

## **A Study of Gender Disparities in Development Challenges for Indian Economy**

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### **Introduction**

Women's position and degree of empowerment is defined by men and men's relation in society which is very unfortunate. Empowerment of women is most essential for the development of the country as it will promote both the quality and quantity of human resources available for development. Women are known to be the best managers as they are the person who manages the affairs of the family and prosperity of the family fully depends of the management capability of the women. Inequality in the status of men and women leads to the failure of development efforts.

Women's discrimination occurs due to several factors. It may be self-imposed, or it may have religious sanctions and sometimes it is due to other cultural norms. There can also be externally imposed factor is employer. All these have a cumulative effect of women and thus they become vulnerable to exploitation. The nature and extent of the discrimination vary considerably across The reality of women's lives remains invisible to men and women alike and this invisibility persists at all levels beginning with the family to the nation. Although geographically men and women share the same space, they live in different worlds. The mere fact that "**Women hold up half the sky**"- does not appear to give them a position of dignity and equality. True, that over the years women have made great strides in many areas with notable progress in reducing some gender\* gaps. Yet, 'the afflicted world in which we live is characterised by deeply unequal sharing of the burden of adversities between women and men'. Sprawling inequalities persist in their access to education, health care, physical and financial resources and opportunities in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres.

'Gender inequality holds back the growth of individuals, the development of nations and the evolution of societies to the disadvantage of both men and women'. Gender issues are not simply talking about women's issues. Understanding gender means understanding opportunities, constraints and the impact of change as they affect both men and women.

### **Data Source and Methodology**

The present paper is solely based on secondary sources of data. The extent of gender gap has been examined in four fundamental areas like economic participation and opportunity, education, health and political participation using the indicators like work participation rate (WPR), literacy

rate, enrollment ratio, sex ratio, infant mortality rate (IMR), life expectancy at birth and political participation.

**Objective** - I the present study a modest attempt made with the purpose of understanding and analyzing the major issues involved in gender disparities in India, So as to provide a basis for formulating policies to remove regional disparities in India.

### Education and Gender inequalities

Literacy and education are generally taken as indicators of social development. The spread of literacy is also associated with the traits of industrialization, urbanization, better communication increased commerce and modernization, improved literacy helps in the growth of awareness and social skill and in the improvement of Economic Condition.

Table 1 shows the literacy rate in India from 1951-2011

**Table 1**

Census year	Persons	Males	Females	Male-Female gap in literacy rate
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.30	40.40	15.35	25.05
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	23.98
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	26.26
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	65.38	75.85	54.16	21.70
2011	80.90	64.60	73.00	16.30

Source: Census of India, 2011.

According to 2011 census, the national average literacy rate is 73 per cent as against 18.33 per cent in 1951. In isolation this may look quite impressive, but the fact remains that even more fifty years after Independence about 27 per cent of population remains illiterate in India. As per census 2011, female literacy rate is 64.60 per cent as against 80.90 per cent for males. The so-called past “gains” in women’s education as reflected in the female literacy rate shows an increase from 29.76 per cent in 1981 to 64.60 per cent in 2011 (Table 1)

**Table 2**

Level	1990-91		1999-2000		2010-11	
	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total
Primary (I-V)	40.4 (41.5)	97.4	46.8 (43.2)	108.2	49.5 (43.6)	113.6
Middle/Upper Primary (VI-VIII)	12.5 (36.7)	34.0	15.2 (39.5)	38.1	17.0 (40.4)	42.1
Secondary/Higher Secondary	6.3 (32.9)	19.1	8.7 (36.4)	24.0	11.0 (38.7)	28.2

Source- Selected Educational Statistics, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Education, Government of India, New Delhi, Various issues.

Table 2 show the absolute and percentage of girl's enrolment to total enrolment by stages from 1990-91 to 1999-2000. From the table, it can be observed that girls' participation has increased from 41.5 per cent to 43.6 per cent at primary level from 36.7 per cent to 40.4 per cent at middle level (VI-VIII). From 32.9 per cent to 38.7 per cent at secondary/ higher secondary level between 1990-91 and 2010-2011. Girls' participation in absolute term has also increased in every level during same period. Despite the increasing participation of girls, it is still below fifty per cent at stages of education.

It is encouraging to note that, as revealed by the 2011 census for the first time, the absolute number of female illiterates has come down from 200.7 million in 1991 to 189.6. The number women in higher education which includes colleges, universities, professional colleges of engineering, medicine, technology, etc. Has also increased from 1.32 million(33.0 per cent) in 1990-91 to 3.03 million (39.8 per cent) in 2010-2011 (table 3). The number of women enrolled has shown an increase in both absolute and relative terms.

### **Women status in employment**

According to the world bank (1999), women constitute 32 per cent of the labour force. Because of their lack of access to education and skill training opportunities, Many women are forced into either the daily wage market or the informal sector. Only 15 percent of women are in the formal sector. Outside the agricultural sector, women are concentrated within a limited number of sectors, mostly service and poorly paid manufacturing jobs. In India, only 15.4 percent of female sector manufacturing employees are women, although the actual number would be much higher if home-based subcontracting for which there are no numbers were taken into account (Mahbab ul haq development centre, 2000). Although urban-educated, affluent women are keen to avail themselves of the opportunities that have come with globalization current trends in the economy and the problem of women's illiteracy have pushed more women into the informal sector. Downsizing as part of liberalization policies has increased the amount of low-paying, home-based, subcontracted work, most of it being done by women.

In India, 96 per cent of economically active women work in the **informal sector**. Because of their lack of mobility the pressures of domestic work, or cultural norms, women find them in the informal sector. The conditions of work in the informal sector and the terms of labour are usually exploitative. Although some women may earn a good living in the informal sector, the majority face long working hours with low returns. Because there is little legislation concerning working condition, safety, or enforcement of existing legislation, there is no protection against exploitation. even though India has laws mandating equal wages for equal work women continue to be paid less.

In fact, gender-specific inequalities in appointment pay, and job security are as widespread as harassment at the work place. In rural India, women get paid 60 per cent or less than men for the same work, while women's pay in urban areas may approach 80 per cent of men's. However,

equal pay for equal work remains on illusion. Maternity and other benefits are denied to women in the unorganized sector, which is where they are largely concentrated.

in the year 1990, males occupied an overwhelming proportion of total employment aggregating to about 86 per cent and women could get only 14 per cent gender disparities were still higher in public sector where only about 12 per cent of women were employed when compared to private sector where about 18 per cent of total employment was in the hands of women. One encouraging feature as could be observed from the table is that gender disparities in employment seemed to be gradually narrowing down over the year 1990 and 2011.

Besides these, males largely control technical cadres, top administrative and management positions as well as professionals. While in industrial countries women accounted for 37 per cent of administrators and managers and 50 per cent of professional and technical workers, the corresponding figures for India were partly 2 per cent and 21 per cent respectively.

### **Women Entrepreneurship**

The perspective role of women entrepreneurs in India has been realized since long. The role of women entrepreneur was not up to the mark because of the lack of government support at every stage. The government of India has rightly realized that there is a need to evolve strategy and launch different schemes for the upliftment of women entrepreneur. After the enactment of the first industrial policy of 1956, there was no such proposal for the promotion of the entrepreneur. It was during the sixty five year plan that a new chapter was created for the integration of the women in the development stream. The industrial policies of 1980 and 1990 have considerably emphasized the need of **entrepreneurship development programs** (EDPs) in urban as well as rural areas for the upliftment of the status of women in economic and social sector.

The 1987-88 census indicated 44,759 small scale enterprise (SSE) units run by women which constitute 7.69 per cent of the total 5.82 lakh small scale industry (SSI) units. The Prime Minister's Rozgar yojana launched in 1993 and administered by the development of Industry provides self-employment opportunities to women entrepreneurs along with men upto November 1995, a total of 3,25,575 persons have been assisted under this programme out of which constitute about 10 per cent although it was expected that 30 per cent of the beneficiaries under this scheme would be women.

The small industrial development organization has formulated a new scheme for the development of women entrepreneurs and would be giving training to 4500 women every year under this scheme. The National small industry corporation has also formulated a special scheme for women entrepreneurs through information campaigns and training programme for women.

### **Conclusion and suggestion**

My suggestions to government in order to development of women are as follows-

- Education should be strictly compulsory to women.
- The government should be given the equal rights to the women in all fields.

- Women which almost constitute half of the population of the country are required to play important role in development of the country. But to realize our dream of becoming a developed country, there is a need for mobilizations of women in large number by empowering them.

It is an evident from the above analysis that there is an improvement in the status of women in India as far as women empowerment is concerned.

It is an established fact that education plays an important role in empowering women.

“There cannot be an educated person without educating women. If general education is to be limited to men or women, that opportunity should be given to women. Since then, it would most surely be passed on to the next generation.”

Some qualities to be acquired by women to become truly empowered are awareness about risk prevailing at home, in work place, in travelling and staying outside the home.

They should have political, legal, economic and health awareness.

They should have knowledge about support groups and positive attitudes towards life. They should get goals for future and strive to achieve them with courage. So, it is a wake up call for women to awake for their deep slumber and understand the true meaning of their empowerment.

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