

Gender inequality and human development in India

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In a democratic country, human development means to lead a meaningful life which can help the society to develop economically, educationally, socially, culturally and so on. It means that the people of a society must be educated and contribute a lot to the economic development with good health. In fact, human development indicates toward making the people productive as human resource and human capital. Subsequently, ideas of human resource development have come to mean enlargement of the people's choices, their skills, capacities, attitudes, etc.

For estimating and ranking human development, various indices such as the Human Development Index (HDI), Gender Development Index (GDI), Gender Inequality Index (GII), etc., have been developed in the world. For the first time, the Human Development Report was developed by the Indian economist Amartya Sen and his Pakistani counterpart Mahbub-ul Haq in 1990. On the basis of the report, it was possible to get the position of India in human development indices in terms of education, health and employment so that the needful efforts could be made from time to time

for bringing the welfare of the country. In a developing country like India, for ensuring the welfare for all, the Central Government has been entrusted to implement some schemes and other developmental programmes to provide human and social security to the people.

We all know that India has a rich demographic dividend because the country has 54% of population below the age of 25. It means that the young age of population, the numbers of school-going people within that age group and the level of work force in that period is considered an asset for the entire country. If the proper form of skill-based education could be given to the members of this group of population, then it would contribute a lot towards the positive social transformation through social and economic mobility, creating the knowledge-enabled population in the country. Therefore, it is the right time for the country to provide skill-based learning opportunity to all and make them productive citizens.

But, unfortunately, the fruits of the opportunity are not reaped equally; women are mostly deprived to get the rights, e.g., the right to education, right to employment, right to social and health services, etc., which

are constitutionally provided to them. There are rampant gender differences in terms of education, employment and labour market, health and so on. According to the Human Development Report of 2014, India ranks 134 out of 148 countries in terms of HDI. Besides, in terms of GII, India's rank is 127 out of 187 countries. Although demographically India as a whole has great potential, the growth of manpower and the level of its engagement in productive activities are yet to be fully harnessed. The literacy rate in India is rather low compared to that of the developed countries. Besides, within India, there are considerable differences among the States and regions in terms of employment, gender differences in all stages of education, regional disparities in Gross Enrolment Ratio and literacy level, enrolment in various subjects, etc. In terms of literacy in India, according to the Census of 2011, the literacy rate of men is 82.14%, and women 65.46% with a gap of 16.68%. Women often get lower wage for the same work done by their male counterparts.

Although women constitute half of the total population, they are always unprivileged in both inside and outside their homes; their works are rarely recognized and unaccounted

in monetary terms. This situation prevails mainly because of the invisibility of women's work. In fact, the activities of women are considered under private domain whereas the activities of men are under the public domain. If all activities – including maintenance of kitchen gardens and poultry, grinding foodgrains, collecting water and firewood, etc., – are taken into account, then 88% of the rural housewives and 66% of the urban housewives can be considered economically productive. Thus, it proves how women are excluded from gaining their human rights as well as from the socio-economic recognition.

The GII measures inequality in achievement between men and women in terms of three dimensions: reproductive health in terms of maternal mortality ratio, empowerment that includes women's share of seats in national parliament and higher education, and women's share in the labour market or women labour force participation rate. If we calculate the progress of these three dimensions as well as their development indicators, it is seen that still there is a high maternal mortality ratio in India compared to many developing countries in the world. The MMR in India is about 200 against per 100,000 live births. Besides, in

terms of the percentage of women in the national parliament, in India, it is 10.9% in 2013, which is not more than 18% in all the medium HDI countries in the world. If we look at the population of our country above the age of 25 and older, it seems that 50.4% men and 26.6% women were able to pursue secondary education (2005-2012).

Besides these, a country can be developed when the people are engaged in some vibrant works and productive activities. But, in our country, the working force is not properly engaged, and eventually the problems like unemployment, underemployment and brain drain are rising day by day. Besides, more than 90% women are engaged in the unorganized sector, as most of them work for their day to day living, which remain uncounted and unrecognized. Around 28.8% of women in the age of 15 and above occupy the labour force participation rate; on the other hand, men have hovered around 80.9% in 2013.

Thus, these inequalities in terms of the GII in India have posed a challenge for the country for taking immediate action for ensuring sustainable economy and providing equal opportunities to all for inclusive growth and development and for having a gender-equal society for all.