

Gender Equality And Development in India - An Over view

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Our Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh has rightly pointed out in the 57th National Development Council Meeting, on 27th December, 2012 at New Delhi that "Gender inequality is an important aspect which deserves special attention. Women and girls represent half the population and our society has not been fair to this half. Their socio-economic status is improving, but gaps persist....The emergence of women in public spaces, which is an absolutely essential part of social emancipation, is accompanied by growing threats to their safety and security..... the issue of safety and security of women is of the highest concern to our Government. **There can be no meaningful development without the active participation of half the population and this participation simply cannot take place if their security is not assured**". (1) Hence, "Gender Inclusive Development" should be our main aim for the overall development of our country. We have to find out the ways and means, how women could be involved in the development process. In India, despite several years of planned development, improvement observed in education and, to a lesser extent, in health **women's improved capabilities do not seem to have been translated into an equal participation between men and women in economic and political activities.**

The main message of the World development report (2012) is gender equality and inclusive development. Greater gender equality

enhances productivity and improves other development outcomes, including prospects for the next generation and for the quality of societal policies and institutions. Economic development is not enough to shrink all gender disparities-corrective policies that focus on persisting gender gaps are essential. This report points to four priority areas for policy going forward. First, reducing gender gaps in human capital-specifically those that address female mortality and education. Second, closing gender gaps in access to economic opportunities, earnings, and productivity. Third, shrinking gender differences in voice and agency within society. Fourth, limiting the reproduction of gender inequality across generations. (2) These are all areas where higher incomes by themselves do little to reduce gender gaps, but focused policies can have a real impact. Gender equality is at the heart of development. It's the right development objective, and it's smart economic policy..

Women still account for 70% of the world's poorest and yet they remain a potential driver for development and an untapped resource for growth in many countries. Empowering women is a prerequisite for long-term and resilient growth and the achievement of all the MDGs. Investment in gender equality yields the highest returns of all actions for development. **In recent decades, economic and social inequalities have increased alongside high growth rates, stemming from the nature of the growth process, embedded pre-existing structural inequalities, and as an offshoot of**

globalization. This has exacerbated regional inequalities depending upon their initial resource endowments and social structures. It has also exacerbated the inequalities between men and women.

In spite of claim of ‘gender inclusive growth’ by the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012), the mass of Indian women have not only been bypassed but also marginalized in the growth process. Real wages of mass of women have declined. Due to withdrawal of the state from social sector, women’s work burden in unpaid care economy (cooking, cleaning, nursing, collecting fuel-fodder-water, etc.) has increased many folds. Subordinate status of women manifests in declining child sex ratio i.e., ‘missing girls phenomenon’, deteriorating reproductive and child health, feminization of poverty, increased violence against women, enhanced mortality and morbidity among girls and women and deplorable condition of elderly women and women in difficult circumstances. Government schemes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, Microfinance Movement and Mid Day Meal Scheme have brought the poor women from the level of starvation to subsistence but not to human development. Gender inequality holds back the growth of individuals, the development of nations and the evolution of societies. Gender issues are not women’s issues but understanding opportunities, constraints and the impact of change as they affect both men and women. For gender inclusive growth, the state needs to play more proactive role through gender budgeting and gender mainstreaming in the Indian economy.

Women in India: Brief Historical Overview

Vedic Age: “Yathra nariyasthu pujiyathe ramanthe thathra devathaha”, the meaning of this Sanskrit Sloka is, where women are respected, there angels will reside. This shows that **in the Vedic Age (1500-1000 BC), women enjoyed great respect and freedom in the**

society. In fact far superior position to the men of that time. “Sakthi” a feminine term means “power” and “strength”. It is evident from the ancient scripts that the women like Vishwavara, Gosa, Gaargi and Mythreya learnt and chanted Vedaas. They participated in Vedhantha discussions. In the later period the position of women gradually weakened.

In the past:

Culture outlook and historical perspective of society always reflects in present-day behavioral pattern of a society. In the past, 6th-7th century onwards, due to continuous foreign invasions on the country, women’s position in the society had worsened.

Basic human rights denied – Slave like condition and inhuman treatment to women had become a common practice. Basic human rights were denied to women during this period. Seventh century onwards, Muslim and British attacks had given birth to many social evils like child-marriage, Sati, ‘Purdah-system, complete segregation of women from outside world. Restrictions were imposed on women-movements. (3)

Post Independence:

Constitution of India has guaranteed equal protection for all its citizens irrespective of gender. Several legislative interventions to protect and deal with special crimes against women have also been framed over the years. Domestic violence and collective forms of violence like communal or caste violence, targeting women have also been acknowledged as serious crimes. Many institutional mechanisms have been created like National and State Commissions for women. Government and NGO’s are continuously working for empowerment and emancipation of women. India is also a signatory to several international conventions that protect the rights of women.

Slow but steady Progress: Modern women have come out of their protective shell – four-

walls of the house. They are trying their best to restore lost prestige and secure due place in modern world. They have marched ahead, though slowly but steadily with tremendous self-confidence and inner strength. They are actively participating in nation-building activities and have paved way even into the precincts, which have been considered as an exclusive male preserve. Their entry is resented by some persons, but women are facing it bravely. They work very hard to prove their worth and make their presence felt.

Position still not very satisfactory: Position of women remains pathetic despite all efforts of governmental and non-governmental agencies after the independence. Only a small number of women could come up, that too in big towns with access to modern education and limited employment opportunities. Conceptualization of man-woman relationships and their representation in institutions like family, community, religious agencies, state, educational institutions etc. are still focused on physical weakness of woman.

Secondary position in the society: Women are still accorded secondary position in the society. Credit of their contributions goes to society, nation or to their male counter-parts, who have retained power, prestige and pleasures of the world leaving women remain ignorant, illiterate and ill-informed, invisible and unrewarded.

Facts and Figures about Women:

Women make up half of the world's population and yet represent of the world's poor of illiterate adults are 70%

- 64% of illiterate adults are women. (That's 2 out of 3)
- Women work 2/3 of the world's hours yet earn 1/10 of the world's income.

Violence

- One in four women is physically or sexually abused during pregnancy

- Globally, nearly 40% of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner.
- Every day, 39,000 girls are forced into early marriage. That's 27 girls a minute

Inclusion & participation

- Women make up only 21.9% of parliamentarian seats, and 8% of the world's executives.
- 95% of countries have a male head of state.
- More than 100 countries have laws on the books that restrict women's participation in the economy.

Women in power=greater opportunities for girls' education, health, and equality.

According to the gender-based research carried out by Anupriya Singh of Delhi-based Lal Bahadur Shastri Institute of Management ((The Times of India: Dated: 20-09-2014). **Only 5% of working women in India make it to senior leadership positions in the corporate sector, compared to the global average of 20 percent. In India, women's representation at the board level was lesser at just two percent.**

Women's strength in the labour force stands at 28 percent at the junior level, 14.91 at the middle level and 9.32 percent at the senior level.

India ranks at the top in the dropout rate with 48 percent of women dropping out between the junior and middle level. "Indian women drop out of the workforce much early in their career compared to their counterparts in other Asian countries.

"The primary reasons often mentioned for the high dropout rate have been child care and family responsibilities, including care for the elderly.

Percentage of total women workers to total persons employed in India was 30.90% (rural) and 19.80% (urban), aggregate percentage being 25.56.

Though Punjab a developed state, as per the provisional results of the sixth Economic Census, the percentage of female (hired and non-hired) workers in the total persons employed is 18.21%, though it is 25.56% at the national level. (The Times of India: Dated: 27-08-2014)

Human Development Report 2014 – Gender Development Index (GDI)

The latest Human Development Report released by the United Nations Development Programme in Tokyo on July 24 has ranked India 135 in a list of 187 countries. India's position is the same as it was in 2012. **Gender Development Index (GDI), introduced this year for the first time to measure the gender gap in human development achievements.** (4) GDI measures gender gap in human development achievements in three basic dimensions of human development: health, measured by female and male life expectancy at birth; education, measured by female and male expected years of schooling for children and female and male mean years of schooling for adults ages 25 and older; and command over economic resources, measured by female and male estimated earned income.

UNDP - HDI Report, 2014 – GDI Rank among BRIC Countries

SI.No.	Country	GDI Rank
1	Brazil	57
2	Russia	79
3	India	132
4	China	79

Source: UNDP Report 2014

Inequality adjusted HDI

HDI ranking compares different countries on three parameters: health, education and income. But, for internal inequality within same country another rank created is inequality adjusted HDI. For this, India Rank same for both HDI and inequality adjusted HDI =135. The "Absolute

figure" tell us how much human development lost due to inequality within a country. **For India, it is calculated that 29% of Human development is lost due to inequality.** (5)

India's Inequality adjusted HDI Table

India' Performance	Absolute Figure
HDI	0.586
Inequality adjusted	0.418
% of difference over HDI	29%

Source: UNDP Report 2014

The Global Gender Gap Report (2013) - India 101st among 136 nations

The Global Gender Gap Report, introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006, provides a framework for capturing the magnitude and scope of gender-based disparities around the world. **The index benchmarks national gender gaps on economic, political, education- and health-based criteria and provides country rankings that allow for effective comparison across regions and income groups and over time.** India has a long way to go is evident from the fact that it has the widest gender gaps among similar economies. **It is the laggard in the BRICS bloc.** The only sign of optimism lay in political empowerment of women. Despite Parliament dithering over passage of a women's reservation bill for equal representation in the legislature, **India bagged a healthy ninth rank when it came to political empowerment of its women.** (6)

The Global Gender Gap Report (2013): BRIC Countries

SI. No.	Country	GDI Rank
1	Brazil	62
2	Russia	61
3	India	101
4	China	69

Source: Global Gender Gap Report, 2013

Advancement of Women through Five Year Plans (7)

First Five Year Plan (1951-56)

Welfare oriented concerning women's issues. The programmes for women were implemented through the National Extension Service Programmes through Community Development Blocks.

Second Five Year (1956-61)

Efforts were geared to organize "Mahila Mandals" (women's Plan groups) at grass-roots levels to ensure better implementation of welfare schemes.

Third, Fourth, Fifth Year Plans (1961-74)

High priority to women's education. Measures to and other Interim improve maternal and child health services, and supplementary

Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85)

The Plan adopted a multidisciplinary approach with a three-pronged thrust on health, education and employment of women.

Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90)

Development programmes with objective of raising economic and social status and bring them into the mainstream of national development. Promotion of "beneficiary-oriented programmes" which extended direct benefits to women.

Eighth Five Year (1992-97)

Enabled to function as equal partners and participants in the developmental process with reservation in the membership of local bodies. Marks a definite shift from 'development' to empowerment' of women.

Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002)

Envisaged: a) Empowerment of women and socially disadvantaged as agents of socio-economic change and development. b) Promoting and developing people's participatory institutions like Panchayati Raj institutions,

cooperatives and self-help groups. c) Strengthening efforts to build self-reliance. d) A women's component plan at the Central and State levels.

Tenth Five Year (2002-2007)

Ensure requisite access of women to information, resources and services, and advance gender equality goals.

Eleventh Five Year (2007-2012)

Special measures for gender empowerment and equity. The Ministry of Women and Child Development would make synergistic use of gender budget and gender mainstreaming process.

Twelfth Five Year (2012 – 2017)

The key strategies for women identified are; 1- Economic Empowerment 2- Social and Physical Infrastructure 3- Enabling legislations 4- Women's Participation in Governance 5- Inclusiveness of all categories of vulnerable women and 6- Engendering National Policies/ Programmes. The key strategy for children is to fulfill the rights of children to survival, protection, participation and development.

Gender Equity Issues in India:

The origin of the Indian idea of appropriate female behavior can be traced back to the rules laid down by Manu in 200 BC: "In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent." They are not well aware of economical and political systems. So they cannot participate in such fields without proper training. It requires a long time. They are not aware of legal provisions favoring and protecting them. Female are regarded as machines to produce children. This attitude is yet to be changed.

Gender discrimination continues to be an enormous problem within Indian society. Traditional patriarchal norms have relegated women to secondary status within the household

and workplace. This drastically affects women's health, financial status, education, and political involvement. Women are commonly married young, quickly become mothers, and are then burdened by stringent domestic and financial responsibilities. India has traditionally been schizophrenic in its treatment of women, worshipping them on the one hand and neglecting the girl child on the other. "While countries like China too have a male preference among children, but they have less discrimination in healthcare services made available to children. India has traditionally been "very backward" when it comes to social development and gender parameters. **"We don't lack government programmes, but the challenge lies in half-hearted implementation and corruption"**.

The Constitution of India ensures gender equality in its preamble as a fundamental right but also empowers the state to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women by ways of legislation and policies. India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights forums to secure equal rights of women," such as the ratification of Convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) in 1993. Women have been finding place in local governance structures, overcoming gender biases. Over one million women have been elected to local Panchayats as a result of 1993 amendment to the Indian Constitution. The passing of Pre-natal Diagnostic Tech Act in 1994 also is a step in removing gender discrimination. This Act seeks to end sex- determination tests and female foeticide and prohibits doctors from conducting such procedures for the specific purpose of determining the sex of the fetus. The Government also announced the National policy for empowerment of women in 2001 to bring out advancement, development and empowerment of women. As persistent gender inequalities continue, we need to rethink concepts and strategies for promoting women's dignity and rights.

Impressive Gender Equality Results are achieved through:

- Better employment opportunities for women
- Women's increased access to economic resources
- Women's participation in all project elements
- Practical benefits to women

Women and Children constitute 70 per cent of India's population. According to 2011 census, women (including girls) account for 48.5 % and children about 35% of the population. High prevalence of anemia among women 55 % (in 15-49 age group). Overall sex ratio is 940. **A decline in the child sex ratio (0-6 years) was observed with India's 2011 census reporting that it stands at 914 females against 1,000 males, dropping from 927 in 2001 - the lowest since India's independence.** Gender differential in under 5 child mortality- 64 for girls against 55 for boys.

Gender inequalities in India:

Gandhiji described discrimination against women as an anachronism, he said: "I fail to see any reason for jubilation over the birth of a son and for mourning over the birth of a daughter. Both are God's gifts. They have an equal right to live and are equally necessary to keep the world going." Gender inequalities in India, refers to health, education, economic and political inequalities between men and women. Gender inequalities, and its social causes, impact India's sex ratio, women's health over their lifetimes, their educational attainment, and economic conditions. When India's population is examined as a whole, women are placed at a disadvantage in several ways. **Gender inequality holds back the growth of individuals, the development of nations and the evolution of societies.**

Amartya Sen highlighted the need to consider the socio-cultural influences that promote gender inequalities. In India, cultural influences favour the preference for sons for reasons

related to kinship, lineage, inheritance, identity, status, and economic security. In extreme cases, the discrimination takes the form of honour killings where families kill daughters or daughter in laws who fail to conform to gender expectations about marriage and sexuality. The causes of gender inequalities in India are complex, but some of them are:

Economic Inequalities:

Labor participation and wages:

Over 50% of Indian labor is employed in agriculture. A majority of rural men work as cultivators, while a majority of women work in livestock maintenance, egg and milk production. Rao (8) states that about 78 per cent of rural women are engaged in agriculture, compared to 63 per cent men. About 37% of women are cultivators, but they are more active in the irrigation, weeding, winnowing, transplanting and harvesting stages of agriculture. About 70 per cent of farm work was performed by women in India in 2004. (8) There is wage inequality between men and women in India. The largest wage gap was in manual ploughing operations in 2009, where men were paid ₹ 103 per day, while women were paid 55, a wage gap ratio of 1.87. For sowing the wage gap ratio reduced to 1.38 and for weeding 1.18. (9) For other agriculture operations such as winnowing, threshing and transplanting, the men to female wage ratio varied from 1.16 to 1.28. For sweeping, the 2009 wages were statistically same for men and women in all states of India. (9)

Access to credit:

Although laws are supportive of lending to women and micro credit programs targeted to women are prolific, women often lack collateral for bank loans due to low levels of property ownership and microcredit schemes have come under scrutiny for coercive lending practices. Although many microcredit programs have been successful and prompted community-based women's self-help groups, a 2012 review of

microcredit practices found that women are contacted by multiple lenders and as a result, take on too many loans and overextend their credit. The report found that financial incentives for the recruiters of these programs were not in the best interest of the women they purported to serve. (10) The result was a spate of suicides by women who were unable to pay their debts. (11)

Property ownership Inequalities: When compared with men, women have low levels of property ownership.

Education Inequalities:

According to Mahatma Gandhi, "**If you educate a man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate an entire family.**" Our predominant patriarchal system doesn't provide enough chances for women to have higher education even if they wish. Education of women would mean narrowing down of social disparities and inequities. **This would automatically lead to sustainable and inclusive development.** India is on target to meet its **Millennium Development Goal** of gender parity in education by 2015. (12) In rural India girls continue to be less educated than the boys. (13) According to a 1998 report by U.S. Department of Commerce, the chief barrier to female education in India are inadequate school facilities (such as sanitary facilities), shortage of female teachers and gender bias in curriculum (majority of the female characters being depicted as weak and helpless vs. strong, adventurous, and intelligent men with high prestige jobs) (13)

Why do girls drop out?

- Child marriage
- School fees
- Sexual violence
- Lack of sanitary facilities

But ... If we could keep girls in school beyond grade 7, they would be:

- More likely to marry 4 years later
- Less likely to die in pregnancy/childbirth

- More likely to have an average of 2.2 fewer children
- More likely to have healthier children
- More likely to send their children to school

Literacy Inequalities:

Though it is gradually rising, the female literacy rate in India is lower than the male literacy rate. (14) According to Census of India 2011, literacy rate of females is 65.46% compared to males which are 82.14%. Compared to boys, far fewer girls are enrolled in the schools, and many of them drop out. (14) According to majority of the scholars, the major factor behind the improved social and economic status of women in Kerala is literacy. (14) In rural Punjab, the gap between girls and boys in school enrollment increases dramatically with age as demonstrated in National Family Health Survey-3 where girls age 15-17 in Punjab are 10% more likely than boys to drop out of school. (15) Although this gap has been reduced significantly, problems still remain in the quality of education for girls where boys in the same family will be sent to higher quality private schools and girls sent to the government school in the village. (16)

Health Inequalities:

Immunization rates for 2 year olds were 41.7% for girls and 45.3% for boys according to the National Family Health Survey-3, indicating a slight disadvantage for girls. Some studies in south India have found that gender disadvantages, such as negative attitudes towards women's empowerment are risk factors for suicidal behavior and common mental disorders like anxiety and depression. (17)

Violence against women:

Domestic violence, (18) rape and dowry-related violence are sources of gender violence. (19) (20) According to the National Crime Records Bureau 2013 annual report, 24,923 rape cases were reported across India in 2012. (21) Out of

these, 24,470 were committed by relative or neighbor; in other words, the victim knew the alleged rapist in 98 per cent of the cases. (22) India records a rape rate of 2 per 100,000 people, (23) (24) compared to 8.1 rapes per 100,000 people in Western Europe, 14.7 per 100,000 in Latin America, 28.6 in the United States, and 40.2 per 100,000 in Southern African region. (25)

Political Inequalities:

This measure of gender inequality considers the gap between men and women in political decision making at the highest levels. (26) On this measure, India has ranked in top 20 countries worldwide for many years, with 9th best in 2013 - a score reflecting less gender inequality in India's political empowerment than Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, France and United Kingdom (27) (28). From the prime minister to chief ministers of various states, Indian voters have elected women to its state legislative assemblies and national parliament in large numbers for many decades. Women turnout during India's 2014 parliamentary general elections was 65.63%, compared to 67.09% turnout for men. (29) In 16 states of India, more women voted than men. A total of 260.6 million women exercised their right to vote in April-May 2014 elections for India's parliament. (29) India passed 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1993, which provides for 33 per cent quotas for women's representation in the local self-government institutions. These Amendments were implemented in 1993. This, suggest Ghani et al., has had strong effects for empowering women in India in many spheres. (30) **However, Women's Reservation Bill or the the Constitution (108th Amendment) Bill, which provides for 33 per cent reservation for women in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies is still pending.**

Other Inequalities:

Natality inequality: Given a preference for boys over girls that many male-dominated societies have, gender inequality can manifest itself in the form of the parents wanting the newborn to be a boy rather than a girl.

Opportunities of higher education inequality: The opportunities of higher education may be far fewer for young women than for young men. Indeed, gender bias in higher education and professional training can be observed even in some of the richest countries in the world, in Europe and North America.

Mortality inequality: In some regions in the world, inequality between women and men directly involves matters of life and death, and takes the brutal form of unusually high mortality rates of women and a consequent preponderance of men in the total population.

Mortality inequality has been observed extensively in North Africa and in Asia, including China and South Asia.

Household inequality: There are often enough basic inequalities in case of girls and women within the family or the household, which can take many different forms – food, health and schooling and unequally shared household duties.

Professional inequality: In terms of employment as well as promotion in work and occupation, women often face greater handicap than men.

Reasons for Gender Inequalities in India:

Patriarchal Society:

Most of India, with some exceptions, has strong patriarchal and patrilineal customs, where men hold authority over female family members and inherit family property and title. Examples of patriarchy in India include prevailing customs where inheritance passes from father to son, women move in with the husband and his family upon marriage, and marriages include a bride price or dowry. This 'inter-generational contract'

provides strong social and economic incentives for raising sons and disincentives for raising daughters. (31) The parents of the woman essentially lose all they have invested in their daughter to her husband's family, which is a disincentive for investing in their girls during youth. Furthermore, sons are expected to support their parents in old age and women have very limited ability to assist their own parents. (32)

Son Preference:

A key factor driving gender inequality is the preference for sons, as they are deemed more useful than girls. Boys are given the exclusive rights to inherit the family name and properties and they are viewed as additional status for their family. They are also believed to have a higher economic utility as they can provide additional labour in agriculture. Another factor is that of religious practices, which can only be performed by males for their parents' afterlife and save them from punaama naraka. All these factors make sons more desirable. Thus, a combination of factors has shaped the imbalanced view of sexes in India. A 2005 study in Madurai, India, found that old age security, economic motivation, and to a lesser extent, religious obligations, continuation of the family name, and help in business or farm, were key reasons for son preference. (33)

Discrimination against girl child: The girl child is subjected to discrimination with all respects – Education, marriage, employment etc. Sex determination continues to be practiced robustly and rampantly. As is sex discrimination — girls are given less food, less health care, less education and even less affection. Also, it seems policies for the girl child haven't done much to improve the situation.

Dowry: The evil practice of dowry is widely prevalent in India. As a result, daughters are considered to be an economic liability.

Pressing Issues:

- As the opportunities in cities improve, it is observed that more women are migrating to the urban areas in search of work and a better quality of life.
- Women and Poverty
- Education and Training of Women
- The attitudes towards women in the society
- Non-flexible working hours and discriminatory working condition
- Sexual harassment and a safety-oriented workplace design.
- Fear of Transit

The Implications of Gender Disparities in India:

- **Declining Female Sex-Ratio:** India has yet a long way to go in her fight against declining female sex ratio, pre-birth elimination of females. Time is quickly ticking away. A shortage of girls would lead to a shortage of eligible brides thus making the girl a “scarce commodity”. A concerted effort by the government, the law, political leaders, NGOs, media, teachers and the community itself is the need of the hour.
- **Gender inequality has adverse impact on development goals** as it reduces economic growth.
- **It hampers the overall well being**, because blocking women from participation in social, political and economic activities can adversely affect the whole society. Many developing countries including India, have displayed gender inequality in education, employment and health.
- It is common to find girls and women suffering from high mortality rates. There are vast differences in education level of the two sexes. India has witnessed gender inequality from its early history **due to its socio-economic and religious practices that**

resulted in a wide gap between the position of men and women in the society.

In fact, gender has been the most statistically significant determinant of **malnutrition** among young children and malnutrition is a frequent, direct or underlying, cause of death among girls below age 5. Girls are breast-fed less frequently and for a shorter duration in infancy. In childhood and adulthood, males are fed first and better. Adult women consume approximately 1,000 fewer calories per day than men according to one estimate.

Higher mortality of females (young girls, maternal mortality, and female infanticide): The main factor responsible for the numerical deficit of females was excess female mortality. **The numerical impact of the higher female mortality was expressed in terms of “missing women” was devised by Amartya Sen to give some rough idea of the enormity of the problem. According to more recent estimates 50 million women are missing in India alone. Due to Delivery deaths (maternal deaths) also the number of females is decreasing. It came to know that in India for every 14 minutes a woman dies from pregnancy and complications of child birth.**

Marriage squeeze: ‘Marriage squeeze’ characterized by inability of men in marriageable age to find suitable partners. Marriage is universal in India and men typically marry younger women with age gap of normally not exceeding five years. Already declining child sex ratio plummets further; there is a probability that each successive cohort will contain lesser and lesser women relative to men. As (in and out) migration do not substantially alter the cohort sex composition, it is likely that **more men compete for comparatively lesser number of women in the marriage market.**

- **Mental Distress among Women:** In this modern age also women are often blamed for their no fault of giving birth to a male child. Actually women can release XX chromosomes only, while men can release both X & Y chromosomes. If X chromosome released from a woman and X chromosome released from a man is joined during sexual intercourse, a female child is born, otherwise if Y chromosome released from a man is joined with X chromosome released from a woman a male child is born. Thus, it is clear from scientific evidence that men can only play a vital role in sex determination. But, knowingly or unknowingly women are blamed for sex determination. The result of distress among some women has led to their suicides.
 - **Postponing the marriages:** Postponing the marriage longer by marrying late, looking for brides who may be younger than usual or even older, etc. In any case these options are not desirable. The age at marriage, when involuntarily pushed upward as a result of inability in finding a match will result in longer spousal gaps.
 - **Re-emergence of “bride price”:** There are reports that scarcity of women in an environment of poverty and lack of development has led to re-emergence of “bride price”, **the system of paying money to obtain a wife, and sharing of wives in some communities in Rajasthan**, who are in the lower echelons of the society in terms of caste hierarchies and economic position (India Today, September 1, 2001). If this continues in a wider scale, it is the rich and powerful who are better poised for matrimony than others.
 - **Glass Ceiling Effect:** This term symbolizes a number of barriers that prevent qualified individuals, especially women from advancing higher in their organizations. Although many women hold management positions, few have made the breakthrough to top-level positions. **It was estimated that only one to five percent of the top executive officials are women.** Hymowitz & Schelhardt (1986) used this term for the first time in the Wall Street Journal special report on corporate women.
 - **Crime against women:** Difficulties and inability in finding a female partner would lead to social tensions, particularly manifested in crime against women.
 - **Sex Determination Tests:** The increasing and widespread incidence of “Boy-Girl tests” in urban centers will have serious consequences. **In Mumbai and Delhi, the child sex ratio is far below the national average and the girl population has dropped in 23 cities.**
 - **Deterioration of ethics:** If the situation of decline in sex ratio becomes serious, ethics will deteriorate in the society, as a consequence, for biological need prostitution will increase, and family taboos will also deteriorate.
- Suggestions:**
- **Globalization:** Globalization has presented new challenges for the realization of the goal of women’s equality. **Strategies should be designed to enhance the capacity of women and empower them to meet the negative social and economic impacts, which may flow from the globalization process.**
 - **Change in attitude of men:** Men should change their attitude towards women. Unless men start regarding women as their equal partners, in the growth of humanity this differentiation between men and women shall continue unabated. No single item of achievement like education, profession, legal rights or even the mixture of all these will work out a solution - **the only feasible solution is the change in the mindset of men towards women. Till this is done, no**

amount of teaching, preaching or bargaining will help the girl child.

- **Change in attitude of women:** There is a proverb in Telugu that “A woman is enemy to another woman”. Even women have to change their attitude towards the girl child/women. At least partly women are themselves responsible for their position. They prefer for sons.
- **Gender discrimination:** There should be full stop for gender discrimination and an end to son preference. Both and boys and girls should be treated equal in all aspects. According to United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) projection, by the year 2025 a significant share of men above 30 would still be single and that many will never be able to marry at all. Men in the states of Haryana and Punjab are already experiencing a nearly 20% deficit of marriageable women.
- **Intensive Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Campaigns:** Intensive Information, Education and Communication campaigns should be organized for raising awareness among the public regarding the serious consequences of decline in female sex ratio. In this context it right to quote, the statement of GK Pillai, Union Home Secretary that “**Whatever major steps that have been put in the last 40 years have not had any impact in the child sex ratio and therefore it requires complete review. Every policy measure has to be looked into at the central government, state government and at the panchayat level**”.
- **MTP: Amartya Sen refers to the abortions of the female fetus after determination of the sex of the fetus as “natality inequality.” He designates the use of ultrasound as “high-tech sexism.”** MTP providers need to be more vigilant when performing second-trimester abortions.

While the feminist discourse on abortion advocates that abortion is a right over one’s body, **sex-selective abortion in itself is a form of female violence. Effective implementation of the Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (PNDT) Act (1994) so that families find it difficult to undertake sex determination and selective abortion.**

- **Women empowerment:** In the simplest of words, basically women empowerment means the creation of an environment where women can make independent decisions on their personal development as well as shine as equals in society. Education of women is a powerful tool for improving nutrition levels, raising the age at marriage, acceptance of family planning, improvement in self-image, and their empowerment. Hence, this should be given top priority.
- **Recognizing unpaid care work as a major human rights issue:** As unpaid care work is a major human rights issue this needs to change. Policies must recognize the role of women and girls in the provision of unpaid care; reduce the drudgery of unpaid care; and redistribute unpaid care work (from women to men, and from the family to communities and the state), thus laying the basis for true gender equality.
- **Decision-making:** Enhancing women’s decision-making power in the household and society.
- **Resources:** Ensuring that resources allocated for gender equality match the genuine objectives and commitments.
- **Financial Management:** Making sure that public financial management systems are gender-responsive, including by more rigorous tracking of expenditures.
- **Accountability:** Strengthening accountability framework for measuring progress on gender equality and Women’s empowerment commitments at the country level.

- **Economic and Financial assets:** Enhancing women's access to and control over economic and financial assets.
- **Reducing the gender gap:** Reducing the gender gap in secondary and higher education would be a focus area, with a special focus on girls and women, particularly those belonging to weaker sections including the SC/ST/BC/Minorities.
- **NGOs Role:** NGOs may be encouraged to promote formation of self-help groups, organize non-formal education for adult females and school dropouts, create employment opportunities for women as well as provide counseling and support services to newly married and pregnant women to discourage them from undergoing sex-selective abortion.
- **Warning Signals:** "It (the decline in child sex ratio) was expected, but it is a warning signal for the nation to wake up," Ranjana Kumari, Director of Centre for Social Research, said. She said the law banning sex-based abortion "is not stringently implemented". "The caution should be taken seriously. We are leading to a crisis situation," she said. Social activist Dr Sabu George said the larger cause for concern was the fact that previously unaffected states were also indulging in sex determination because of aggressive promotion of the sex selection tests by doctors.
- **Regular check and serious punishment:** There should be regular check and serious punishment for sex determination tests, female feticide, infanticide and illegal abortions.
- **Save the Girl Child Campaign:** "Save the Girl Child campaign" launched by Government of India must be intensified. One of its main objectives is to lessen the preference for a son by highlighting the achievements of young girls. To achieve the long-term vision, efforts are afloat to create an environment where sons and daughters are equally valued. Boys need to be educated at an early level with regard to giving respect and equal rights to girls.
- **Dowry:** The evil practice of dowry is widely prevalent in India. This should be curbed by implementing stringent laws and punishment.
- **Malnutrition:** In view of the high risk of malnutrition and disease that women face at all the three critical stages viz., infancy, childhood, adolescent and reproductive phase, focused attention should be paid to meeting the nutritional needs of women at all stages of life cycle.
- **Positive Economic and Social policies:** Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential.
- **Equal Rights:** The de-jure and de-facto enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all spheres-political, economic, social cultural and civil should be given.
- **Equal Access:** Equal access to participation, decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office etc. is essential.
- **Strengthening legal systems:** Strengthening the legal systems aimed at elimination of all forms of discrimination against women is the need of the hour.
- **Priorities for domestic policy action:** Addressing excess deaths of girls and women and eliminating gender disadvantage in education where these remain entrenched.
- **Closing differences** in access to economic opportunities and the ensuing earnings and productivity gaps between women and men.

- **Shrinking gender differences** in voice within households and societies.
- **Limiting the reproduction of gender inequality** across generations.
- **Stringent laws:** Laws related to SDTs and MTPs should be implemented strictly.

Safety of Women is ensured:

- Where women girls can enjoy public spaces and public life without fear of being assaulted
- Where violence do not exist against women and girls in their home, street and at work place
- Where women and girls participate in making decisions that affect the community in which they live
- Where women and girls are discriminated against where their economic, social, Political and Cultural rights are guaranteed.
- Where safety guarantees human rights of all people without excluding women and girls
- Where the state and local government take actions against to provide attention, prevention and punishment for violence against women and girls
- Where the state and local government gaurentee women and girls access to justice
- Insecurity and the threat of violence prevent women from participating as full and equal citizens in community life.

Sharing Responsibilities:

Women:

- Speak out on issues of violence and insecurity
- Support in the efforts to attain gender equality in decision-making positions
- Support women in positions of power to remain accountable and promote equality.

Men:

- Listen, accompany, and support women in their drive for autonomy and empowerment
- Mobilize men and boys to challenge traditional gender roles in order to prevent violence against women and girls
- To Women's groups, grassroots and community organizations:
- Special efforts should be given to outreach isolated communities
- Act for a local safety policy, planning, and practices which integrate a gender approach, and which support women's safety initiatives.
- Provide greater opportunities for women's involvement
- Allocate municipal and Panchayat funds to gender equality, community development and poverty reduction programs

To police services:

- Preventive rather than a repressive approach to violence and insecurity
- The provision of adequate training on the causes and impacts of violence and insecurity on women
- Development of strategies to promote women's safety and empowerment. Increase women power in police force

Education sector:

- Integrate gender awareness, anti-violence, and human rights teaching into the curriculum, and to challenge stereotypes and attitudes on gender-based violence.
- Mobilize children through empowerment strategies, including self-defense, aimed at ensuring a safer city for all.
- Girls should be motivated to take up higher education. Universal education for all below 14 years should be strictly implemented. Gender sensitive curricula should be framed to address sex-stereotyping menace.

The Role of Media:

- Contribute to community mobilization, and facilitate access to services aimed at ensuring women's safety.
- Challenge gender stereotypes and inequalities through information and awareness campaigns.
- Reduce sensationalized reporting.
- The mass media must be involved in promoting a positive image of women. School and college girls should be the target audience. However, this should be combined with highlighting the issue and dangers of female feticide and skewed gender ratio.

Research community:

- Encourage research on women's safety and the integration of gender in crime prevention
- Provide research assistance and support to community-based project implementation and evaluation

To private sector:

- Partner with local organizations and municipalities, and financially support initiatives promoting women's safety.
- Audit the impacts of all decisions on the safety and security of women employees, clients, and consumers, by working with unions, women's groups and community organizations to include these issues in workplaces.

To governments:

- Develop policies and programs to ensure women's financial autonomy, including women's right to own property.
- Allocate necessary resources for the development of strategies and initiatives on women's safety and security.

- Politically and financially support local governments in their efforts to promote safety.

International networks and UN agencies:

- Increase the availability of electronic exchange, and of technical assistance.
- International, regional, national and local-to-local exchanges and cooperation for sustainable development and inclusive development.
- Support the evaluation of progress made by regular international or regional conferences on women's safety.

By 2015, India is expected to achieve the MDG target on gender parity in education; however, the targets on women's economic empowerment and representation in National Parliament will not be met. In shaping the post 2015 development agenda, the attention of the world is focused on India and the role of the Government in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment focused on women's security, voice and empowerment. (34)

To conclude, India has enacted many constitutional and legislative provisions for empowerment of women. Many development schemes especially for women have also been launched for improving their fortune. Such measures have started giving positive outcomes relating to women's problems. But the position of women in our country still leaves much to be desired. Top priority should be given in our developmental plans for improving female literacy and creating skills and capability among women for enabling them to stand on their own feet. Unless the process of development is properly engendered, it shall remain endangered. One concurrent example of gender discrimination is glass ceiling effect. (35) Empowerment of women could only be achieved if their economic and social status is improved. This could be possible only by adopting definite social and economic policies

with a view of total development of women and to make them realize that they have the potential to be strong human beings. The first and foremost priority should be given to the education of women, which is the grass root problem. **Swami Vivekananda had said “That nation which doesn’t respect women will never become great now and nor will ever in future. Arise away and stop not until the goal is reached”**. In pursuit of making India a great nation, let us work towards giving women their much deserved status. Thus, our country should be catapulted into the horizon of empowerment and equity of girls/women in all spheres to achieve the goal of “Gender Inclusive Development”.

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