

GENDER EQUALITY: A CORE CONCEPT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

Dr. Dinesh Das*
Department of Economics
Gossaigaon College, Kokrajhar, Assam
INDIA.

Minakshee Pathak
Department of Education
Gossaigaon College, Kokrajhar, Assam
INDIA.

ABSTRACT

The word 'gender' refers to the socio-economic definition of man and woman-the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles. The distinction between sex and gender was introduced to deal with the general tendency to attribute women's subordination to their anatomy. For ages it was believed that the different characteristics, roles and status accorded to women and men in society are determined by sex that are natural and therefore not changeable. Gender is seen closely related to the roles and behavior assigned to women and men based on their sexual differences. As soon as a child is born, families and society begin the process of gendering. The birth of the son is being celebrated while the birth of a daughter filled with pain; sons are showered with love, respect, better food and proper health care. Boys are encouraged to be tough and outgoing but girls are encouraged to be homebound and shy. All these differences are gender differences and they are created by society. Gender inequality is, therefore, a form of inequality which is distinct from other forms of socio-economic inequalities.

Keywords: Equality, Gender Status, Development, India

INTRODUCTION

Gender disparities in India deserve a serious study and discussion among media, academia, researchers and policy makers of country. The Economic Survey (2011-12) has emphasized that much needs to be done to reduce disparities between men and women. In gender development index India ranking 114 out of 155 countries. Gender inequality has adverse impact on development goals as 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 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.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The objectives of the present study are:

- (i) To clarify the concept of gender equality;
- (ii) To analysis Census of India 2011 data to understand present status of gender equality in India; and
- (iii) To suggest measures to reduce gender inequality.

* author's email: dineshdas88@gmail.com

The present study is based on official source of report and survey statistics of Census of India 2011, news paper articles on Census of India 2011, demography statistics and figures of different Census of India, different issues of 'Economic and Political weekly', Yajana, etc. The study throws light on various dimensions of gender inequality in India. It will be helpful for decision makers in formulating new policies/amending the existing policies.

COMPOSITION OF POPULATION OF INDIA: FINDING OF 2011 CENSUS

The Indian Population Census 2011 was conducted in two phases beginning April 1, 2010. According to the 15th Census data (provisional) released on 31st March 2011 in New Delhi by Union Home Secretary, Shri G.K. Pillai and Register General of India and Census Commissioner, Shri C. Chandramouli, the population has increased by more than 181 million during the decade 2001-2011; significantly the growth is slower for the first time in nine decades. Among the States and Union Territories, Uttar Pradesh is the most populous State with 199 million people and Lakshadweep the least populated at 64,429. India is the second populous country of the world, accounts for world's 17.5 per cent population. As per the provisional results of Census 2011, total population of India is 1,21,01,93,422 which comprises of 62,37,24,248 males and 58,64,69,174 females with the sex ratio of 940 females per 1000 males, indicating a persisting preference for male children.

Table 1. Population of India 2011 at Glance

Population	Statistics
Total Population	1,21,01,93,422 (persons)
Males	62,37,24,248
Females	58,64,69,174
Ratio	940 Females/1000 Males
Decadal Growth (2001-2011)	18,14,55,986 (17.64 percent)
Density of Population	382 per sq. km.
Literacy (in per cent)	Total: 74.04, Males: 82.14, Females: 65.46

Source: 2011 Census Data (provisional) Male includes Males and others.

China is the world's most populous country with 1,341 billion people, accounting for 19.4 per cent of the global population. India's population is almost equal to the combined population of the United States, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Japan put together that is 1214.3 million. The sex ratio of a few countries is presented here (Table-3) to understand the trend prevailing in various parts of the world. Sex ratio of India and Madhya Pradesh is slightly better compared to China, the most populated country. However, the sex ratio in the listed European, African and American countries are comparatively better than India (940).

Even as India's population show continues increasing, the growth rate has actually slowed down. The percentage decadal growth during 2001-2011 has registered the sharpest decline since independence-a decrease of 3.90 percentage points. The growth rate in 2011 is 17.64 per cent in comparison to 21.15 per cent in 2001. The 2001-2011 periods is the first decade (exception of 1911-1921), which has actually added lesser population compared to the previous decade. According to the figures, there has been a decline in the number of children under the age of 6, down five million since 2001 to 158.8 million. It is no surprise that the overall sex ratio (number of females for every 1,000 males) has

shown improvement, from 932.91 in 2001 to 940.27 in 2011. The gap of 21.59 percentage points between men and women in 2001 now stands reduced to 16.68 points.

Table 2. Top Ten Populous Countries of the World

Country	Percent of World Population
China	19.4
India	17.5
USA	4.5
Indonesia	3.4
Brazil	2.8
Pakistan	2.7
Bangladesh	2.4
Nigeria	2.3
Russia Federal	2.0
Japan	1.9
Others	41.2

Source: ISI website, Kolkata

Table 3. Sex Ratio of India in Comparison to other Countries

Country	Sex Ratio
World	984
Russian Federation	1,165
France	1,056
Japan	1,054
Germany	1,038
United Kingdom	1,037
Brazil	1,031
South Africa	1,028
United States of America	1,026
Republic of Korea	1,020
Australia	1,011
Ethiopia	1,010
Indonesia	1,003
Nigeria	995
Malaysia	970
Iran	968
India	940
China	927
Saudi Arab	828

Source: Provisional Population Totals, Provisional Results, Census 2011

A good part of this can be explained by the greater natural longevity of women and improvements in health care over the years. As per Census 2011, top five states/union territories which have the highest sex ratio are Kerala (1,084) followed by Puducherry (1,038), Tamilnadu (995), Andhra Pradesh (992) and Chhattisgarh (991). Five states which have the lowest sex ratio are Daman & Diu (618), Dadra & Nagar Haveli (775), Chandigarh (818), NCT of Delhi (866) and Andaman & Nicobar Islands (878).

Table 4. Top five and Bottom five States/UTs by Sex Ratio: 2011

Top Five States/UTs		Bottom Five States/UTs	
State/UT	Sex Ratio (Females per 1000 Males)	State/UT	Sex Ratio (Females per 1000 Males)
Kerela	1,084	Chhattisgarh	991
Puducherry	1,038	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	775
Tamilnadu	995	Chandigarh	818
Andhra Pradesh	992	NCT of Delhi	866
Chhattisgarh	991	A & N Islands	878

Source: Provisional Population Totals, Provisional Result, Census 2011

Gender Inequality: A Dark Finding of 2011 Census

Gender inequality is perhaps the biggest setback of otherwise good looking 2011 Census of India. Census 2011 has revealed that the child sex ratio in the country has declined to touch the lowest levels since independence. Provisional population data indicates a steep fall in the child sex ratio. The sex ratio in the 0-6 age group has been continually declining since 1961, but the fall from 927.31 in 2001 to 914.23 in 2011 is the worst since independence. It can only be explained by the deadly application of the strong preference for sons over daughters through the instrumentality of sex-selective abortion, or female foeticide. Attempts to tackle female foeticide through bans on sex-determination tests imposed by legislations have been remained largely ineffective. Chandramouli said the declining child sex ratio was a ‘matter of grave concern.’ Pillai described government’s policies to curb the declining sex ratio needed a ‘complete review.’ Gender equality campaigner Ranjana Kumari, Director of Central for Social Research expressed, sex ratio figure of 2011 Census is a ‘warning signal for the nation to wake up.’

Table 5. Child Population in the age group 0-6 by Sex: 2011

Males	Females	Persons
82,952,135	75,837,152	158,789,287

Source: 2011 Census Data (provisional)

**Table 6. Child Population in the age group 0-6 and 7+ years: 2001 and 2011
 Sex Ratio (Females per 1,000 Males)**

Child Population in the age group 0-6		Population aged 7 and above	
2001	2011	2001	2011
927	914	934	944

Source: 2011 Census Data (provisional)

The 15th Census figure indicates a continued trend of preference for male children over females. India is country where female infanticide is still common and the government has banned doctors from revealing the sex of the unborn child. The gender imbalance is there despite a ban on sex determination tests based on ultrasound scans and sex selection abortion. Despite the laws to prevent female foeticide and schemes to encourage families to have girl child, the child sex ratio has fallen

sharply in the latest census period. The male population has grown by 17.19 percent to reach 623.7 million (62 crore) while the female population has risen by 18.12 percent to reach 586.5 million (58 crore). The total number of children in the age-group 0-6 is 158.8 million (-5 million since 2001). Population (0-6 years) 2001-2011 registered minus (-) 3.08 percent growth with minus (-) 2.42 for males and -3.80 for females. The proportion of child population in the age group of 0-6 years to total population is 13.1 percent while the corresponding figure in 2001 was 15.9 percent. The decline has been to the extent of 2.8 points.

Table 7. States' Pictures of Gender Imbalance

- ▶ Overall sex ratio at the national level has increased by 7 points to reach 940 at Census 2011 as against 933 in Census 2001. This is the highest sex ratio recorded since Census 1971 and a shade lower than 1961. Increase in sex ratio is observed in 29 States/UTs.
- ▶ Three major States (J&K, Bihar & Gujarat) have shown decline in sex ratio as compared to Census 2001.
- ▶ Kerala with 1084 has the highest sex ratio followed by Puducherry with 1038; Daman & Diu has the lowest sex ratio of 618.
- ▶ Child sex ratio (0-6 years) is 914. Increasing trend in the child sex ratio (0-6) seen in Punjab (846), Haryana (830), Himachal Pradesh (906), Gujarat (886), Tamil Nadu (946), Mizoram (971) and Andaman & Nicobar Islands (966). In all remaining 27 States/UTs, the child sex ratio show decline over Census 2001.
- ▶ Mizoram has the highest child sex ratio (0-6 years) of 971 followed by Meghalaya with 970. Haryana is at the bottom with ratio of 830 followed by Punjab with 846.

Source: 2011 Census Data (provisional)

Gender Gap in Education: Missing Ingredients of Inclusive Development

For inclusive development, what could be more crucial input than education for all? Education is the single most effective instrument for social and economic transformation. For horizontal and vertical mobility in society, it is imperative to promote education among all backward sections those have fallen behind the national average in the field of education. A well educated population is not only essential to support economic growth, but is also a precondition for growth to be inclusive since it is the educated and skilled person who can stand to benefit most from the employment opportunities which growth will provide. Education opens up opportunities for individual and group entitlements, productive employment and participation in various arenas of social life. In all, education ignites social changes and catalyses economic growth. The world community recognizes education for all as an important Millennium Development Goal, India is actively pushing forward with its agenda for revamping and restructuring education towards inclusive education.

Education empowers women that increase the economic, social and political opportunities available to women. Over the years the gender gap in education has been narrowing, yet substantial disparity still persists and need to be overcome (Table-8). According to the released data, literacy rate has gone up from 64.83 per cent in 2001 to 74.04 per cent in 2011 showing an increase of 9.21 percentage points. Literates constitute 74 per cent of the total population aged seven and above and illiterates form 26 per cent. Percentage growth in literacy during 2001-2011 is 38.82; males: 31.98 per cent and females: 49.10 per cent. While literacy among males rose from 75.26 per cent to 82.14 per cent, an increase of 6.9 points, it rose among females from 53.67 per cent to 65.46 per cent, an increase of 11.8 points. Of

the additional literates, women (110,069,001) outnumber men (107,631,940). The gap of 21.59 percentage points between men and women in 2001 now stands reduced to 16.68 points. The full census data, to be released in 2013, should provide policymakers a comprehensive view of where India stands on key indicators of socio-economic development, set against the goal of creating a more egalitarian and just society.

Table 8. Literacy Gap by Sex (percentage)

Year	Male	Female	Total	Male-Female Literacy Gap
1951	27.16	8.86	18.33	18.30
1961	34.44	12.95	24.02	21.49
1971	39.45	18.70	29.45	20.75
1981	46.89	24.82	36.23	22.07
1991	64.10	39.30	39.3	24.80
2001	75.30	53.70	64.8	21.60
2011	82.14	65.46	74.04	16.68

Source: Census of India, 1951-2011, (provisional)

Table 9. Number of Girls per hundred Boys enrolled in School

Year	Primary (Class I- V)	Upper Primary (Class VI – VIII)	Secondary/Higher Secondary (Class IX- XII)
1950-51	39	18	16
1960-61	48	32	23
1970-71	60	41	35
1980-81	63	49	44
1990-91	71	58	50
2000-01	78	69	63
2004-05	88	80	71

Source: Hazra-2009

Poverty and illiteracy may be the biggest reason for population crisis, but may not be for the gender inequality. While India's robust growth over the past few years has helped it reduce the income gap with developed countries, the country still lags far behind in terms of gender equality. The sex ratio has fallen very sharply in States like Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and Maharashtra, which are among the richer Indian States. Uttar Pradesh has a better child sex ratio than Maharashtra and Gujarat, while Bihar better the national average (Census, 2011). Rural areas had 918 girls for every 1,000 boys under four as opposed to 905 in urban areas (2008 Sample Registration System). The latest census numbers show that literacy rate stands at 74.04 percent, an increase of 9.2 per cent from the last decade but child sex ratio has fallen sharply. Maharashtra, with a literacy rate of almost 83 per cent, has a child sex ratio of 883, while Chhattisgarh, with just 71 per cent literacy has a child sex ratio of 964.

Gender Equality Index indicates a higher degree of Gender Discrimination

The Gender Equality Index (GEI) is a new index for measurement of gender disparity. This index is a composite measure which captures the loss of achievement, within a country, due to gender inequality, and uses three dimensions to do so: reproductive health, empowerment, and labor market participation. In terms of gender equality index, India with an index value of 0.748 ranks 122 out of a total of 168 countries in 2008. The GEI capture the loss in achievement due to gender disparities in the areas of

reproductive health, empowerment and labour force participation with values ranging from 0 (perfect equality) to 1 (total inequality). The GEI index value of 0.748 indicates a higher degree of gender discrimination in India compared to countries like China (0.405) and Sri Lanka (0.599) (Economic Survey 2010-11). Gender parity index (GPI) is another index for measurement of gender disparity in education. GPI is the ratio of girls' enrollment to boys' enrollment in education. Value of one signifies equal access of education for boys and girls. Over the years the gender disparity in education has been decreasing, yet substantial gap still exists (Table-10).

Table 10. Gender Parity Index: 1951 to 2001

Year	Gender Disparity		
	Primary	Upper Primary	Elementary
1951	0.49	0.69	0.49
1961	0.43	0.52	0.42
1971	0.32	0.42	0.33
1981	0.29	0.35	0.30
1991	0.25	0.31	0.26
2001	0.17	0.18	0.16

Source: Hazra-2009

Legislation and Policies against Gender Inequality

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 favour 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 ratification of convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women in 1993. 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. The Government has also drawn up a draft National Policy for the empowerment of women which is a policy statement outlining the state's response to problems of gender discrimination. Ministry of Human Resource Development has also launched a National Mission for Female Literacy, with focus on minorities, SCs, STs and other marginalized groups. During the year 2010-11, out of 2573 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) sanctioned, 427 KGBVs have been sanctioned in rural and urban areas of Muslim concentration areas.

Without socio-economic equality for women in poor sectors of India, the impacts of efforts at development cannot become fully realized. India must value women as human resource assets and not liabilities. Socio-economic development can both empower women and raise the status of the Indian economy. Women need employment justice. Education, vocational training, and skill improvements would increase the capacity for gainful economic participation of women in India. The needs of women in poor sectors of India should be included in a national approach to workforce development. From a U.S. perspective, Jacobs & Hawley (2003) described workforce development as coordinated policies and programs that collectively "enable individuals the opportunity to realize a sustainable livelihood and organizations to achieve exemplary goals, consistent with the history, culture, and goals of the social context" (p. 1017). Naquin (2002) described workforce development systems as a means of serving needs of organizations communities, and nations. India is a complex social context-it will

require many integrated approaches of private and public systems to serve the pressing needs of women in poor sectors of India.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

As persistent gender inequalities continue we need to rethink concepts and strategies for promoting women's dignity and rights. There is a need for new kinds of institutions, incorporating new norms and rules that support equal and just relations between women and men. The implementation of the law is becoming extremely difficult as sex detection is done within the doctor-patient confidentiality. The only foolproof method to stop this crime of pre-birth sex selection is to bring about a change in the mindsets of the people. Today the issue has reached such colossal proportions that a multi-pronged strategy with the single goal of balancing the sex ratio is the need of the hour. This is not an issue that can be dealt by a few but requires a mass movement.

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