that SHG activities improved their savings habits, financial awareness, and participation in income-generating activities. Women

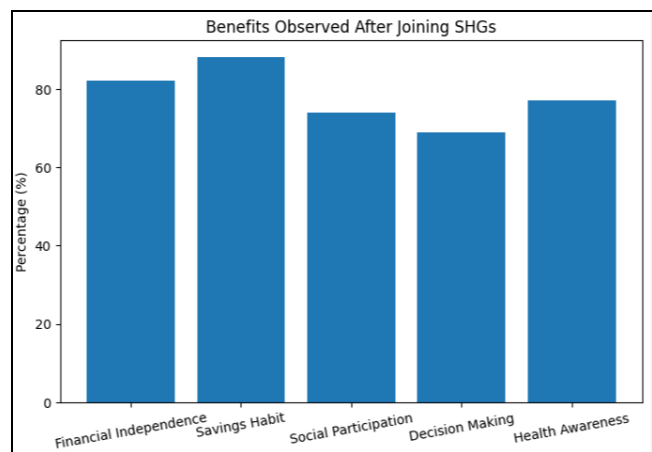
regularly participated in group meetings, savings programs, and loan-related activities. Many SHGs received revolving funds of approximately ₹15,000–₹20,000 and Community Investment Funds (CIF) ranging from ₹35,000–₹60,000 for livelihood development activities. Bank-linked loans ranging from ₹50,000 to ₹5,00,000 were also provided to SHGs depending on their repayment capacity and business performance.

Women utilized financial assistance for various small-scale enterprises such as:

- Poultry farming
- Goat rearing
- Mushroom cultivation
- Vegetable farming
- Tailoring and stitching work
- Grocery shops
- Handicrafts and leaf plate making
- Food processing activities



The pie-chart shows the different business activities carried out by rural women through Self-Help Groups (SHGs). Poultry farming (22%) was the most common activity, followed by vegetable farming (20%) and goat rearing (18%). Tailoring, mushroom cultivation, grocery shops, handicrafts, and food processing were also important livelihood activities among women. The graph indicates that SHGs helped rural women participate in various income-generating enterprises, improving their financial independence and socio-economic condition.



The above bar graph shows the major benefits experienced by rural women after joining Self-Help Groups (SHGs). The

highest improvement was observed in savings habits (88%), indicating that most women developed regular saving practices through SHG activities. Financial independence (82%) and health awareness (77%) also improved significantly among respondents. Additionally, women reported better social participation (74%) and increased decision-making ability (69%) within their families and communities. The graph demonstrates that SHGs positively contributed to the economic, social, and personal empowerment of rural women.

Respondents from Kalahandi district mainly invested in goat rearing, vegetable cultivation, and poultry farming, while women from Bargarh district utilized financial assistance for dairy farming, tailoring, and grocery businesses. In Sonepur district, mushroom cultivation and food processing activities were commonly observed among SHG members. The study revealed that participation in SHGs and welfare schemes increased women’s monthly savings and household income. Several respondents stated that they became financially independent and were able to contribute towards family expenses, children’s education, and healthcare needs. Beneficiaries of the Mamata Scheme reported receiving financial assistance of approximately ₹10,000 during pregnancy and childbirth. Women stated that this support helped them purchase nutritious food, medicines, and healthcare services. The study also observed improvements in women’s social participation and decision-making abilities. Many respondents actively participated in Gram Sabha meetings, SHG leadership activities, and village development programs. Women reported increased confidence in interacting with bank officials, government representatives, and community members. Awareness regarding healthcare, sanitation, nutrition, girls’ education, and financial management also improved among rural women through government awareness programs and SHG meetings.

#### Promotion of SHG Businesses by the BJD Government

The study revealed that the Biju Janata Dal government played an important role in promoting the business activities of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in rural areas of Odisha. Through Mission Shakti and various livelihood programs, women were encouraged to start small-scale enterprises and become financially independent.

The government provided revolving funds, Community Investment Funds (CIF), subsidized bank loans, and financial assistance to SHGs for establishing income-generating activities. Women received training programs related to tailoring, food processing, mushroom cultivation, poultry farming, handicrafts, dairy farming, and preparation of traditional food products.

The government also promoted SHG businesses through:

- Organization of local fairs and exhibitions
- Marketing support for SHG products
- Training and entrepreneurship development programs
- Linkage with banks and financial institutions
- Participation in government supply programs and local markets
- Digital promotion and branding of SHG products in some areas

Several respondents stated that SHGs were given opportunities to sell products during district-level fairs, festivals, and government programs. Women groups

producing leaf plates, pickles, papad, spices, handicrafts, and food products reported increased sales and income through such promotional activities. In some villages, SHGs were also engaged in supplying school uniforms, mid-day meal materials, sanitation products, and nutritional food items under government-supported programs. These initiatives created regular income opportunities for rural women and strengthened local entrepreneurship.

However, some SHG members reported challenges such as lack of advanced training, transportation problems, limited market access, and competition from commercial products. Despite these limitations, the study found that government support significantly contributed to the growth and sustainability of SHG-based businesses in the study areas.

However, the study found that some women could not fully benefit from government schemes due to lack of awareness, illiteracy, documentation problems, delayed financial assistance, banking difficulties, and social restrictions. Women from remote villages faced additional challenges such as poor transportation, limited training opportunities, and lack of market access for selling products.

Overall, the findings indicate that welfare schemes and women empowerment programs implemented during the BJD government period significantly improved the economic condition, financial independence, social participation, and livelihood opportunities of rural women in the study areas.

### Conclusion

The outcomes of this study reveal how the Biju Janata Dal government, through Mission Shakti and Self-Help Groups, has made a major contribution to the empowerment of rural women in Odisha. These programs improved financial independence, saving practices, and involvement in a variety of livelihood pursuits, including handicrafts, vegetable cultivation, poultry farming, and tailoring. In line with broader socioeconomic advancements, women also reported gains in healthcare understanding, critical thinking, and social participation. The government's support in the form of revolving funds, bank-linked loans, training and marketing assistance proved crucial in sustaining SHG-based enterprises and nurturing entrepreneurship. The program has had a life-changing effect despite challenges like limited market access, illiteracy and transportation barriers. The study concludes that the BJD administration's welfare schemes were substantially enhanced the economic resilience, social status and community engagement of rural women, paving the way for inclusive and sustainable rural development.

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