

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISPARITIES PREVAILING IN INDIAN SOCIETY : AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Megha Thakur¹

Abstract

In economics, we often talk of the discrimination which means denial of equality and human rights to women and the freedom to make decisions which affects their lives as well as results in widening disparities in the human capabilities and functioning associated between man and woman. From the view point of economics, gender discrimination severely limits expansion and utilisation of human capabilities in women and it has critical implications for economic growth. The inequality between men and women is one of the most crucial disparities in many societies, and this is more prominent particularly in India. The differences in the female and male literacy rates are one aspect of this broader phenomenon of the gender-based inequality in India. In most parts of the country, women tend in general to fare quite badly in relative terms compared with men, even within the same families. This is reflected not only in such matters as education and opportunity to develop talents, but also in the more elementary fields of nutrition, health as well as survival. India is amongst the fastest growing countries in the world today, with a GDP growth rate of more than 8 percent during the XI plan period. This high level of growth can, however, be sustained only when all the sections of the society, especially women become equal partners in the development process. It is well recognised that societies which discriminate by gender tend to experience less rapid economic growth and poverty reduction than societies which treat men and women more equally. Gender equality and empowerment would, thus, need to be core development goals for achieving inclusive growth and egalitarian society. Some deliberate policy steps are critical to achieve gender equality. Gender discrimination cannot be automatically corrected in the course of development. The institutions of economics, politics and law must be considered in terms of how they relate to each other and how they play out across the different spheres where gender discrimination occurs and gender assessments have to be undertaken continuously to reveal gaps and monitor progress towards gender equality.

Introduction

In economics, we often talk of the discrimination which means denial of equality and human rights to women and the freedom to make decisions which affects their lives as well as results in widening disparities in the human capabilities and functioning associated between man and woman. From the view point of economics, gender

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce & Management, Govt. Mohindra College., Punjabi University, Punjab, India

discrimination severely limits expansion and utilisation of human capabilities in women and it has critical implications for economic growth (Ashok and Tankha, 2010).

The inequality between men and women is one of the most crucial disparities in many societies, and this is more prominent particularly in India. The differences in the female and male literacy rates are one aspect of this broader phenomenon of the gender-based inequality in India. In most parts of the country, women tend in general to fare quite badly in relative terms compared with men, even within the same families. This is reflected not only in such matters as education and opportunity to develop talents, but also in the more elementary fields of nutrition, health as well as survival. Indeed, the mortality rates of females tend to exceed those of males until the late twenties and even the late thirties in some states and this is very much in contrast with what tends to happen when men and women receive similar nutritional and health care (Gupta,2007).

India is amongst the fastest growing countries in the world today, with a GDP growth rate of more than 8 percent during the XI plan period. This high level of growth can, however, be sustained only when all the sections of the society, especially women become equal partners in the development process. It is well recognised that societies which discriminate by gender tend to experience less rapid economic growth and poverty reduction than societies which treat men and women more equally. Gender equality and empowerment would, thus, need to be core development goals for achieving inclusive growth and egalitarian society. Some deliberate policy steps are critical to achieve gender equality. Gender discrimination cannot be automatically corrected in the course of development. The institutions of economics, politics and law must be considered in terms of how they relate to each other and how they play out across the different spheres where gender discrimination occurs and gender assessments have to be undertaken continuously to reveal gaps and monitor progress towards gender equality. The empowerment of women is essentially the instrument of change to achieve gender equality that is meaningful and sustainable (Ministry of Women and Child and Development, 2011). This research paper deals with the socio economic status of women across major states in India. For analysing their socio-economic status, various aspects like demographic, education, employment has been taken as they are the key indicators of development as well as empowerment.

1.1 Demographic Profile of Women across Major States in India

This section deals with the demographic profile such as sex ratio, child sex ratio, life expectancy at birth, infant mortality, death rate, maternal mortality rate and mean age at marriage of women across the major states in India.

1.1 Sex Ratio and Child Sex Ratio across Major States in India

India has an exceptionally low female-male ratio or sex ratio. This problem is not, of course, equally acute in every region of India. The regional patterns of sex ratios are consistent with what is known as the character of gender relations in different parts of the country. The North-West states, for instance, are notorious for highly unequal gender relations, some symptoms of which include the continued practice of female seclusion, very low female labour-force participation rates, a large gender gap in literacy rates, extremely restricted female property rights, strong boy preference in the fertility decisions, widespread neglect of female children and drastic separation of a married women from her natal family. In all these respects, the social standing of women is somewhat better in the South India and Kerala, of course, has a distinguished history of a more liberated position of women in the society (Dreze and Murthi, 1996).

The sex ratio and child sex ratio across major states in India has been presented in the table 1.1. The analysis reveals that as per 2011 census, sex ratio was highest in Kerala, i.e., 1084 females per thousand males followed by Tamil Nadu (995) and Orissa (978) whereas it was lowest in Haryana, i.e., 877 followed by Punjab (893) and Uttar Pradesh (908) and at all India level sex ratio came out to be 940. The state-wise analysis of child sex- ratio infers that child sex ratio was highest in Kerala, i.e., 959 followed by Assam (951) and West Bengal (950) where as the child sex ratio was lowest in Haryana, i.e., 830 followed by Maharashtra and Rajasthan (883) as per the census of 2011 and at all India level it came out to be 914. Female infanticide was one of the main reasons for this highly skewed gender profile. Hence the need for proper implementation of the Pre Natal Diagnostic Test Act which stipulated stringent punishment of those convicted of killing the girl children. Thus spreading awareness is the need of the hour if this menace is to be checked.

Table 1.1: Sex Ratio and Child Sex Ratio across Major States in India (2011)

Sr. No.	States	Sex-Ratio	Child Sex-Ratio
1	Andhra Pradesh	992	943
2	Assam	954	951
3	Bihar	916	933
4	Gujarat	918	886
5	Haryana	877	830
6	Karnatka	968	943
7	Kerala	1084	959
8	Madhya Pradesh	930	912
9	Maharashtra	925	883
10	Odissa	978	934
11	Punjab	893	906

12	Rajasthan	926	883
13	Tamil Nadu	995	946
14	Uttar Pradesh	908	899
15	West Bengal	947	950
16	India	940	914

Source: Census of India (2011)

The data clearly supports the belief that people don't want daughters due to social evil of dowry as well as to avoid perceived social disgrace of not having a son. Even today, birth of a girl child is viewed as a bad investment for future but the poor still find the cost of raising a child to be nominal with respect to the income that the child might generate and also they cannot afford the cost of tests and abortion. The reform needs to begin with the prosperous, educated class which abort a female child due to their narrow patriarchal view, where sons are considered to be the only hope of old age and even after life.

1.1.2 Life Expectancy at Birth and Infant Mortality Rate across Major States in India

The life expectancy at birth and infant mortality rate among males and females across the major states in India has been presented in the table 4.2. It indicates that the life expectancy at birth among males and females was highest in Kerala, i. e., 76.8 percent followed by Maharashtra (71.3 percent) and Punjab (71.6 percent). Whereas the life expectancy of females was lowest in Assam, i. e., 62.8 percent followed by Maharashtra (63.8 percent) and Uttar Pradesh (64.4). This analysis reveals that life expectancy at birth is much favourable towards females than males in all the major states in India.

Table 1.2: Life Expectancy at Birth and Death Rate across the Major States in India

Sr. No.	States	Life expectancy at birth (2009)		Infant Mortality Rate (2010)	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
1	Andhra Pradesh	65.4	69.4	46	49
2	Assam	61.6	62.8	44	47
3	Bihar	67.1	66.7	56	60
4	Gujarat	67.2	71.0	46	46
5	Haryana	67.9	69.8	41	41
6	Karnataka	66.5	71.1	46	46

7	Kerala	72.0	76.8	37	37
8	Madhya Pradesh	62.5	63.3	13	13
9	Maharashtra	67.9	71.3	62	62
10	Odissa	62.3	64.8	27	27
11	Punjab	68.7	71.6	60	60
12	Rajasthan	66.1	69.2	33	33
13	Tamil Nadu	67.6	70.6	52	52
14	Uttar Pradesh	64.0	64.4	23	23
15	West Bengal	68.2	70.9	58	58
16	India	65.8	68.1	29	29

Source: SRS Bulletin, (2011) Sample Registration System, Registrar General, India.

The infant mortality rate was highest in Maharashtra, i.e., 62 per thousand followed by Punjab (60 per thousand) for both for males and females. The table further reveals that infant mortality rate among females was lowest in Madhya Pradesh (13 percent) followed by Uttar Pradesh (23 percent). It is further inferred by the table that except the states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, all the other the major states have high infant mortality rate than the national average.

1.1.3 Death Rate, Maternal Mortality and Mean Age at Marriage across Major States in India

India has an unexceptionally high maternal mortality ratio. Maternal mortality is not merely a health disadvantage, but also a reflection of social and gender injustice. The low social and economic status of girls and women limits their access to education, appropriate nutrition as well as health and family planning services. All these directly affect pregnancy outcomes. The overriding causes of the high maternal mortality ratio across India are the absence of a skilled birth attendant at delivery, poor access to emergency obstetric care in case of a complication and no reliable referral system (with easy mobility), to ensure that women who experience complications can reach life saving emergency obstetric care in time. The death rate, maternal mortality rate and mean age at marriage of women across the major states in India have been presented in table 1.3.

Table 1.3 Death Rate, Maternal Mortality Rate and Mean Age at Marriage of Women across the Major States in India

Sr. N.	States	Death Rate (2009)		Maternal Morality Rate (2009)	Mean Age at Marriage of Women (2009)
		Male	Female		

1	Andhra Pradesh	8.4	6.9	10.9	19.6
2	Assam	9.3	7.4	34.4	20.7
3	Bihar	7.2	6.8	38.4	19.5
4	Gujarat	7.2	6.4	14.8	21.0
5	Haryana	7.4	5.7	17.4	20.1
6	Karnataka	8.1	6.4	14.0	20.3
7	Kerala	7.8	5.8	4.9	22.8
8	Madhya Pradesh	8.5	8.4	36.9	21.4
9	Maharashtra	7.5	5.8	9.3	20.9
10	Odissa	9.4	8.3	24.9	20.5
11	Punjab	7.6	6.4	13.7	22.2
12	Rajasthan	7.1	6.0	47.5	19.8
13	Tamil Nadu	8.5	6.8	6.6	21.9
14	Uttar Pradesh	8.5	7.8	40.9	20.2
15	West Bengal	6.7	5.6	10.0	20.2
16	India	7.8	6.7	20.7	20.6

Source: Source: SRS Bulletin, (2011) Sample Registration System and Registrar General, India.

The death rate among males was highest in the Odissa, i. e., 9.4 percent followed by Assam (9.3 percent), Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh (8.5 percent). The death rate among females was highest in Madhya Pradesh, i. e., 8.4 percent followed by Odissa (8.3 percent) and Uttar Pradesh (7.8 percent). The lowest death rate among females was in West Bengal, i. e., 5.6 percent followed by Haryana (5.7 percent) and Kerala (5.8 percent). The states which give importance to female health and its consequent impact on the whole family; show lesser death rate among females.

The table further indicates that the maternal mortality rate was highest in Rajasthan, i. e., 47.5 percent followed by Uttar Pradesh (40.9 percent) and Bihar (38.4 percent). The maternal maternity rate was lowest in Kerala, i. e., 4.9 percent followed by Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. It is mainly due to advance educational system as well as positive outlook of the society towards females, Kerala is fairing well in terms of life expectancy at birth, infant mortality rate maternal mortality rate and mean age at marriage. The mean age at marriage of women was highest in Kerala, i. e, 22.8 percent followed by Punjab (22.2 percent) and Tamil Nadu (21.9 percent). The lowest mean age at marriage among women was in Bihar, i.e., 19.5 percent followed by Assam (19.6 percent) and Rajasthan (19.8 percent).

2.1 Educational Status of Women across the Major States in India

Empowerment of women is closely related to formal and informal sources of education. In order to create a sense of community among men and women at home and at work as fellow and equal human beings capable of playing many roles -- many of them shared

and interchangeable -- women must be educated and allowed to participate in all activities. In India, the roles traditionally assigned for men and women are that of bread-winners and home-makers respectively. Thus, the education of girls is not seen as an important requirement for preparing girls for their future role as "home-makers". As such, in states where, besides economic need, the social and individual demand for education is also recognised, one would expect a higher rate of enrollment of girls in schools and a higher proportion of educated women in the population than is actually the case. In reality, women's creative and intellectual potentials are either ignored or underplayed in education in India. As a consequence, generally fewer women are found to have the opportunity of gaining a higher level of education in India. This pattern of behaviour cannot be attributed to current attitudes alone; they have been molded over several generations (George and Dhhiya, 1998).

Literacy is pre-requisite for development. Literacy as a qualitative attribute of the population is one of the most important indicators of the social, economic, political and human development of a society. It is a major component of human resource development and is, thus, basic to any programme of social and economic progress. The problem of illiteracy is further aggravated by social constraints, which inhibit female literacy and educational development of women. Inequality between genders is one of the most crucial and yet one of the most persistent disparities in India, where differences in female and male literacy rates are glaring.

The percentage of literacy rates among males and females across the major states of India has been presented in the table 2.1. It indicates that as per 2011 census, the literacy rate among males and females was highest in Kerala, i. e., 96.02 percent and 91.98 percent followed by Maharashtra, i. e., 89.82 percent and 75.48 percent respectively. The lowest literacy rate among males was in Bihar, i.e., 73.39 percent and in case of females it was lowest in Rajasthan (52.66 percent). It is inferred from the table that even in the highest literacy rate among male and female, there is a gap of nearly 4 percent whereas in the case of lowest literacy rate among male and female there is a huge gap of nearly 21 percent. The analysis further points that except three states namely Kerala, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, female literacy rate was lower than the lowest percentage of male literacy rate in India. The gap in male female literacy rate was highest in Rajasthan (27.85 percent) followed by Madhya Pradesh (20.51 percent) and Bihar (20.06 percent) whereas this gap was lowest in Kerala (4.04 percent) followed by Punjab (10.14) and Assam (10.54 percent). The gender-wise analysis shows that the percentage of literacy rate was highest among the males as compared to females in all the major states of India.

Table 2.1: Literacy Rates across the Major states in India as per 2011 Census

Sr. No.	States	Persons	Male	Female	Male Female Literacy Gap

1	Andhra Pradesh	67.66	75.56	59.74	15.82
2	Assam	73.18	78.81	67.27	10.54
3	Bihar	63.82	73.39	53.33	20.06
4	Gujarat	79.31	87.23	70.73	16.50
5	Haryana	76.64	85.38	66.77	18.61
6	Karnataka	75.60	82.85	68.13	14.72
7	Kerala	93.91	96.02	91.98	4.04
8	Madhya Pradesh	70.63	80.53	60.02	20.51
9	Maharashtra	82.91	89.82	75.48	14.34
10	Odissa	73.45	82.40	64.36	18.04
11	Punjab	76.68	81.48	71.34	10.14
12	Rajasthan	67.06	80.51	52.66	27.85
13	Tamil Nadu	80.33	86.81	73.86	12.95
14	Uttar Pradesh	69.72	79.24	59.26	19.98
15	West Bengal	77.08	82.67	71.16	11.51
16	India	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

Source: Census of India, 2011

The gross enrollment ratio is higher among boys as compared to girls at all the education levels. It can be observed that the states having poor enrollment ratio of girls are also lagging behind at economic front. Due to the lack of education and professional know-how, the females are not able to contribute significantly in these states. Knowingly or unknowingly, they are dependent and the environment around them suppresses their right to freedom of expression. Most Indian families consider investing in their daughters' education a waste. They feel they can instead save the money for their marriage. The discrimination against women thus starts at home, shattering all their dreams (Sinha, 2009).

The drop-out rate measures the percentage of students leaving school before completion. About 40 percent of student's drop-out before completing the primary level and this figure increases with higher classes. The female dropout rate is higher than males. Poor economic status of families also increases the probability of children to help out in economic and household activities; other factors include lack of interest, low economic returns to education, etc. Dropping out of school, therefore, is a combination of a household's requirements, accessibility of educational institutions and the quality of education.

It is important to mention here that many more girls drop out even before Standard VIII for another reason, i.e., due to lack of toilets in the schools. The Annual Status of Education Report (2009) a comprehensive survey of government and private schools in 575 districts out of 583 in India, revealed that only 50 per cent of government schools have toilets and that four out of 10 government schools did not have separate toilets for girls. Even where there were separate toilets for girls, as many as 12-15 per cent were

locked and only 30-40 per cent was “usable”. What urgently needs to be tackled is the quality of education, basic facilities like toilets and running water and transport, particularly for girls (Sharma, 2005).

3.1 Employment and Unemployment Status of Women in India

Remunerative employment is considered to be one of the major status-deciding factors. The common belief is that man's high status within the family is due to his position as bread-winner. It is argued that, if a woman's economic dependence can be reduced by her ability to earn an income outside the household, she would enjoy a higher status, which would be the case if there was not much difference in the nature of the work done by males and females (Lal, 1979). Women’s work most of the time goes unrecognised and the benefits hardly reach them. Today many female workers in India are involved in the unorganised sector and the problems of indifference towards their safety and rights is a cause of worry (Antonopoulos, 2007).

According to National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER), almost 97 percent female workers were involved in the unorganised or informal sector. Many laws have been provided to ensure a safe and healthy working environment for the female workers – the Trade Union Act (1926), the Minimum Wages Act (1948), the Maternity Benefits Act (1961), etc. The most recent in the row of laws is the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act of 2008, which provides benefits to workers registered with the district administration, including some health insurance and maternity benefits but despite of these laws, health and health services for females have remained disheartening (Rajshekhar and Manjula, 2006).

3.1.1 Labour Force Participation Rate across the Major States in India

Labour force participation rate among males and females across the major states in India in the rural areas has been presented in the table 3.1. Labour force participation among males was higher than female as per usual, current weekly and current daily status in the rural areas. It is inferred from the table that as per usual status, the labour force participation rate at all India level has come out 55.6 for males and only 26.5 among females.

Table 3.1 : Labour Force Participation Rate among Male and Female According to Usual, Current Weekly and Current Daily Status across the Major States in the Rural Areas (2009-2010)

States	Males			Females		
	U.S.	C.W.S	C.D.S	U.S.	C.W.S	C.D.S
Andhra Pradesh	60.6	59.8	57.8	44.7	41.1	37.6
Assam	57.3	57.6	55.1	16.8	14.5	12.4
Bihar	49.1	48.8	48.2	6.6	5.6	4.4
Gujarat	59.0	58.5	56.8	32.2	30.0	23.6

Haryana	53.3	52.4	51.7	25.2	21.8	17.1
Karnataka	62.7	62.5	60.8	37.2	34.6	31.4
Kerala	58.3	56.6	54.1	26.0	23.8	21.3
Madhya Pradesh	56.0	55.8	55.0	28.4	26.1	24.1
Maharashtra	58.1	57.3	56.2	39.7	36.0	33.2
Odissa	59.6	58.5	57.6	24.9	19.5	16.2
Punjab	54.6	54.6	53.8	24.6	24.0	14.6
Rajasthan	51.3	50.9	50.7	35.7	27.2	23.2
Tamil Nadu	61.3	61.0	59.5	41.1	39.7	37.2
Uttar Pradesh	51.0	49.0	47.9	17.5	12.5	8.9
West Bengal	61.9	61.8	59.6	15.6	14.4	10.4
India	55.6	54.8	53.6	26.5	23.1	19.7

Source: NSSO, Round 66th, Report No. 537.

The labour force participation rate among males was highest in Karnataka, i.e., 62.7 percent followed by West Bengal (61.9 percent) and Tamil Nadu (61.3 percent) whereas the labour force participation rate among females was highest in the Andhra Pradesh, i.e., 44.7 percent followed by Tamil Nadu (41.1 percent) and Maharashtra (39.7 percent). The results indicate that the labour force participation among males was higher than females across all the major states in India.

Labour force participation rate among males and females across the major states in India in the urban areas has been presented in the table 3.1. It indicates that the highest labour force participation among males as per the usual status was in West Bengal, i.e., 60.5 percent followed by Punjab 59.5 percent; Maharashtra and Odissa (59.2 percent) in the urban areas. The highest labour force participation among females as per the usual status was in Kerala, i.e., 23.3 percent followed by Tamil Nadu (20.2 percent) and Andhra Pradesh (18.6 percent). It is inferred from the analysis that there was a significant difference among males and female labour force participation in the urban areas across all the major states in India.

Table No 3.2 : Labour Force Participation Rate among Male And Female According to Usual, Current Weekly and Current Daily Status across Major the States in the urban Areas (2009-2010)

States	Males			Females		
	U.S.	C.W.S	C.D.S	U.S.	C.W.S	C.D.S
Andhra Pradesh	55.5	55.1	54.5	18.6	18.1	17.0
Assam	55.0	54.2	53.6	10.7	9.4	9.2
Bihar	46.5	45.5	45.1	5.6	4.8	4.5

Gujarat	57.2	57.1	56.4	14.8	14.6	12.6
Haryana	56.9	56.4	56.1	13.5	12.9	11.9
Karnataka	59.0	58.7	57.7	17.7	17.7	16.7
Kerala	56.4	55.5	53.4	23.3	21.8	20.1
Madhya Pradesh	51.7	51.3	50.8	13.6	12.6	11.9
Maharashtra	59.2	59.0	58.7	16.7	16.0	15.0
Odissa	59.2	58.9	58.6	12.6	11.5	10.1
Punjab	59.5	59.4	59.3	13.2	13.1	11.2
Rajasthan	51.9	51.2	51.1	12.6	11.7	10.3
Tamil Nadu	58.4	58.2	57.5	20.2	19.6	18.5
Uttar Pradesh	51.6	51.2	50.9	8.3	7.8	6.8
West Bengal	60.5	60.3	59.5	15.1	14.5	12.3
India	55.9	55.6	55.0	14.6	14.1	12.9

Source: NSSO, Round 66th, Report No. 537.

3.1.2 Unemployment Rates among male and female across the Major States in India

Unemployment rates according to usual, current weekly and current daily status across the major states in India among the males and females in the rural areas has been presented in the table 3.3.

It indicates that the highest rate of unemployment among males as per the usual status was in Assam, i.e., 3.4 percent followed by Kerala (3.2 percent) and Odissa (3.1 percent) whereas the highest unemployment rates among females were in Kerala (16.1 percent) followed by Assam (5.6 percent). The analysis further reveals that unemployment rates among females was marginally higher than males as per the usual, current weekly and current daily status.

Table 3.3: Unemployment Rates according to Usual, Current Weekly and Current Daily Status

among Males and Females across the Major States among Males and Females in the Rural areas of India.

States	Male			Female		
	U.S.	C.W.S	C.D.S	U.S.	C.W.S	C.D.S
Andhra Pradesh	1.3	3.5	7.3	0.9	3.7	7.8

Assam	3.4	4.0	5.6	5.6	7.2	11.9
Bihar	2.1	2.8	5.4	1.3	4.4	5.9
Gujarat	0.8	2.9	5.7	0.7	3.6	6.8
Haryana	2.1	4.6	6.7	1.1	2.4	3.7
Karnataka	0.5	1.6	3.9	0.4	1.7	4.1
Kerala	3.2	4.7	12.9	16.1	19.9	27.4
Madhya Pradesh	0.8	2.5	6.4	0.4	2.6	7.4
Maharashtra	0.7	2.2	5.5	0.4	3.1	8.8
Odissa	3.1	5.4	8.2	2.7	5.3	7.8
Punjab	2.8	4.2	6.5	2.2	2.5	5.1
Rajasthan	0.6	2.2	3.5	0.1	1.4	2.2
Tamil Nadu	1.5	2.2	11.6	1.5	3.8	17.9
Uttar Pradesh	1.2	3.5	6.1	0.5	1.5	2.8
West Bengal	1.7	2.8	7.0	2.8	5.2	8.0
India	1.6	3.2	6.4	1.6	3.7	8.0

Source: NSSO, Round 66th, Report No. 537.

The unemployment rates according to usual, current weekly and current daily status among males and females across the major states in the urban areas of India has been presented in the table 3.3. It indicates that the unemployment rates among males as per the usual status was highest in Bihar, i.e., 6.3 percent followed by Punjab (4.4 percent) Assam and Odissa (4.0 percent) whereas among females it was highest in Kerala, i.e., 16.8 percent followed by Bihar (16.0 percent). It is further inferred from the analysis of the table that male unemployment rates were significantly lower than females in the urban areas.

Thus it can be concluded that there is a wide scale difference with regard to the socio-economic status of women among major across states of India. The very basic indicator of social status of women is their sex ratio and states like Kerala have sex ratio as high as 1084 whereas it is as low as 877 in Haryana. The child sex-ratio also varies across the states and it is highest in Kerala (959) and lowest in Haryana (830). The infant mortality rate as well as maternal mortality was lowest in Madhya Pradesh and Haryana. The states of Bihar and West Bengal were most poor in health status of women where nearly 67.0 percent of females were anaemic and the health of the females was greatly linked up with their economic status and resource control exercised by them but poor educational status inturn affect economic empowerment of females in

India. The literacy rates among females were highest in Kerala (91.98 percent) and lowest in Rajasthan (52.66 percent). The drop-out rates among girls was highest as compared to boys. The analysis further revealed that education is key factor for empowering women as it enables them to get gainful employment. It is inferred from the results of the study that females are far less employed than males in India. The highest labour force participation rate among females was in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra whereas it was lowest in Bihar, U.P. and West Bengal. Most of the females were employed in the agriculture sector and allied activities. The unemployment rates among females were highest in Kerala.i.e. 16.1 percent and 12.1 percent respectively in the rural and urban areas and it was lowest in Rajasthan (0.1 percent) and Gujarat (2.7 percent).

Conclusion

To sum up, it can be concluded that there are wide regional disparities across the major states in relation to socio-economic status of women where some states are fairing well but far there it is really a long way to go. The paper highlighted the disparities between the two genders i.e. male and female across the vital social-economic parameters namely: - sex ratio, birth rate, infant mortality rate, literacy rate and labour force participation rate. There are glaring differences depicting the low socio-economic status of women in India and hence, enforcing the old socio-stigma that women are treated as secondary citizens in India. In developing countries like India, if we will not give equal opportunities of birth, education and employment to the females, then human capital formation cannot be expected to be at par with developed nations of the world. The Government needs to redesign its developmental policies and programmes in such a way that backward states, i.e., BIMARU can uplift the socio-economic status of the females and can include them in the growth process.

Future Research

The paper is limited to study the disparity in socio-economic status of women in comparison to men taking the sex ratio, birth rate, infant mortality rate, literacy rate and labour force participation rate. Future research can be done to explore the other parameters which highlights the socio-economic and other disparities between the two genders. Further area of research can be to estimate the impact of various Government programmes and policies to remove this disparity.

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