CHAPTER -1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background and Broad Purpose of the Thesis

Women represent almost half of the global population. Yet, for centuries they have been subjected to endless exploitation by men folk. The male domination, carried on either by economic necessity or social compulsions, has taken a heavy toll on the half of the global Homo sapiens. The problem is not, certainly, unique to India, but it is particularly critical in this country in a range of dimensions, and certainly merits public attention as an important priority (Krishnamoorthy, 2006).

The notion of empowerment of women, which is based on equality between sexes, is a long drawn, conscious and continuous process comprising enhancement of skills, capacity building, gaining self-confidence and meaningful participation in decision making. Yet, it comprehensively seeks to ensure an equitable division of resources and cut up a clear role for them in the decision-making. It helps them in speaking about theirs with others rights and participates actively in the democratic processes. The term empowerment has multi-dimensional undertones which range from development of personal instrumental capabilities and skills, to the procedure of challenging ongoing power relations, to household decision making, to gaining access and control of resources like credit, income, land knowledge, etc as well as to subjective variables like the sense of personal power of self-efficiency (Kumar, 2006).

Extensive optimism of the 1950s that the advantages of economic growth would ‘trickle down’ to everyone, and an implied supposition that the surplus in the capitalist sector would indeed be reinvested in ways that reduce women’s drudgery, was noticeable
in the writings of Lewis (1955), Elson (1999). In 1962, the UN general Assembly asked the Commission on Women’s Status to prepare a report on the role of women in development. However, in 1974, four years after the publication of Boserup’s path breaking study ‘Women’s Role in Economic Development’, the first bibliography on Women In Development was drafted (Boserup, 1989). Boserup argued that development is not gender impartial. Women are marginalised in the economy as development takes place because they gain less than men in their roles as wage workers, farmers and traders (Mishra and Pandey, 2006).

In order to encourage development of women and defend their rights, the general assembly of the United Nations adopted convention on the exclusion of all forms of discrimination against women on 1979, which came into force on 1981. But despite many conventions and time bound measurable goals, world statistics speak of dreadful state of women, which is a cause of unease. The focus areas, where gender disparities are deliberately sustained and meticulously fostered from time immemorial, are female-male ratio, literacy and education, food and nutrition, health care system, work participation rate and opportunity to employment, access to economic resources particularly income and property and the most important political participation. Two third of world’s sex ratio, maternal mortality rate and infant mortality rate are increasing at all levels, there is a significant gender gap in literacy, dropout rates are far above the ground among girl students and incidence of crime against women is on the rise.

Gender equality and empowerment of women is internationally known as a key element to achieve development in all areas. It is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to which world leaders agreed at the Millennium summit held in New York in the year of 2000. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had
promised gender equality and empowerment of women by 2015 as one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The World Bank, The World Health Organisation (WHO) and The UNFPA admit women as deprived gender worldwide, particularly in developing nations. The lack of education and economic dependence are the prime factors that have an effect on women’s health. Economic background of the family does not convey women’s equality and empowerment. Demographic partition is wider with education and economic opportunity. The UNFPA has pointed towards the need of investment in education and healthcare for women in order to empower them and considerably lessen the gender violence. A strategic intervention is required if MDGs are to be met (Sinha et al 2006).

With particular reference to India, an adequate understanding of the prevailing disparity on Female Male Ratio (FMR) is needed as the society refuses to acknowledge its origin – the mothers. It also indicates that women are increasingly being turned down to live with equal rights and capabilities. They can hardly hope to live a full life, with the freedom to choose the course of their well being, survival, even to get born. This is not a problem of gender in isolation but also its association with economic and human development needs to be considered. This brings us to look into the problem from the broader context of economic development defined these days in terms of human development and precisely that is the broad purpose of the thesis.

1.2 From Economic Development to Human Development

In development economics, the role of per capita gross domestic product (PCGDP) had been of prime importance for a long period of time. Till the early part of the 1970’s, any improvement in PCGDP was considered to be a sign of economic development. Thereafter, it was increasingly felt that PCGDP was not an adequate measure of well
being that should characterise the process of development as it fails to take care of the
distributional aspect of growth. So, scholars felt the need to explicitly incorporate the
distributional factors in the measures of well-being. During the 1980’s Lucas (1986) and
Romer (1986) brought into the idea of human capital in the growth theory almost
unambiguously. A detailed analysis from a neo-classical perspective is available from
Lucas (1986). Social services----particularly basic health and education--- also received
greater attention during this decade. Almost at the same time Professor Amartya Sen
(1985, 1987) introduced the concept of standard of living in terms of functioning and
capabilities. But before actually discussing those in some detail, we would just concentrate
on the interrelationship between economic growth and development. In other words, it is
important to know where growth actually fails as a measure of well being and human
development takes over.

It is generally agreed that a zero growth situation cannot imply development in any
sense of the term. Assuming then that development means something more than growth,
we are constrained to accept growth as a basic precondition of development. This leads to
the question of identifying the set of alternative indicators. The result is a paradigm shift
and that is from emphasizing a rise in per capita income to a more expansive concept of
human well-being for the last two decades and a half. As a result of this shift people’s
choices have widened and enhanced the quality of their lives. Capital accumulation may
not be necessary for the fulfillment of some other kinds of human choices. In fact,
individuals and societies make many choices that require no wealth at all. The crucial
difference between economic growth (EG) and human development (HD) school is that
the former focuses on the expansion of only one choice----that is income, while the second
comprises the extension of all human choices-whether economic, social, cultural or
political. It has been observed that in many societies, economic growth does not trickle
down (Haq 1995). Given this backdrop the objective of development is to create a favourable atmosphere for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives and these are nothing but a process of enlarging people's choices in the form of some capabilities.

In the presence of tremendous consensus that per capita income or related measures of income are inadequate measures of well-being, the emphasis has now shifted to the identification of alternative measures of well being. Rahman et.al (2006), in their paper elaborately mentioned that Quality of Life, social indicators and basic needs are the new approaches that have been discussed (Hicks 1979, Morris 1979, Dasgupta and Weale 1992 in Rahman et.al (2006)). They have further explained that Morris D Morris (1979) first introduced the idea of a composite index in the form of Physical Quality of Life index (PQLI). The PQLI is a function of life expectancy at age one, infant mortality rate, and literacy rate. Then there have been many attempts made by others though without any final form of acceptance. Among them Dasgupta and Weale (1992) constructed a measure of quality of life that included per capita income, life expectancy at birth, adult literacy rate, and indices of political rights and civil liberties. Their contribution was very important because in the latter year's indices like Human Development Index (HDI), Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) all had been formulated basically with those components that we took into consideration.

However, the UNDP introduced the concept of human development in 1990 for practice by releasing its first Human Development Report. The whole idea was to make an aggregate measure that would incorporate three basic aspects of life: (1) Health, (2) Education and (3) Income. The basic structure of HDI stands up on the capability and functioning approach of Sen. He defines functioning as an "achievement", whereas capabilities as the "ability to achieve". Thus, functionings are directly related to what life
people actually lead, whereas capabilities are connected with the freedom people have in the choice of life or functionings. Sen offered this entitlement-capability-functioning framework in order to redefine development that could be used for enhancing human well-being and for that to happen all the capabilities that increase human well-being should be selected. Speaking exclusively from the empirical point of view, this is not an easy task. It is rather advisable to select the more important capabilities affecting the quality of life clearly by applying value judgments. (Kakwani 1993).

1.3 The issues related to HDI

Prof. Haq (1995) has discussed elaborately on certain issues related to HDI and we find it quite pertinent to take note of those in this context. He basically put forward his arguments as follows:

There are certain features of the human development approach on which we have found acceptance in a wider range. It ensures the fact that development should be people centric with the objective of enlarging all human choices beyond income. This perception of human development is based on structuring human capabilities by investing on people and using them to the fullest extent (through an enabling framework for growth and employment). It pays enough importance to economic growth but at the same time emphasises the requirement of drawing attention to its quality and distribution, analyses its linkage with human lives and questions its long-term sustainability in some details.

In spite of the aforesaid points of agreement, there are areas where controversies have evolved about the human development concept. It is argued that human development is anti-growth and that it is concerned only with social development. However, a correct appreciation of human development tells us that economic growth is not the end of the road for economic development. For achieving a satisfactory level of human development
the role of economic growth is crucial. The opportunities that economic growth creates need to be properly handled for a meaningful utilisation and that is how improvement in well-being takes place through what growth offers. There are countries where this management has been successful and there are some others who have failed. So, there is no automatic link between economic growth and human progress though it has been a long-standing presumption that such a link exists. One of the most pertinent policy issues concerns the exact process through which growth develops, or fails to develop, into human development under different development conditions.

There is a mistaken belief related to the assumed anti-growth bias of human development models that suggests that human development strategies contain merely social content, without any sorts of solid economic analysis in it. Also, there is a growing idea that the strategies of human development are basically dealt with social development expenditures (specifically education and health). There are viewpoints which indicate that i) it is a development of only human resources – that is, social development expenditure is intended at enhancing human capabilities, ii) human development strategies are associated only with human welfare issues – or, only with basic human needs and iii) that this theory remains silent about economic growth, production and consumption, saving and investment, trade and technology, or any other aspect of a macroeconomic framework. However, the fact is that the basic model of human development is a holistic one that takes into account ends and means of economic and social development, productivity and equity, material goods and human welfare. It covers all the spheres of development, including economic growth, social investment, people’s empowerment, provision of basic needs and social safety nets, political and cultural freedoms and all other aspects of people’s lives.
The actual point of deviation of human development strategies is to handle each issue in the traditional growth models from the gaining point of people and they are analysed not just as the recipients of economic growth but also as the actual agents of every change in society whether economic, political, social or cultural. To set up the control of people in the development process it is not to degrade economic growth but to revive its true objective.

1.4 The Arrival of GDI

The Human Development Report (HDR) has been effective primarily because of the extensive and thorough statistical analyses of achievements and limitations of living conditions of people in different parts of the existing world. In spite of all the shortcomings of the HDI, it emerged and served as a challenger to the other summary indicator- the aggregative GNP, which till then (1990) had been almost unanimously used as the leading index of the economic attainment of nations. The HDI has been able to clarify certain features of human development that the GNP fails to demonstrate. The HDR has been concerned with inequalities in the opportunities and conditions of women and men. Although in earlier reports, this perspective received some attention, there is still a strong case for concentrating on that issue for a detailed exploration of gender inequality in economic and social orders in the contemporary world. HDR 1995 has drawn attention to the prevalence of severe gender inequalities in human development. “The central message of the Report is that human development if not engendered, is endangered and there is long way to go in terms of equalizing opportunities between men and women.”(HDR1995) This report has an extremely valuable and pioneering contribution as it provides the gender-adjusted version of HDI, that is gender related development index (GDI). The GDI corresponds to gender disparities in some basic human capabilities. We
find from our day-to-day life that even after sharing many aspects of living together, collaborating with each other women and men receive very different rewards. It is specifically important to develop a framework for “gender-equity-sensitive indicators” (GESI) of achievements and freedoms (Anand and Sen, 1995). Anand and Sen pointed out “aside from developing ‘gender-equity-sensitive indicators’, the approach must also look at gender inequality per se. The investigation of such inequalities must have a close link with the development of equity-sensitive overall indicators, and it would be important to explore how the inequality measures should relate to the approach of using (GESI)”. The new initiative in the Human Development Report 1995 has three distinct departures to make, respectively: (1) the development and use of gender-equity-sensitive indicators (2) the formulation and utilisation of measures of gender equality and inequality (3) and the identification of efforts and contributions made by women that go unrecognized in standard national income and employment statistics (Anand and Sen 1995).

In this backdrop the GDI was constructed to measure gender inequality in an aggregative way, incorporating the same achievement indicators. The GDI focuses on the inequality between men and women as well as on the average achievement of all people taken together. The basic difference that one finds out between HDI and GDI is that the latter is constructed by taking female and male achievements separately. It is presumed that higher the value of GDI the better is the rank of that country in terms of gender development. Also, lesser the gap between HDI and GDI the better becomes the magnitude of gender equality. So basically we have two aggregative indicators to measure development, which by nature are quite similar to each other, and the second one is practically derived from the first one.
1.5 The Problem of gender inequality and “missing women”

Before talking about the GDI and its relation with gender bias let us concentrate a bit more about the starting point of this disparity. Opinions differ on wherefrom it originates. A school of thought opines that poverty is the genesis of the story wherefrom a chain of interconnected inequality emerges. Another group argues that it is more of a socio cultural issue than an economic problem. “What distinguishes gender from these other form of inequalities, though, is that it is an intra-household inequality where as the others are between-households inequalities. The disadvantage that women suffer is super imposed on the other disadvantages that the household as a whole suffers. Thus, for example, females in rural households suffer the combined disadvantages of the rural-urban divide as well as the gender divide.” (Dutta and Sinha 1997)

In recent times we are concerned with perhaps the most important component of this inequality that is falling female-male ratio (FMR) especially in the age group of 0-6 years, which is more commonly known as Juvenile Female Male Ratio (JFMR). This trend has been observed throughout the last century with considerable variation across the major states of India if not all. Sen (2001) has looked at the position of JFMR in some developed countries of Europe as well as South-East Asia and found that the ratio is quite high in the U.K., U.S., Germany, Singapore Taiwan, South Korea, and China (it varies from 86.0 to 95.7). He has observed that the value of Germany’s FMR (94.8) produces a remarkable geographical split of India. According to him there are some states in north and west part of India where the FMR is steadily less than the benchmark figure led by Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Gujarat (with ratios between 79.3 and 87.8), and also including among others Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jammu & Kashmir (a tiny exception is Dadra and Nagar Haveli, with less than a quarter million people altogether). The states in east and south tend to have JFMR’s that are above the
benchmark line of 94.8 girls per hundred boys with Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Assam (each between 96.3 and 96.6), and also among others, Orissa, Karnataka and the north eastern states to the east of Bangladesh (Meghalaya, Mijoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh) if we look at the other side of this divide.

There is another striking observation that captures our attention to this falling trend. The fall in JFMR turns out to be sharper in the urban areas (32 points) than in the rural during the Census 2001. There are more districts in the urban areas where the FMRs have declined by 60 to 100 points. The traditional north-south divide stands significantly modified and the ‘northanisation’ of sex-ratios is rapidly taking the urban route.

Apart from the aforesaid problem there are other dimensions of gender inequality and there is a widespread predominance of those features. In his paper Sen (2001) has elaborately discussed about seven types of gender inequalities. They are (1) Mortality inequality, (2) Natality inequality, (3) Basic facility inequality, (4) Special opportunity inequality, (5) Professional inequality, (6) Ownership inequality and (7) Household inequality. It is not expected that all those manifestations would get reflected in a single composite index. It has been observed that the problem of gender inequality is actually more acute for female children right from their arrival in this world, and in fact, once detected that the unborn baby in mother’s womb is going to be her daughter there is every possibility that the male dominated family or the elderly males of the household would like to see that the girl child is not allowed to be born. Naturally, the number of females is declining in the society and so the magnitude of “missing women” (Sen 1990) gets aggravated day by day. According to Sen (2001) this is called Natality inequality. It is needless to say that this is the most dangerous form of gender discrimination among others. In fact Mortality inequality and Natality inequality are very common in areas like
North Africa, Asia, including China and South Asia, East Asia including South Korea in particular, Singapore, Taiwan and India. An ever more important consideration could be that it is falling more so in economically prosperous areas simply because of availability of modern facilities like ultrasonography, amniosentesis etc. by which it is easily possible to know the gender of an unborn child. If it turns out to be female then that unborn baby will be aborted.

1.6 The Problems to be investigated

However, this acute prevalence of gender inequality is not captured by the GDI. There are quite a few reasons to believe that the areas where the apparent position of gender inequality appears to be good the falling trend of JFMR is also quite visible. Naturally some amount of skepticism evolves about this role of the index which the UNDP had formulated keeping an eye to address gender inequality in some specific way. Above all it is difficult to understand whether keeping a large section of population outside the purview of development, any kind of developmental analysis can justifiably be done. It is strongly felt that there is some scope to modify GDI. There is need for some alternative as a composite measure of gender inequality incorporating this problem.

Now this being a typical problem of health status of an individual in so far the modification of GDI is concerned, we find it quite pertinent to have a look at the linkage between gender inequality and nutritional status specifically for children. It is an observed phenomenon that intrahousehold distribution of resources often goes against the girl child of a family when the resource is scarce and also in some cases it happens in several prosperous zones. So unequal distribution of food often makes girl child deprived of getting the desired amount of nutritional status and creates problems of malnutrition. There are umpteen numbers of case studies concentrating on developing countries where
gender inequality has had much to do for the prevalence of inadequate child nutritional status. This is an area where child mortality rate becomes a crucial indicator as an outcome of this deficient child nutritional status. So the exercise is worthwhile to have a look at whether with an improvement in gender inequality child nutritional status has fared better across developing countries over time.

Another dimension that occupies wide space in human development literature is the link between income and quality of life. It is quite expected that with some progress in the level of per capita income the general features of so called quality of life (QLI) or indicators of human development would improve than what it was earlier. But, there is no reason to believe in this line unless it is tested with data across counties over time and it is worthwhile to test this hypothesis in both the frame of pure human development angle and also in the light of human development measures taking gender inequality into account. We have mentioned the importance of child mortality rate as a severe outcome of gender imbalance. It is important at this juncture to trace out the interrelationships, if any, between income, gender inequality and child mortality only to reiterate the fact that no matter in which way we may call it, QLI or human development, it must consider the aspect of mortality to make the path complete that it wants to travel.

Under this backdrop this study intends to examine the problem of gender inequality across the countries of the world with special reference to India. In particular, we are interested to know that given the fact the nearly half of the population are vanishing from the society even before their arrival whether the implications in terms of overall developmental scenario changes and how that can be better reflected through this study.