

## GENDER EQUALITY IN INDIA-ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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**ABSTRACT:** It is well known and established fact that gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental prescriptions for achieving development goals. Gender equality is a human right which provides opportunities and environment to all the persons irrespective of their gender to live with dignity and with freedom. Gender equality is a precondition for all diversified development and poverty eradication. Millennium Development goal puts emphasis on empowerment of women through gender equality. When men and women enjoy same opportunities, rights and obligations in all spheres of their life, gender equality is achieved. By empowering women we can make invaluable contribution to the improvement of health, educational status and productivity of families and society which will eventually improve the prospects of the next generation resulting in healthy and educated society.

Gender equality means sharing equally power and influence, and having equal opportunities in social and economic life. Equal opportunities in sphere of education and career prospects will help women in understanding their personal ambitions and their own worth. Women Empowerment will have a Multiplier effect on future generation. It demands the empowerment of women with a focus on redressal of power imbalances and giving more independence and autonomy to manage and live their own lives.

Women can be powerful change agents. Empowering poor rural women involves three critical and interrelated dimensions: expanding access to assets such as capital, land, knowledge and technologies; strengthening decision-making and their representation in community affairs; and improving women's well-being and lessening their workloads.

Promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women eliminate all forms of gender-based discrimination in labour markets which is essential to defeating poverty and fostering sustainable development. Policies aimed at eradicating the gender gap in education are crucial to allow women to develop the skills and competencies they need to better participate in the labour market and make their contribution to the global economy. Their increased role in turn will boost women's economic security that ultimately helps families out of poverty and hunger and leads to the improved health and education of their children that is fundamental for sustainable development. The theory that mothers have an asymmetrically large influence on a child's intelligent is not a new one. Even more so, the special bond between a mother and child provides motivation for them to explore the world. So, women play a much larger part in child's intellectual development and they have larger influence on their cognitive capacity.

Gender Equality is a critical element in achieving social and institutional change that leads to sustainable development with equity and growth. Education, Participation in the economy through employment measured by the percentage of women and men in paid jobs excluding agriculture, by the income ratio of men to women, Empowerment measured by the number of women working in different jobs and by the number of seats women occupy in parliament and in decision making ministerial post are some of the indicators of gender equality.

Despite rapid strides made by India on the front of economic growth, gender inequalities still persist This presents a serious challenge for the policy makers and decision makers to devise ways to reduce these gaps in

the shortest possible term so that women can participate more equally in the growth process. Gender equality and women empowerment plays a central role in reducing poverty, promoting development and addressing many other challenges. Education being the most basic step towards this objective, it is essential to continue the initiatives directed to improve the situation of participation in all levels of education by both genders.

**Keywords:** Gender Equality, Education, Employment, Empowerment, Economic Growth

## INTRODUCTION

It is well known and established fact that gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental prescriptions for achieving development goals. Gender equality is a human right which provides opportunities and environment to all the persons irrespective of their gender to live with dignity and with freedom. Gender equality is a precondition for all diversified development and poverty eradication. Millennium Development goal puts emphasis on empowerment of women through gender equality. When men and women enjoy same opportunities, rights and obligations in all spheres of their life, gender equality is achieved. By empowering women we can make invaluable contribution to the improvement of health and educational status and productivity of families and society which will eventually improve the prospects of the next generation resulting in healthy and educated society. Gender equality means sharing equally power and influence, and having equal opportunities in social and economic life. Equal opportunities in sphere of education and career prospects will help women in understanding their personal ambitions and their own worth. Women Empowerment will have a Multiplier effect on future generation. It demands the empowerment of women with a focus on redressal of power imbalances and giving more independence and autonomy to manage and live their own lives.

## OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the study is to highlight following dimension of Gender Equality.

1. To analyse the level of equality among girls and boys in Education in India
2. know the level of differences in literacy among women and men.
3. To evaluate Gender Equality and Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector.

4. Women Empowerment through ensuring land rights and livelihood and their role in political field.

## METHODOLOGY

Data required for the present paper is collected from secondary sources. Necessary information on conceptual framework, secondary data and review of literature are collected from published and unpublished sources namely for example, Journals, Magazines, Newspapers, Periodicals, Reference books, including reports of NSSO and Ministry of Human Resource Development, Census of India etc. Different Statistical tools are used to determine the various dimensions of inequalities and empowerment of women.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

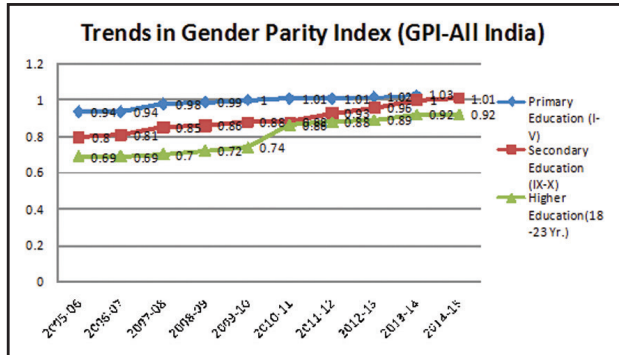
Gender Equality is a critical element in achieving social and institutional change that leads to sustainable development with equity and growth. Education, Participation in the economy through employment measured by the percentage of women and men in paid jobs excluding agriculture, by the income ratio of men to women, Empowerment measured by the number of women working in different jobs and by the number of seats women occupy in parliament and in decision making ministerial post are some of the indicators of gender equality.

## GENDER EQUALITY AND EDUCATION

Education is an important factor to ensure gender equality and empowerment .During 2000-2001 to 2004-2015 substantial progress has been achieved towards Gender Parity in education as revealed by some of the indicators discussed below (Figure-1). The Gender Parity Index is the ratio of the number of female students enrolled at Primary, Secondary and Tertiary level of education to the corresponding number of male student in each level. Thus GPI which is based on Gross En-

rolment Ratio, free from effects of population structure of the appropriate age group provides the picture of gender equality in Education. The Gross Enrolment Ratio is the number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education regardless of expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for the same level of education. Gender Parity Index for GER in Primary, Secondary and higher Education has been improving.

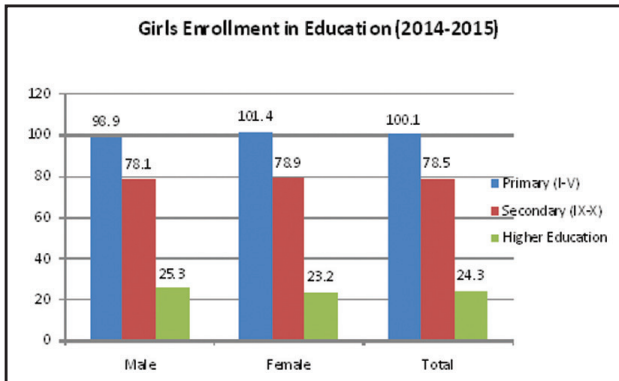
Figure-1



Source:- M/O,HRD (website: <http://mhrd.gov.in/statistics>)

At present in primary education the enrolment is favourable to females as GPI has crossed the level of 1. In secondary education Gender Parity has been achieved from 2013 onwards. But in Tertiary Education rapid progress has been observed which is 0.92 in the year 2014-15.

Table-1



Source:-M/O, HRD (website: <http://mhrd.gov.in/statistics>)

In the above Table -1 Gross enrolment ratio in primary education is 100, because of excessive thrust on providing primary education. But GER in secondary education and higher education is 78.5 and 24.3 respectively. While comparing GER for male and female it is

almost the same in 2014-15 which resulted in Gender Parity in education.

Table-2

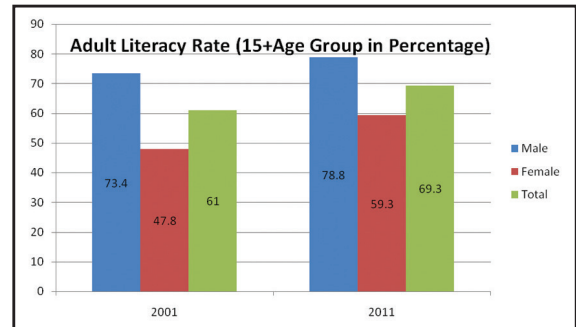
Trend in some important indicators related to girl enrolment in education

Indicators	Level of Education	2000-2001	2014-2015
Enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment.	A. Primary Education (I-V)	43.8	48.2
	B. Upper Primary Education (VI-VIII)	40.9	48.6
	C. Secondary Education (IX-X) And Higher Secondary Education (XI-XII)	30.8	47.3
Number of girls per 100 boys enrolment	A. Primary Education (I-V)	78	93
	B. Upper Primary Education (VI-VIII)	69	95
	C. Secondary Education (IX-X)	63	91
	D. Higher Secondary Education	58	85

Source:-Educational Statistics at a glance 2016, M/O, Human Resource Development

From the above table it is clear that during 2000-01 to 2014-15 enrolment of girls is improving and gender gap is reducing in all levels of education.

Table-3



Source: website: <http://census India.gov.in>

The literacy rate for the age group above 15 depicts an upward trend both for males as well as females. The youth literacy rate has increased from 61.9% to 86.1% during the period 1991-2011. According to Census of India 2011 this period shows remarkable increase in the literacy rate among female youth from 49.3% to 81.8% compared to male youth from 73.5% to 90%. As per census 2011 ratio of female youth literacy rate to male youth literacy rate is 0.91 at all India level. The gender

**Table 4: Growth of Employment (UPSS)**

Years	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1983-94	1.92	1.39	1.72	3.14	3.38	3.19	2.21	1.64	2.02
1994-2005	1.40	1.54	1.45	3.10	3.30	3.14	1.86	1.81	1.84
2005-2012	1.06	-2.76	-0.22	2.54	1.07	2.23	1.51	-2.04	0.44

Source: Computed from unit level data of various NSSO rounds and various decadal census

disparity in youth literacy rate was highest in Rajasthan (0.78) followed by Bihar (0.80).

**GENDER EQUALITY AND WAGE EMPLOYMENT**

The share of women in wage employment in non agricultural sector expressed as a percentage of total wage employment in that same sector is an important variant showing their integration into the economy and the extent to which women have access to paid employment. The share of female workers in industry and service sectors, tells us about the equal employment opportunity for women, and flexibility in labour market reflecting economic factors in social empowerment of women. According to NSS 66th round (2009-10) share of women in wage employment is 18.6% at national level and corresponding estimates for rural and urban India is at 19.6% and 17.6% respectively. In 68th round of NSS the percentage share of females in wage employment in the non agricultural sector reported as 19.3% with corresponding figures for rural and urban areas as 19.9% and 18.7% respectively.

During the period 2005-12, there is a sharp decline in the growth of employment (Table 4). While comparing with South Asian neighbours except Pakistan India has observed low participation rate for women in workforce.

Labour Force Participation Rate and Worker Population Ratio occupy the crucial importance in the extent and structure of available human resources. The Table 5 reveals that WPR has shown negative growth both among males and females and LFPR shows negative growth among the females. There has been great gender inequality regarding annual growth in LFPR and WPR. Mechanisation of agriculture and continuous development has worsened their employment situation resulting in inequality among social groups in rural India as evi-

denced from some research.

**Table 5: Employment Situation in India by Social Status**

Year	LFPR			WPR		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
1993-94	55.6	29	42.8	54.5	28.6	42
1999-00	54.1	23.3	38.7	52.7	25.9	39.7
2004-05	55.9	29.4	43	54.7	28.7	42
2009-10	55.7	23.3	40	54.6	22.8	39.2
2011-12	55.6	22.5	39.5	54.4	21.9	38.6
CAGR	0.00	-1.40	-0.44	-0.01	-1.47	-0.47

Source: NSSO Reports, 50th, 61st, 66th & 68th Rounds

During 2011-12 average woman's wage in rural casual works increased to 70% of man's

wage from 62%. During the same time period this increased from 59 to 62 percent in urban areas for casual workers. But, there is a big gap in male and female wages. Gap is highest among urban casual workers and lowest among urban regular workers. In rural areas this gap is higher for regular workers and in urban areas it is higher in the case of casual workers. As per Global Wage Report 2016-17 released by ILO, men earning more than women in similar jobs, with the gap exceeding 30%, exhibits that there is worst level of gender disparity in India.

**Table 6: Gender-wise Distribution of Wages (2011-12 prices)**

Type of Worker	Wages Per Days (Rs.)			
	Rural	Rural	Urban	Urban

		Regular	Casual	Regular	Casual
2004-05	Male	261	101	353	132
	Female	153	63	266	78
	Person	241	88	336	120

2011-12	Male	320	150	463	185
	Female	203	105	369	115
	Person	293	138	445	173

Source: NSSO 61st and 68<sup>th</sup> rounds

Lack of education and employment avenues makes

Table 7: Unemployment Rate by Education (UPS), 2011-12

Educational Level	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Not Literate	0.6	0.7	0.6	0.9	1.0	0.9	0.6	0.8	0.7
Below Primary	1.0	1.4	1.1	2.9	2.1	2.8	1.4	1.6	1.4
Primary	1.6	1.1	1.5	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.7	1.2	1.6
Middle	2.2	4.2	2.5	2.3	4.7	2.6	2.2	4.4	2.5
Secondary	2.6	8.8	3.5	2.3	8.3	2.9	2.5	8.7	3.3
Higher Secondary	4.3	14.2	5.5	4.9	10.7	5.7	4.5	12.7	5.6
Diploma/Certificate	10.0	25.9	12.6	6.1	11.2	7.0	8.0	18.3	9.7
Graduation	8.0	23.7	10.2	5.8	14.8	7.4	6.6	17.5	8.4
PG and Above	10.0	23.2	12.6	4.5	12.4	6.5	6.1	14.9	8.2
Total	2.1	2.9	2.3	3.2	6.6	3.8	2.4	3.7	2.7

Note: Age 5 and above years.

Source: Computed from unit level data of NSSO, 68th Round.

the youth the most stressed population so education and skill formation are preconditions to turn ‘demographic bulge’ into demographic dividend. Because Educational and skill levels of Indian workers are abysmally low. During 2011-12 the unemployment rate as per UPS increases consistently with increasing levels of education for both males and females in rural as well as urban areas. It is true that generally the more educated are able to remain unemployed until a suitable offer comes along. Some part of the higher unemployment rate for the more educated reflects this greater waiting period. At the same time, it is undeniably true that males as well as females, more so the latter, with higher secondary and above education, have very high unemployment rates in both urban and rural areas as shown by table 7.

This shows that even the persons with certificates or

diploma from technical institutions are also not getting employable training. It is evident that unemployment for females is increasing more rapidly with increasing level of education than their male counter parts. In almost all regions of the world, women are disproportionately represented in labour markets. Women’s disproportionate representation in informal employment, particularly in agriculture, wage gaps, occupational segregation, and higher relative unemployment rates are some of the indicators of gender inequality. The type and quality of employment activities. is also different among males and females. When we look at non-agricultural wage employment, there exist significant differences between men and women, particularly in the rural areas of developing countries. Basically women are employed in low productivity jobs with low status, often insecure and



poorly paid. Women work for family subsistence in agriculture, where it is now recognised their vital contributions to both agricultural production and importantly, to food security. However, these activities do not provide enough income to allow them to lift their families out of poverty. All indicators have close links with the unemployment-to-population ratio because they deal with employment as a principal path out of poverty and generation of production. These factors are a pre-requisite for sustaining growth while reducing poverty and hunger, and increasing potential to achieve MDGs in universal primary education, better health care and disease control, and environmental sustainability. The share of women in wage employment as an indicator does not fully reflect the quality of employment, especially the economic benefits of such employment.

### **GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT**

The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) seeks to measure relative female representation in economic and political power. Greater participation of women in social and political institutions is essential to make these more representative. It considers gender gaps in political representation, in professional and management positions in the economy, as well as gender gaps in incomes. Women play an important role in India's agricultural production. Their role in agriculture is getting more valuable recently as trend is rising with respect to men shifting to better paid non-farm activities. As per latest NSSO (68th round) in contrast to the engagement of women in agriculture, noted as 75% of the full time female rural workforce against 59% for men, only 12.79% of women have operational land ownership. Lack of ownership of immovable assets like land, prevents them from getting formal credit increasing the cost of farm activities.

India, with 1.3 million elected women representatives, has the largest number of women participating in local governance among the Asian countries, exceeding its own 33% reservation. A study of Indian local governments by Munshi and Rozenweig (2008) said that women in local government roles came out with better outcomes for communities in budgetary decisions and were more competent in procuring resources despite significantly lower education and labour market experience, so politically empowering women is a good thing. Various research studies demonstrated that women with financial independence or those who possess assets like

land face less gender violence both within home and outside.

### **CONCLUSION**

Women can be powerful change agents. Empowering poor rural women involves three critical and interrelated dimensions: expanding access to assets such as capital, land, knowledge and technologies; strengthening decision-making and their representation in community affairs; and improving women's well-being and lessening their workloads.

According to National Statistical Commission Chairman Pronab Sen, rural women are shifting towards self-help groups and self-employment, which is clear from the percentage of women taking up self-employment rising to 59 per cent in 2011-12 from 56 per cent in 2009-10. Also, it could also be that a large segment of rural women are not being categorised in the employable workforce in the WPR, as their activity may be designated as family household chores (Ashok Gupta 2013).

Promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women eliminate all forms of gender-based discrimination in labour markets which is essential to defeating poverty and fostering sustainable development. Policies aimed at eradicating the gender gap in education are crucial to allow women to develop the skills and competencies they need to better participate in the labour market and make their contribution to the global economy. Their increased role in turn will boost women's economic security that ultimately helps families out of poverty and hunger and leads to the improved health and education of their children that is fundamental for sustainable development. The theory that mothers have an asymmetrically large influence on a child's intelligent is not a new one. Even more so, the special bond between a mother and child provides motivation for them to explore the world. So, women play a much larger part in child's intellectual development and they have larger influence on their cognitive capacity.

Eliminate discriminatory practices in employment (Beijing), Promote gender equality and empower women (MDG Goal 3) and in parallel, making the goals of decent work for all central to national development (Ministerial Declaration, ECOSOC). Despite rapid strides made by India on the front of economic growth, gender inequalities still persist This presents a serious

challenge for the policy makers and decision makers to devise ways to reduce these gaps in the shortest possible term so that women can participate more equally in the growth process. Gender equality and women empowerment plays a central role in reducing poverty, promoting development and addressing many other challenges. Education being the most basic step towards this objective, it is essential to continue the initiatives directed to improve the situation of participation in all levels of education by both genders.

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