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An In-depth Analysis of Human Development in India with Reference to West Bengal: A Critical Perspective

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Abstract

India's human development is a complicated and varied topic that need in-depth research and focused actions. Although the nation has achieved significant progress in a number of areas, issues still exist in socioeconomic inequality, gender equality, healthcare, education, and poverty reduction. Comprehensive changes are needed to improve human development results, with an emphasis on

raising educational standards, building up the healthcare system, addressing inequality and poverty, empowering women, and fostering social inclusion. The aim of a more equal and inclusive society that promotes holistic human development in India would only be realised with the help of effective policy execution, greater public investment, and community involvement.

Keywords: HDI, WB, Kanyashree Prakalpa, Utkarsh Bangla, NREGA, SSA

Introduction

India, the biggest democracy in the world, has advanced significantly over time in many areas. However, the nation has a wide range of difficulties in terms of human growth. The main determinants of human development in India, such as socioeconomic inequities, poverty, gender inequality, and access to healthcare and education, will be examined in this critical examination. Investigating these intricate concerns will help us comprehend India's present level of human development and pinpoint areas that need to be improved.

A composite statistical measure called the Human Development Index (HDI) is used to evaluate and compare the general state of human development in various nations. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) created it, and it was initially made public in 1990. The HDI considers three essential aspects of human development: Knowledge, a high quality of living, and a long and healthy life.

The HDI is calculated using the following indicators:

Life expectancy at birth: It is a measure of how long a person is typically anticipated to live after birth. It provides insight on the general health and happiness of a people.

Education: There are two indicators that make up the HDI's education component:

Mean years of schooling: This statistic shows the typical number of years that individuals who are 25 years old and older spent in formal education.

Expected years of schooling: This indicator calculates the number of years of education a kid is anticipated to get, taking enrolment rates and the length of schooling into consideration.

Gross National Income (GNI) per capita: This statistic illustrates the standard of living in a nation. It takes into consideration the purchasing power parity (PPP) to take into account regional variations in cost of living.

Each of these metrics is turned into a number between 0 and 1, with 1 being the maximum degree of progress, and then normalised. The HDI is then calculated by averaging the normalised values. From 0 to 1, where 1 represents the greatest degree of human development, is the HDI scale.

Instead, then concentrating just on economic data, the HDI gives a wide and thorough evaluation of human development by taking numerous factors into account. It makes it possible to compare different nations, and it is a valuable tool for policymakers to pinpoint their own country's strengths and shortcomings in order to decide which policies to focus on in order to improve human development results.

It's crucial to remember that although the HDI offers insightful information, it also has significant limits. All facets of human growth, including social and political dimensions, environmental sustainability, inequality, and human rights, are not included. In order to overcome these drawbacks, new indices have been created, such as the Gender Development Index (GDI), Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI), and Gender Inequality Index (GII), which offer a more complex understanding of human development by taking inequality and gender disparities into account.

India's ranking in different HDIs:

India had an HDI score of 0.499 in 1995, placing it at position 134 out of 174 nations.

With an HDI score of 0.548 in 2000, India's HDI ranking increased to 124 out of 174 nations.

2005: With an HDI score of 0.602, India's HDI rank increased to 128 out of 177 nations.

2010: With an HDI score of 0.519, India's HDI rank rose to 119 out of 169 nations.

With an HDI score of 0.624, India's HDI rank increased to 130 out of 188 nations in 2015.

India's HDI score in 2019 was 0.645, placing it 131st out of 189 nations.

Human development in India is a complex and multifaceted issue due to several interrelated factors:

Size and Diversity:

With a population of nearly 1.3 billion, India is the second most populous nation in the world. Providing equal human development opportunities across many geographies, faiths, languages, and socioeconomic origins presents distinct problems due to the sheer size and variety of the population. To meet particular demands and promote equitable growth, the varied cultural, social, and economic environments need specialised methods.

Social and economic inequalities:

With a big section of the population living in poverty or experiencing severe income disparity, India has enormous socioeconomic gaps. These discrepancies take many different forms, including uneven access to work opportunities, clean water, clean air, and healthcare. Targeted interventions and policies that take into account the particular difficulties that various socioeconomic groups and geographical areas confront are necessary to address these inequities.

Governance and the execution of policy:

The difficulties of human development are made more difficult by the complexity of government and policy execution in a large and varied nation like India. Although India has a democratic government and a sound legal system, it may be difficult to effectively execute policies and programmes at the local level. It becomes essential to guarantee accountability, transparency, and effective service delivery if one wants to see good results in terms of human development.

Resource and Infrastructure:

Poor infrastructure is a major barrier to human growth, especially in rural regions. In many areas of the nation, access to high-quality healthcare, education, sanitation,

power, and transportation is still restricted. These problems are made more difficult by the unequal allocation of resources, making it more difficult to close the disparities in human development metrics.

Social and cultural norms:

In India, ingrained cultural and social conventions may obstruct the advancement of human development. Opportunities may be restricted and social exclusion may continue as a result of factors including gender inequality, caste prejudice, and religious differences. In order to challenge these conventions, it is necessary to confront ingrained attitudes and beliefs that obstruct equitable access to economic, medical, and educational possibilities.

Sustainable environmental practices:

In India, environmental elements also have an influence on human growth. Natural catastrophes, deforestation, climate change, and other issues have an impact on people's livelihoods and general well-being. To ensure long-term progress in human development, economic growth and environmental development must be balanced.

Given these difficulties and complexity, complete human development in India necessitates a multifaceted and holistic strategy. Addressing socioeconomic inequalities, fostering inclusion, giving voice to disadvantaged groups, bolstering institutions, enhancing infrastructure, and guaranteeing sustainable environmental practises are all part of it. To promote meaningful and long-lasting change, such initiatives must be backed by effective governance, smart policies, and active engagement from all stakeholders.

The Right to Education Act of 2009 and HDI

A notable law that directly and significantly affects human development is India's Right to Education Act of 2009. All children between the ages of 6 and 14 are entitled to free and compulsory education by the law, which recognises education as a basic right. Let's look at how the Right to Education Act affects the growth of people:

Access to Education:

The legislation is essential for increasing access to education, especially for underprivileged and marginalised groups. It makes sure that children from socially and economically disadvantaged groups, as well as those with impairments, have equitable access to school. The legislation contributes to the reduction of inequities and the promotion of inclusive human development by removing access restrictions.

Social justice and equity:

The Right to Education Act places a strong emphasis on the idea of equality and makes sure that kids from all socioeconomic levels have equal access to high-quality education. On the basis of socioeconomic class, gender, caste, religion, or handicap, it outlaws discrimination and segregation. The legislation fosters comprehensive human development and works to advance social fairness and equitable chances in society.

Quality Education:

The statute emphasises the provision of high-quality education in addition to access to it. It establishes requirements for facilities, student-teacher ratios, teaching

credentials, and curricular frameworks. The legislation seeks to raise educational standards and improve learning outcomes by requiring schools to adhere to certain requirements. Since access to high-quality education gives people the information and skills needed for socioeconomic success, it is essential for human development.

Child Protection and Rights:

The protection and rights of children are included into the Right to Education Act. Within educational institutions, it outlaws all forms of child abuse, including physical and emotional abuse. Children's general wellbeing and holistic development are aided by the act of providing a secure and supportive environment for them. Children's rights must be upheld in order for them to grow and thrive in a safe environment, which is a crucial component of human development.

Social and economic mobility and empowerment

Socioeconomic mobility and empowerment are made possible through education. This is acknowledged by the Right to Education Act, which seeks to empower people through education. The legislation gives kids the opportunity to learn things that will benefit their personal development and raise their chances of socioeconomic success by making education free and mandatory. People with greater authority are more likely to take an active role in the growth of their communities and advance society as a whole.

A Case Study of West Bengal: Human Development Index (HDI) Analysis

In order to examine variables impacting human development in the area and analyse patterns in West Bengal, a state in eastern India, this case study focuses on the HDI (Human Development Index). We may learn more about West Bengal's accomplishments, difficulties, and possible solutions for advancing human development by looking at important metrics and policy efforts.

Trends in West Bengal's HDI:

West Bengal's HDI ranks and values have changed significantly over time. A thorough picture of the state's progress in human development may be obtained by analysing the HDI patterns.

Rankings for HDI

West Bengal's HDI ranking information was unavailable in 1990.

West Bengal was rated 20th out of 28 Indian states in 2000. 2010 saw an increase in the state's HDI ranking, which now stands at 18 out of 35 states and union territories.

West Bengal's HDI ranking increased in 2019 to 12, placing it 12th out of 37 states and union territories.

Data on West Bengal's HDI values were not available in 1990.

West Bengal's HDI score in 2000 was around 0.533.

The state's HDI rating improved to around 0.591 in 2010.

West Bengal's HDI rating increased again in 2019 and amounted to around 0.704.

Factors Influencing Human Development in West Bengal:

The variations in West Bengal's HDI over time are caused by a number of variables, including:

Education:

School enrollment rates and literacy levels have grown as a result of the expansion of educational institutions and programmes like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for All) programme.

The results of human development have been favourably impacted by efforts to provide access to high-quality education, lower dropout rates, and enhance skills.

Healthcare:

Government programmes like the National Rural Health Mission and Swasthya Sathi have sought to increase access to and the quality of healthcare in both urban and rural regions.

Better health indicators have been attributed to investments in healthcare infrastructure, immunisation campaigns, and maternal and child healthcare services.

Poverty Alleviation:

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and other specific social welfare programmes have been implemented with the goal of reducing poverty and improving possibilities for a living.

Poverty reduction has been aided by initiatives to increase agricultural production, foster rural development, and build social safety nets.

Industrial Development:

The expansion of industries and the encouragement of entrepreneurship have aided in the creation of jobs and economic growth, raising living standards.

Focusing on industries like manufacturing, tourism, and information technology has promoted economic growth and expanded chances for human development.

Women Empowerment:

Indicators of human development in West Bengal have improved as a result of initiatives supporting gender equality, women's economic empowerment, and educational opportunities.

The status and prospects for women and girls in the state have been improved by programmes like Kanyashree Prakalpa and Utkarsh Bangla.

The Human growth Index for West Bengal has significantly improved over time, demonstrating favourable trends in women's empowerment, healthcare, poverty alleviation, education, and industrial growth. However, issues including social injustice, environmental sustainability, and geographical differences still exist. Continuous work is needed to further advance human development, including targeted interventions, infrastructure investments, skill development, sustainable development strategies, and social inclusion. West Bengal can maintain its progress in the HDI rankings and foster a climate that promotes holistic human development all over the state by concentrating on these factors.

Status of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in West Bengal:

It is a flagship initiative of the Indian government with the goals of enhancing access, equality, and educational quality

while achieving the goal of universalizing primary education. It focuses on offering children between the ages of 6 and 14 free, mandatory schooling.

The SSA programme has been put in place in West Bengal by the government to improve educational opportunities and results. Enrollment and Access, Infrastructure Development, Quality Enhancement, Equity and Inclusion, and others are important factors affecting the state's participation in the SSA programme and how it affects human development.

The introduction of SSA in West Bengal has enhanced educational opportunities and results, which has benefited human development. It has helped to boost enrollment rates, lower dropout rates, improve infrastructure, and concentrate resources on providing high-quality education. However, there may still be issues that need ongoing attention and focused initiatives, such as ensuring that everyone has access, enhancing learning outcomes, and resolving regional inequities.

Status of NREGA in West Bengal:

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), formerly known as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), is a social welfare initiative carried out by the Indian government. In order to provide livelihood security, combat poverty, and promote rural development, it provides rural families with 100 days of guaranteed pay work annually.

The implementation of NREGA in West Bengal has significantly influenced human development, especially in rural regions. The creation of jobs, the development of assets, the empowerment of women, and the reduction of poverty are some important features of the state.

Advancement, etc.

Status of Kanyashree Prakalpa in West Bengal:

The Government of West Bengal's flagship programme, Kanyashree Prakalpa, aims to empower girls and prevent child marriage. It offers females between the ages of 13 and 18 support and financial aid.

The programme has been effective in increasing human development in West Bengal and improving the status of females. Enrollment, financial support, empowerment, and other important features of the state's current participation in the Kanyashree Prakalpa programme are only a few.

Status of Utkarsh Bangla:

Another significant project carried out by the West Bengali government is Utkarsh Bangla. In order to increase job possibilities and economic empowerment, it places a strong emphasis on skill development and vocational training.

The Utkarsh Bangla programme has improved West Bengal's quality of life in a number of ways, including through fostering entrepreneurship, creating jobs, and developing skill sets.

Conclusion

India's human development is a complicated and varied topic that need in-depth research and focused actions. Although the nation has achieved significant progress in a number of areas, issues still exist in socioeconomic inequality, gender equality, healthcare, education, and poverty reduction. Comprehensive changes are needed to improve human development results, with an emphasis on

raising educational standards, building up the healthcare system, addressing inequality and poverty, empowering women, and fostering social inclusion. The aim of a more equal and inclusive society that promotes holistic human development in India would only be realised with the help of effective policy execution, greater public investment, and community involvement.

The Right to Education Act of 2009 and India's economic growth are interwoven. The legislation makes a substantial contribution to the overall human development outcomes in the nation by guaranteeing access to education, fostering equality, guaranteeing excellent education, safeguarding children's rights, and empowering people. To realise the full potential of the act and its effects on human development in India, however, efficient implementation, removing obstacles, and ongoing monitoring and assessment are crucial.

Given these difficulties and complexity, complete human development in India necessitates a multifaceted and holistic strategy. Addressing socioeconomic inequalities, fostering inclusion, giving voice to disadvantaged groups, bolstering institutions, enhancing infrastructure, and guaranteeing sustainable environmental practises are all part of it. To promote meaningful and long-lasting change, such initiatives must be backed by effective governance, smart policies, and active engagement from all stakeholders.

By emphasising education, skill development, and women's empowerment, these initiatives—Kanyashree Prakalpa, Utkarsh Bangla, NREGA, and SSA—have had a good effect on human development in West Bengal. They have helped to increase job possibilities, lessen gender inequities, improve educational performance, and promote economic empowerment.

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