The intensity of ‘gender inequality’ indicates the status of women in that particular community. The possibility of women being prone to gender inequality is limited when she enjoys a high status in the society and vice-versa. Therefore, knowledge pertaining to ‘status of women’ is necessary to get clear interpretation of ‘gender inequality’. The present chapter which consists of two sections throws light on this matter. Section ‘A’ presents the status of women from sociological and economic point of view. Different aspects related to gender inequality are highlighted in Section ‘B’.

**Section: A**

‘Status’ is an omniscient relative term describing the position at a given time. The word ‘status’ refers to the position of an individual in relation to another or others, especially in regard to social or professional standing. The beginning of systematic study about women in India is usually dated to the publication of the report ‘Toward Equality’ in 1974. An important contribution of this report was its clear articulation pertaining to status in two manners.

- ‘Achieved status’ is the status acquired by an individual through her efforts, often through competition and the use of special abilities, knowledge and skill. It is determined by attributes such as education, health, work participation and so on.

- ‘Ascriptive status’ refers to any status not based on individual ability, skill, efforts or accomplishment but on inherited positions in society. It includes factors that are not in the control of the individual and represent a collective consciousness or community norms, such as family and kinship norms, the nature of the marital contract, levels of privacy, religion etc.

In our society women with her efforts has succeeded in improving her achieved status to a considerable extent. The fact remains, however, that the subordinate role that is tagged with women found in the ‘black box’ of whatever constitutes ascriptive status.

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3.1: Status of Women in India: The Past and the Present

“It is impossible to understand the present without reference to the past. In order to explain the differential status of women and men in contemporary society, it is necessary to examine the impact of specific historical forces and recognize their power in creating attitudes about sexes.”

Women’s current status cannot be properly understood without reference to their past, from which their contemporary status seems to have evolved, and the process by which it has grown. There is, in fact, no dearth of discussion on women’s issues and the question of their status, but the difficulty experienced in studying these issues systematically is because, women in India do not constitute a homogenous group. In our highly complex and extremely diversified society, women in different religious groups, caste levels, economic strata, and those belonging to tribal, rural and urban areas merit separate consideration.

Apart from taking note of these internal differentiations present in India, the analysis of status of women in India also requires us to pay attention to the position of women not merely as it is supposed to be in principle, but especially as it actually is in practice. While traditionalist construct the idealized picture of women in traditional India from selected classical texts and, comparing this with her actual position in recent times, find the present less satisfactory than the past. According to them women were treated with high respect. ‘Where women are honoured, there the god rejoice’ (Manusmriti), ‘all must make a way for woman when she is treading a path’ (Apastamba), ‘where the female relations live in grief, the family soon wholly perishes, but where they are happy, the family ever prospers’ (Manusmriti), etc. were some of the statements made by the code writers indicative of the respectful position of women in India in past, which the traditionalists refer to prove their point.

On the other hand, the modernists point toward freedoms granted to women since independence and contrast these with the restrictions from which they actually suffered in the past. For instance, women were not permitted to undertake any activity

without either the consultation or permission of the male members of the family at any stage of their life cycle. They were subjected to the guardianship of the father, husband and sons during their childhood, youth and their old-age respectively (Manusmriti). ‘Devoid of all virtues the husband was to be worshiped by women as god’, ‘they were equated with the donkey, drum and the village simpleton and deserved to beaten up now and then to be kept in proper sense’, ‘women were considered as husband’s acquisition and hence could even be gifted out to anybody or pawned in a game of dice’, etc. This being the status of women, wherein they were treated as property of their husbands, the question of their holding or succeeding to property was practically an impossible proposition.\textsuperscript{129} Such an analysis by the traditionalists and the modernists presents the paradoxical situation of the status of women in Indian society. Both of them refer to passages from several religious texts to prove their point.

Even today, status of women in India does not seem to be consistent and coherent. Some claim that at present women’s status has definitely improved and that they have almost attained equality. In support of this argument they even point to the number of distinguished women in high public office and the upward trend noticed in women’s literacy, life expectancy, employment, earning capacity, etc. in the decadal enumerations. Contrarily, using the same statistical data from the same decadal enumerations and comparing these with the data pertaining to men, others strongly argue that the status of women is still low in India and that women are not receiving a fair deal.\textsuperscript{130}

3.2: Status of Women: From Sociological Point of View

It is generally pointed out that during the pre-Aryan period, the system of family was predominantly matrilineal. In such a system people believe that the status of women was high and they enjoyed full freedom. But, with the Aryans invasion of India, a drastic transformation was observed in the social system which switched over to patrilineal system from matrilineal, where in, the system was predominantly male oriented. Since men predominated the powerful public sphere in this system, women were practically excluded from either seeking knowledge or its production. Women

\textsuperscript{129} ibid
\textsuperscript{130} Ahuja Ram, \textit{Indian Social System}, Rawat Publication, Jaipur, 1993, pp.203-205
were barred from participating in public, religious and spiritual affairs by evolving and imposing the concepts of ‘purity’ and ‘pollution’. This practically seem to have led to the segregation of women and responsible for keeping women away from public arena, depriving them from equal access to several of resources.

Though women’s vital role in the propagation of race was recognised, yet, the role i.e. ‘the mighty hunter’ of men was glorified and women were treated as subordinate, by gendering the roles of males and females. Women’s character of nurturing and compassion though lauded, were practically used to confine women to domestic spheres. They were considered as over emotional, sensitive and hence less rational by nature, than men. A number of restrictions were imposed on women such as the ideal of virginity in the maiden to be married, a strict celibate life for widows, etc. With passage of time these impositions and the consequent practices have become so rigid that women have been treated as cattle. Their mobility is controlled and they are subjected to several ill and evil practices. For instance, child marriage and early marriage for girls, so common in Indian society, has obvious connection with traditional values and norms propagated by Hindu culture. Early marriage and early motherhood apart from having importance demographic consequences also hinder the full participation of women in certain important fields of social, economic, political and cultural life.

The roles ascribed based on biological determination and the social values which have further fortified these roles are so internalised by people in India, that they have sketched a ‘Feminine Ideal’ which expects women to be dutiful wives, while serving their husbands, aiding them in all their ventures by virtue of their proper behaviour and ensuring transfer of power in crises. They were expected to play various roles in connection with their husbands such as wife, mother, minister, servant, etc. contextually.

Thus, many impossible virtues were imposed on women, which have trickled down to the contemporary times also. Gradually, women in India are changing and

133 Beteille Andre, ‘The Position of Women in Indian Society’ in Jain Devika (Ed.) Indian Women, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, New Delhi, 1975
accepting liberal, rational ideas and ideals, but they are still conservative and traditional at heart. The change in them appears to be peripheral and it has not penetrated the value system imbibed in them.

3.3: Status of Women: From Economic Point of View

“Women make up 50 percent of the world’s population, comprise 33.3 percent of labour force, perform nearly 66.6 percent of all working hours, receive 10 percent of the world’s income and own less than 1 percent of world’s property.”

This significant statistical statement of UNO is enough to illustrate the status of women in any society especially from economic point of view. The status of any given section of population in a society is intimately connected with its social and economic position, which depends on the rights, roles and opportunities for participation in social, economic and political activities. Further, the economic status of women is now accepted as an indicator of society’s stage of development. The participation rate of women in economic activities can be considered as a good measure of the status of women in society.

In many cultures, men’s tasks have been defined as ‘work’ while women’s have been defined as ‘assisting’, ‘helping out’ of ‘housework’. Conventionally women were given the responsibility of bearing and rearing of children as well as the management of the household. It is not implicit in this perspective that women are not required to participate in any economic role, but what it maintains, is that women are expected to give priority to household work and to show commitment to their family. Perhaps, it was due to this reason that women worked under the guidance, supervision and control of men. Because of this, women’s activities were (and are) not counted in various statistical measurements such as the gross national product, and women were viewed as not contributing to economic development. Thus, economic life was profoundly shaped by notions of gender, and in most of the world’s cultures sharp distinctions were drawn between men’s and women’s work.

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3.3.1: Importance of Women in Economic Development

The role of women in economic development is universally recognised. Greater participation of women in the process of economic development is a necessary condition to realise the full potential of economic development. Increasing economic opportunities for women is essential for improving women’s lives and accelerating economic growth and development, with potential to lift hundreds of millions of people out of poverty. It is generally recognised that progress on gender equality is necessary in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.\textsuperscript{137}

Women’s participation in the economy occurs on multiple levels: household, community, country, and international. Women have great importance for the development of the economy, which all the time can not be measured in terms of money. The economic contribution of women has become a source of wealth. One can not think of an economy devoid of women as human capital and their contribution in aggregate production. The contribution of women to economic development can be measured from two angles: (i) Women’s contribution to family well being and (ii) Women’s contribution to national development. Women contribute economically to the well being of the family members. The earning of working mother have positive influence on the nutritional and health status of their children. Women are also helping in national development through women labour participation in employment.\textsuperscript{138}

Unfortunately, women are being excluded from full participation in economic life and it has direct consequences for the welfare of individual families and for the entire economy. The transition from a traditional to a modern society is accompanied by a lower status for women. Women workers receive less pay than men in salaried employment and occupy lower status and power. In the market of economies, women unemployment rates have been higher than those of men. They have less job security

\textsuperscript{137}<www.danchurchaid.org/content/download/17412/152557/file/Gender.pdf> accessed on May 29, 2011
\textsuperscript{138}Bhowmik Krishna, \textit{Indian Women: the Ushering of a New Dawn}, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 2006, pp.26-32
as compared to men. Therefore, women occupy an inferior position in the labour market in relation to men.\textsuperscript{139}

3.3.2: Role of Women in Economy

The role of women in ancient time was confined to perform only one job i.e. to bring progeny for men. The entire life of women was based on protection of men in the form father, husband and men. The role of the women was restricted to the kitchen and four walls of their house. Women were not supposed to seek any gainful employment outside the house. This hindered their economic development.\textsuperscript{140}

During the British period under the impact of west, the women experienced the air of freedom and stir of new life. After the advent of Industrial Revolution the orderly scheme of women’s work and women’s role underwent a change. The women left their hearth and home to work for wages, often a laborious job, in factories, mills, plantation and mines.\textsuperscript{141}

The most importance and enduring consequence of industrialization for women has been the emergence of the modern role of housewives as ‘the dominant mature feminine role’. After the Industrial Revolution, the social situation has changed throughout the world. Because of rapid growth of industrialization, development in the field of transportation, communication and improvement in the realm of science and technology not only new roles have emerged but also new social norms and value have emerged.\textsuperscript{142} Due to change in the outlook, attitude and approach toward life, it has now become imperative for families to supplement their requirement through additional earning. Today as the centre of production is located outside the house, socio economic conditions demand participation of women along with the men in the production process. Moreover, the globalisation has accelerated the ways and means to enter the field of employment. Impact of globalisation is everywhere and it is not only either on males or females. For these reasons women have recorded impressive gain in employment, though the work participation rate of

\textsuperscript{141} Mir G.Q, \textit{Women Workers and the Law}, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 2002, pp.2-3
\textsuperscript{142} Mishra A.D., \textit{Problems And Prospects Of Working Women In Urban India}, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 1994
women continues to be lesser than men, yet it has increased with the passage of time.\textsuperscript{143}

3.3.3: Opportunities for Economic Participation and Women

Any appraisal of women’s economic roles and their opportunities for participation in economic activities cannot be done in isolation of the society’s stage of development, the socio-cultural attitudes toward women’s role in the family and in the wider society, and the social ideology concerning basic components of status. At certain stages of development, capacity for work may provide the high claim to status. But when society becomes inegalitarian, leisure may substitute work as the indicator of status.

The debate regarding women’s economic role and the need for equality of rights and opportunities for economic participation centres round three arguments:\textsuperscript{144}

1. That women’s economic subjugation or dependence leads to exploitation and is a denial of social justice and human rights. Both Karl Marx and Mahatma Gandhi opposed the rigid distinction between men’s and women’s roles from this standpoint.

2. That the development of a society requires full participation by all sections of the population, and opportunities for full development of the potentialities of women. This is the keynote of the U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against women.

3. That modern trend in demographic and social changes, e.g., rising age of marriage, smaller families, urbanization, migrations, raising costs and standard of living and calls for greater participation in decision-making are introducing major changes in women’s roles and responsibilities. A social crisis would result if women are unable to meet these challenges because of social handicaps.

The opposition to increasing women’s economic activities springs from two notions. One, the conservative view that women’s role must be confined within rigidly defined limits. And the second, the fear that chronic unemployment may result


\textsuperscript{144} Pruthi Raj and Sharma Belarani (Eds.), \textit{Post Independence India and Women}, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 1995, pp.216-217
if women enter the labour market at large scale. This results in theories of women’s ‘marginal’ role in the economy. The theory is, however, inapplicable to agrarian societies where the family is the unit of production, and men, women and children, all participate in the production process. Transition from the traditional agriculture to modern organised industry brought many technological changes in production method and required new skills. Women, handicapped by lack of opportunities to acquire these new skills, find themselves unwanted by new economy. This is the situation that the large masses of women face around the world.  

3.3.4: Women in Indian Economy

"yatris nastu pooyante tatra deva ramnataha……"  

"Pitah Rakshathi Koumare, Pati Rakshathi Youvanne, Puthro Rakshathi Vardaykye Na stthree swathanthram arhati"  

These two declarations of Manu put the status of Indian women in contradiction. In our society although women is respected, there is general acceptance of her subordinate status relative to men in all area of life including economic life. India is a multifaceted society where no generalization could apply to the entire nation’s various regional, religious, social, and economic groups. Nevertheless, certain broad circumstances in which Indian women live affect the ways they participate in the economy.

Indian society is extremely hierarchical with virtually everyone ranked relative to others according to their caste (or caste-like group), class, wealth, and power. This ranking even exists in areas where it is not openly acknowledged, such as certain business settings. Though specific customs vary from region to region within the country, there are different standards of behavior for men and women that carry over into the work environment. Women are expected to be chaste and especially modest

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145 ibid PP.218-221
146 Where women are honoured there the Gods rejoice and they are not honoured all works become fruitless.
147 A woman in her childhood is protected by her father, in her youth protected by her husband and in old age protected by her son and hence a woman never deserves freedom.
148 In various Hindu traditions, Manu is a title accorded to the progenitor of mankind, and also the very first Brahman king to rule this earth, who saved mankind from the universal flood.
in all actions, which may constrain their ability to perform in the workplace on an equal basis with men.\textsuperscript{149}

These cultural rules place some Indian women, particularly those of lower caste, in a paradoxical situation; when a family suffers economically, people often think that a woman should go out and work, yet at the same time the woman’s participation in employment outside the home is viewed as “slightly inappropriate, subtly wrong, and definitely dangerous to their chastity and womanly virtue”.\textsuperscript{150} When a family recovers from an economic crisis or attempts to improve its status, women may be kept at home as a demonstration of the family’s morality and as a symbol of its financial security.

Although most women in India work and contribute to the economy in one form or another, much of their work is not documented or accounted for in official statistics. Women plough fields and harvest crops while working on farms; women weave and make handicrafts while working in household industries; women sell food and gather wood while working in the informal sector. Additionally, women are traditionally responsible for the daily household chores (e.g., cooking, fetching water, and looking after children).\textsuperscript{151}

Although the cultural restrictions that women face are changing in India, women are still not as free as men to participate in the formal economy. In the past, cultural restrictions were the primary impediments to female employment; now, however, the shortage of jobs throughout the country contributes to low female employment as well.

\textbf{3.3.5: Female Work Participation Rate in India}

The concept of ‘work’, as defined in the Census of India has been broadly the same in the past five censuses, but the scope of the definition has been extended from time to time. In the 2001 Census, work has been defined as participation in any economically productive activity with or without compensation, wages or profit. Such

\textsuperscript{150} ibid p.130
participation may be physical and/or mental in nature. Work involves not only actual work but also includes effective supervision and direction of work. It even includes part-time help or unpaid work on farm, family enterprise or in any other economic activity.\textsuperscript{152}

Female work participation refers to the proportion of total female workers to the total female population. Work participation involves contributing to the production of goods and services for the market, or for own consumption. The female work participation rate also indicates economic empowerment of women. Equality in the WPR is assumed to occur when 100 women are working against 100 men. Any deviation from this creates gender gap. Table No.3.1 is developed with a specific purpose to point out this type of gender gap.

Table No.3.1: Rural and Urban Work Participation Rate by Sex (In percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th></th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Femal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>31.42</td>
<td>68.58</td>
<td>52.37</td>
<td>11.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>53.78</td>
<td>15.92</td>
<td>84.08</td>
<td>48.88</td>
<td>7.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>76.90</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>72.30</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>69.00</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From Table No.3.1 it is clear that between 1961 and 2001, the WPR of rural men has declined from 58.3 to 52.4 per cent. At the same time, rural female WPR has almost remained stagnant. In case of urban male, WPR has declined from 52.37 percent to 50.9 percent. As in case of rural female, the WPR of urban female has also remained static. It is, however, important to note that there is a huge gender gap in WPR of both rural and urban women. In 2001, the gender gap stood at 69 per cent in case of rural women and it was 88.40 percent in respect of urban female. This also

helps us to know that more number of rural females work as compared to their counterparts in urban areas.

Table No.3.2 throws light on female work participation rate in different states and union territories in India.

**Table No.3.2: States/Union Territories According to Levels of Female Work Participation Rates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>10 – 20%</th>
<th>20-30%</th>
<th>30-40%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andaman &amp; Nicobar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Arunachal Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pondicherry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maharashta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Manipur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nagaland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other States/Union Territories: Less than 10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Report, 2001

Table No.3.2 clearly shows that women’s work participation rates differ widely from state to state. As per census of India 2001, female work participation rate varies from about 10 to 20 percent in states such as Bihar, Haryana, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, etc. to 20 to 30 percent in the states like Goa, Gujarat, Orissa, Karnataka, etc. In few states like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, etc. female work participation rate lies between 30 to 40 percent.

The history of women’s participation in gainful employment is recent one. In 2003, the number of women in central government employment was 7.51 percent. The percentage of educated women seeking employment has shown an upward trend.
from 68.7 percent in 1991 to 78.1 percent in 2001. According to another survey, in the year 2004, the total employed force in the public and private sector was 264.43 lakhs, out of which, the number of working women was 49.34 lakhs. Women working in organise sector constitutes only 10 percent whereas 92 percent are in unorganised sector.

Section: B

Generally, ‘inequality’ refers to unfair differences in rank, wealth, opportunity, power, etc. If the inequalities are arising due to differences in level of efforts made by individuals of different backgrounds then it is morally acceptable, but if the inequalities are due to circumstances beyond the control of individual such as sex, caste, religion, region of birth, ethnicity and so on, then it is deemed unethical and unacceptable. ‘Gender Inequality’ is a kind of inequality which arises due to the circumstances and which is beyond the control of individual. Hence, it is not acceptable and needs investigation. In this section an attempt is made to study the different aspects that are related to ‘gender inequality’.

3.4: Meaning of Gender

Gender refers to the social differences and relations between men and women which are learned, vary widely among societies and cultures, and change over time. The term gender does not replace the term sex, which refers exclusively to biological differences between men and women. For example, statistical data are broken down by sex. The term gender is used to analyse the roles, responsibilities, constraints, opportunities and needs of women and men in all areas in any given social context. Gender roles are learned behaviours in a given society, community or other social groups; the conditions, activities, tasks and responsibilities are perceived as male or female. Gender roles are affected by age, class, race, ethnicity and religion, and by the geographical, economic and political environment.

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153 India Labour Year Book, Government of India, 2003-04
Kishor identifies three important aspects of gender namely:

1. “Gender tends not be value neutral‖. The roles, rights, and obligations assigned to each sex are not just different, but also unequal with male roles and rights generally being valued more highly than female roles and rights.
2. “Gender involves differences in power, both power to and power over‖. The concept of ‘power to’ encompasses legal and informal rights, access to resources, and pursuit of knowledge and personal goals, and cuts across most domains of human functioning, including familial, cultural, and institutional domains. ‘Power over’ refers to control over societal and household resources and decisions, cultural and religious ideology, and one's own and others' bodies. Importantly, men tend to have greater power than women, and, in some domains, even have power over women.
3. “Gender is not static or immutable‖. Being socially constructed, gender roles, rights, and expectations can change over time and across geographical space as societal needs, opportunities, and customs change.

3.5: Gender vs. Sex

Gender and sex are not synonyms. In common parlance, the terms gender and sex are often used interchangeably; however, they are distinct concepts. While "women" and "men" refer to sex, "feminine" and "masculine" refer to gender. Women, men, male, and female are words that specify sexual identities, which biology determines. However, the gender distinctions of masculine and feminine are based on socially constructed meanings for sex. Sex of individuals is largely determined by biology, whereas, their gender is socially constructed and comprises the roles, rights, and obligations that attach to them on the basis of their sex. Julia Wood further clarifies how gender is different from sex.

One's sex is determined by genetic codes:
- One's biological features are programmed by these codes.
- We use these biological features to classify male and female sex.

• These features include differences in external genitalia and internal sex organs, hormones, percentage of body fat, muscles, amount of body hair and brain development.
• Regardless of gender assignment surgery, sex is permanent.
• Sex is an individual property.
One's gender is more complex than one's sex:
• Individuals are not born with a gender, only stronger or weaker inclination for a gender.
• Sex determines how likely a person is to fit the gender-role, but not a guarantee.
• The meaning of gender is neither universal nor stable.
• Gender refers to a culture's meaning for sex.
• Gender is partially constructed by society, while sex is entirely biological.
• Each culture prescribes meanings for one's sex, assigning them certain qualities, activities and identities.
• These meanings are embedded into the fabric of each culture's social life.
• Each culture perceives these meanings as "natural" or "right".
• We constantly receive messages within our culture reinforcing these messages.
• We often adopt the gender that our culture has assigned to us based on our sex.
• Although it doesn't always happen, these social prescriptions generally succeed to ensure most females will become feminine and most males will become masculine.

3.6: Meaning of Gender Inequality

‘Sex’ and ‘gender’ are different in origin but basically the general role of individuals in a particular society is partly based on the physical potentials of individuals. Along with physical requirements individual must have to use his / her mental capabilities in order to move in the society. Gender inequality in its originality is a phenomenon, by which the role of individuals is determined with in a particular society. Gender inequity allows the distribution of the social responsibilities among the members of the society in such an effective manner that one can fulfill his/ her responsibilities by using his/ her physical and mental capabilities at optimum. The conflict of gender inequality arises when only
physical part of one’s strengths is considered and the mental part is neglected. As a result of such half considered phenomenon, individuals are categorized as ‘strong’ and ‘weak’, ‘emotionally strong’ and ‘emotionally sensitive’, ‘competent’ and ‘incompetent’, ‘leaders’ and ‘followers’, etc. In this case the gender inequality doesn’t remain in its totality or originality and is considered as a factor deteriorating the process of development of human skills.\textsuperscript{160}

Wikipedia defines Gender Inequalities as “the obvious or hidden disparities among individuals based on the performance of gender”. This problem in simple term is known as ‘Gender Bias’ which in simple terms means the gender stratification or making difference between a girl and a boy i.e. a male or a female.\textsuperscript{161}

To understand gender inequality, we must distinguish between (1) a gender role approach and (2) a gender structure approach. The gender role approach emphasises characteristics that individuals acquire during the course of socialisation, such as independent or dependent behaviors and ways of reacting. The gender structure approach emphasises factors that are external to individuals, such as the social structure and social institutions that are themselves gendered and that reward women and men differently. These approaches differ in how they view the sexes, in how they explain the causes and effects of sexism, and in the solutions they suggest for eliminating inequality.\textsuperscript{162}

3.7: The Origin of Gender Inequality

Women’s universal responsibility for childbearing appears to have created such a differentiation between the sexes that it invariably resulted in a gender division of labour in all rudimentary societies. Because women and men received distinctive responsibilities and because those responsibilities place them more often in the company of their own gender, gender became a primary division in culture and women and men developed opposing gender identities. This caused women and men

\textsuperscript{160} Qurratulain Akhtar on “Gender Discrimination” available at <http://www.tajzia.com/articles/2/1/Gender-Discrimination.html> accessed on April 12, 2011

\textsuperscript{161} <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_inequality> accessed on April 12, 2011

to identify themselves as interest groups, not necessarily in a self-conscious or abstract way, but in the implicit practice of gender identities.\textsuperscript{163}

Men’s activities in this division of labour were more likely to award them superior political organisation and a relative monopoly over weapons. When they were responsible for warfare and their tasks commonly demanded coordination and organisation, the division of labour, derived particularly in response to reproductive differences, pushed men into positions of leadership, albeit with a limited amount of power, while simultaneously giving them superior resources. Because men’s lot in this division commonly depended in the development of athletic skills, whatever inherent physical advantages of strength over women could be exaggerated by experience. Wherever men were responsible for war and safety, their aggressiveness was reinforced and developed.

All this really became important and effective when societies started to become stratified by castes or classes, organised around unequal control over finite, contested productive resources. Subsequently, the universal tendency of people to protect and extend advantages made the allocation of responsibilities and rights between the sexes a matter of conflict. This produced, in part, an organised defense of individual men’s capacity to exercise advantages over women, thus allowing both biological and social individual difference between the sexes to become reinforcing to group difference in status.\textsuperscript{164}

3.8: Perspective of Gender Inequality

Theories of gender inequality have the following themes:\textsuperscript{165}

1. Men and women are unequally situated in society. In comparison with men, women get less of the material resource, social status, power, and opportunists for self realization.
2. This inequality is not the result of any biological or psychological differences; it results from the organisation of society.

\textsuperscript{164} Ibid p. 45
3. Though individual human beings vary from each other in traits, potentials, etc., no significant pattern of difference distinguishes the sexes.

4. It is possible to change the situation. The theorists assume that men and women will respond to an egalitarian situation.

Both, Liberal feminism and Marxian feminism conform to this theoretical position. Liberal feminism’s explanation of gender inequality begins with an identification of the sexual division of labour, the existence of separate public and private spheres of social activity, men’s primary location in the former and women’s in the latter, and the systematic socialisation of children so that they can move into adult roles and spheres appropriate to their gender. According to liberal feminists, the society or social system that restricts women to access to public sphere, and confines them to the private sphere creates gender inequality. To them, the public sphere provides true rewards of social life such as money, power, status and opportunity. When women’s access to the public sphere is prohibited, or restricted, and when they are burdened with private-sphere responsibilities, gender inequality is established.  

Marxian feminism brings together Marxian class analysis and feminist social protest. The most notable exploration of the issue of gender inequality is presented in ‘The Origins of Family, Private Property and the State’ and the major arguments of the theory are as follows:

1. Women’s subordination results not from her biology, but from social arrangements.
2. The basis for women’s subordination lies within family, which is patrilineal, patriarchal, and hence women are confined to the home, have no job outside the home and hence do not have economic independence.
3. The legitimisation of such a family system.
4. The emergence of private property.
5. The emergence of exploitation.

166 ibid p.463
Thus, according to Marxian feminism, “women are unequal to men not because of any basic and direct conflict of interest between the genders, but because of the working out of class oppression, with its attendant factors of property inequality, exploited labour and alienation.”\(^{168}\)

### 3.9: What Causes Gender Inequality?

To explain gender and power, sociologists, turn to the systems that shape our social worlds. Structural thinking treats gender inequality as the outcome of male control over socially valued resources and opportunities. There are several models of gender inequality. Most of them focus on the division of labour and power between men and women, and the different values placed on their work. This idea originated in the work Fredrick Engels and Karl Marx. They wrote that industrialism and the shift of a capitalist economy widened the gap between the power and value of men and women. As production moved out of the home, the gendered division of labour left men with the greatest share of economic and other forms of power.\(^{169}\)

To explain causes for gender inequality, two different theories have been developed, viz, (a) Materialist Theory and (b) the Division between Domestic and Public Work.\(^{170}\)

(a) **Materialist Theory:** The most compelling explanations of gender inequality are materialist theories that use cross-cultural data on the status of women and men. Materialist theories explain gender inequality as an outcome of how women and men are tied to the economic structure of society. Such theories stress control and distribution of valued resources as crucial facts in producing stratification. They point out that women's roles of mother and wife, although vital to the well-being of society, are devalued and also deny women access to highly valued public resources. They point out that gender stratification is greater where women's work is directed inward to the family and men's work is directed outward to trade and the marketplace.\(^{171}\)

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170 <http://www.delmar.edu/socsci/rlong/problems/chap-09.html> accessed on June 29, 2011
When women do enter the labor markets, they often are concentrated in lower-paying jobs. Women also enter the labor market later than men and often have to leave periodically because of child care responsibilities. Historically, women have had lower levels of education than men, but recently this trend seems to have begun to reverse.

(b) The Division between Domestic and Public Work: Macro structural theories explain gender inequality as an outcome of how women and men are tied to the economic structure of society. These theories say the women’s economic role in society is a primary determinant of their overall status. The division between domestic and public sphere of activity is constraining to women and advantageous to men. Women’s reproductive roles and their responsibilities for domestic labour limit their association with the resources that are highly valued. Men are freed from these responsibilities. Their economic obligations in the public sphere assure them control of highly valued resources and give rise to male privilege.

In capitalist societies the domestic-public split is even more significant, because highly valued foods and services are exchanged in the public, not the domestic, sphere. Women’s domestic labour although important for survival, ranks low in prestige and power because it does not produce exchangeable commodities. Because of the connections between the class relations of production (capitalism) and the hierarchical gender relations in their society (patriarchy) many of the developed and developing countries are ‘capitalist patriarch’, where male supremacy keeps women in subordinate roles at work and in the home and thus causes ‘gender inequality’.

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3.10: Indicators of Gender Inequality

‘Although no number of targets and indicators can capture the rich diversity and complexity of women’s lives, they help us to monitor the fulfillment of commitments to women’s progress, as well as mobilise support for stronger efforts in this regard ... Assessing the progress of women against agreed targets reveals how much progress there has been – but also how much still remains to be done.’

Noeleen Heyzer, (UNIFEM) 2001

Understanding the ‘indicators of gender inequality’ is a vital step in addressing gender related problems and issues; they explain where, why and how gender inequality arises. These measuring indicators are of great importance, because what is measured is more likely to be prioritised and evidence gathered against indicators can help to identify which gender issues should be taken more seriously. Indicators can be used for advocacy and can help make the case for action by highlighting key issues, backed up with statistics and other evidence.

To measure inequality the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) developed two indicators: the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). The variables used in GDI are similar to those used for the Human Development Index; these being education, health and income. The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) has adopted three indicators: (i) Political participation and decision making power; (ii) Economic participation and decision-making power; and (iii) Power over economic resources.

The GDI attempts to capture achievement in the same set of basic capabilities included in the HDI – life expectancy, educational attainment and income – but adjusts the HDI for gender inequality. The GEM measures gender inequality in key areas of economic and political participation and decision making, such as seats held in parliament, and percentage of managerial positions held by women. The GEM thus differs from the GDI, which is an indicator of gender inequality in basic capabilities.


Table No.3.3: Gender Inequality: Comparisons of GEM, GDI and HDI ranks, with GDP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>GEM</th>
<th>GDI</th>
<th>HDI</th>
<th>Real GDP per capita</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developed/ing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinidad and</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9,760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>7,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>5,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19,510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>1,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>1,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>2,890</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from UNDP, 1995: 41, Table 2.9 (available at <http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/reports/re56.pdf> accessed on April 2, 2011)

Higher GDP does not guarantee greater gender equality. Some developing countries outperform much richer industrial countries in gender equality in political, economic, and professional activities. Progress towards gender equality can be achieved at different income levels and stages of development. For example, Table No.3.3 shows interesting comparisons between Trinidad and Tobago and the UK, Mexico and Japan, and Botswana and France. Despite the significantly lower gross domestic product (GDP) of the developing country, it outperforms the developed country in terms of gender empowerment. Likewise, Mozambique beats the richer Zambia on empowering women.\textsuperscript{177}

The OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) Centre has introduced a new comprehensive data collection on gender inequality, the OECD Gender Institutions and Development (GID) database. It distinguishes twelve single indicators of gender inequality that are grouped into four sub-categories: (i) the

\textsuperscript{177} Heike Wach and Hazel Reeves “Gender and Development: Facts and Figures” available at <http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/reports/re56.pdf> accessed on March 12, 2011

\textsuperscript{*} Purchasing power parity: i.e. the number of units of a country’s currency required to purchase the same representative basket of goods and services as in the US, expressed in dollars for comparison. The GDP of these countries is then converted into these PPP dollars.
prevailing family code; (ii) women’s physical integrity; (iii) women’s civil liberties; and (iv) women’s ownership rights.\textsuperscript{178}

The World Economic Forum’s Gender Gap Index (GGI) also uses a broad range of dimensions and indicators to measure gender inequality. GGI indicators include: (i) Economic participation, (ii) Economic opportunity, (iii) Political empowerment, (iv) Educational attainment (v) Health and wellbeing.\textsuperscript{179}

While the conventional indicators focused on the outcomes of inequality, the SIGI (Social Institutions and Gender Index) measures inequalities based on social institutions like norms, traditions and informal laws. The index of social institutions is a tool for capturing the underlying reasons for the gender gaps in 102 non-OECD countries. The SIGI has introduced 12 indicators on social institutions which are grouped into five categories: Family Code, Physical Integrity, Son Preference, Civil Liberties and Ownership Rights.\textsuperscript{180}

The MDGs (Millennium Developmental Goals) are a set of eight goals – with 18 targets to be measured by 48 quantifiable social, economic and environmental indicators – to be achieved by 2015, reflecting the world’s main development challenges. The focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment in Goal 3 serves as a milestone for the decades of advocacy around the importance of gender equality to human development, as well as being a timely reminder of the policies, actions and resources still needed to achieve equality between and among men and women worldwide.\textsuperscript{181}

Thus, many indicators are being used to measure gender inequality from the time to time. These international and regional gender indices are useful because they allow for cross-national comparisons of gender inequality, and they condense


\textsuperscript{180} <http://www.egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/36009/1/Unit%208.pdf> accessed on March 25, 2011

complex data into clear messages about the extent of gender inequality that prevails worldwide.

3.11: Gender Inequality from ‘Capability Approach’ Perspective

Traditionally gender inequality is often measured in terms of market outcomes, such as disposable income, or the female/male wage differential. Recently, scholars have started to use Amartya Sen’s ‘Capability Approach’ (CA) to analyse, assess and measure aspects of gender inequality, both in developed and developing countries. Sen’s capability approach is a framework to analyse and evaluate poverty, inequality, development and related issues, thereby focusing on what people are effectively able to do and be, instead of their disposable income, consumption and expenditure.182

The core concepts of the capability approach are functionings and capabilities. Functionings are the beings and doings of a person, such as being literate, being in good health, being well-fed, being safe from bodily violence, being well-sheltered, and so forth. Capabilities are a person’s real opportunities to these functionings. Thus, if women is trained and educated and is offered a particular job, and she decides not to take the job, she is said to have the capability of holding this job without having the achieved functioning. If, on the other hand, there is no job in offer for her, she has neither real opportunity (i.e. capability), nor the effective realization (i.e. functioning). Thus, the difference between a capability and a functioning is between the potential versus the realised.183

Sen’s new approach has shifted the focus of gender inequality analysis from income or expenditure to functionings and capabilities. Robeyns has identified three major theoretical advantages in Sen’s capability approach.184

1. Functioning and capabilities are properties of individuals; hence the well being of each person is considered separately. In standard economic

183 Ingrid Robeyns, “Measuring Gender Inequality in Functionings and Capabilities: Findings from the British Household Panel Survey” in Bharati Premananda and Pal Manoranjan (Eds.), Gender Disparity: Manifestations, Causes and Implications, Anmol Publication, New Delhi, 2006, pp.236-237
inequality measurement (focusing on income or expenditure), it is often assumed that household members pool their income and that everyone gets an equal share. But this assumption is not realistic.

2. The capability approach is not limited to the market economy, but takes into account aspects of people’s well-being both in and outside markets. Thus, issues of caring for children, elderly or other relatives and friends, and issues of contributing to one’s community and neighborhood and social networks, can all be integrated in a capability measurement, while they are left out from a financial assessment.

3. Diversity between different groups of people are paid due attention.

One of the chief strengths of Sen’s framework is that it is flexible and exhibits a considerable degree of internal pluralism, which allows researchers to develop and apply it in many different ways. Attempts to apply the capacity approach have mushroomed in recent years. Among other things the capacity approach has been used to investigate poverty, inequality, well-being, social justice, gender, social exclusion, health, disability, child poverty and identity. It has also been related to human needs, human rights and human security as well as development more broadly.\(^{185}\)

3.12: Types of Gender Inequality

Facets of gender colour our life from the day we are born until the day we die. Inequality between women and men can take very many different forms. Indeed, gender inequality is not one homogeneous phenomenon, but a collection of disparate and interlinked problems. In one of his lectures, Amarty Sen has identified seven types of gender inequalities.\(^{186}\)

1. Mortality inequality: In some regions in the world, inequality between women and men directly involves matters of life and death, and takes the brutal form of unusually high mortality rates of women and a consequent preponderance

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of men in the total population, as opposed to the preponderance of women found in societies with little or no gender bias in health care and nutrition.

2. *Natality inequality:* In this type of inequality a preference is given for boys over girls that many male-dominated societies have, gender inequality can manifest itself in the form of the parents wanting the newborn to be a boy rather than a girl. There was a time when this could be no more than a wish (a daydream or a nightmare, depending on one's perspective), but with the availability of modern techniques to determine the gender of the foetus, sex-selective abortion has become common in many countries.

3. *Basic facility inequality:* Even when demographic characteristics do not show much or any anti-female bias, there are other ways in which women can have less than a square deal. There are deficiencies in basic facilities available to women, varying from encouragement to cultivate one's natural talents to fair participation in rewarding social functions of the community.

4. *Special opportunity inequality:* Even when there is relatively little difference in basic facilities including schooling, the opportunities of higher education may be far fewer for young women than for young men. Indeed, gender bias in higher education and professional training can be observed even in some of the richest countries in the world. Sometimes this type of division has been based on the superficially innocuous idea that the respective "provinces" of men and women are just different.

5. *Professional inequality:* In terms of employment as well as promotion in work and occupation, women often face greater handicap than men. A country like Japan may be quite egalitarian in matters of demography or basic facilities, and even, to a great extent, in higher education, and yet progress to elevated levels of employment and occupation seems to be much more problematic for women than for men.

6. *Ownership inequality:* In many societies the ownership of property can also be very unequal. Even basic assets such as homes and land may be very asymmetrically shared. The absence of claims to property can not only reduce the voice of women, but also make it harder for women to enter and flourish in commercial, economic and even some social activities.

7. *Household inequality:* There are often enough basic inequalities in gender relations within the family or the household, which can take many different
forms. Even in cases in which there are no overt signs of anti-female bias in, say, survival or son-preference or education, or even in promotion to higher executive positions, the family arrangements can be quite unequal in terms of sharing the burden of housework and child care.

### 3.13: Socialising Institutions on Gender Inequality

The term "gender" is used to describe a set of qualities and behaviours expected from men and women by their societies. A person's social identity is formed by these expectations. These expectations stem from the idea that certain qualities, behaviour, characteristics, needs and roles are ‘natural' for men, while certain other qualities and roles are ‘natural' for women. Gender is not biological – girls and boys are not born knowing how they should look, dress, speak, behave, think or react. Their "gendered" masculine and feminine identities are constructed through the process of socialisation, which prepares them for the social roles they are expected to play. The different sexes are socialized by institutions, such as family, school, church, workplace, etc. These socializing institutions determine the attitudes society forms about men and women. Examining these institutions assists in helping understand the attitudes that determine gender inequality.\(^{187}\)

**Family:**

Family is the first institution that one is born into and provides a strong foundation for attitudes that individuals will develop. Historically, some roles have been defined as male or female, but have changed with time. Household work is often considered the domain of women, and girls are trained and expected to perfect their domestic skills while boys are encouraged to experiment with tools. This socialisation process shapes and conditions different approaches to life that boys and girls will adopt. Family governance also includes decisions over intra-household resource allocation, inheritance and endowments. It is here where gender relationships of unequal power can have the most day to day impact on women - particularly for poor women and those who are not employed in income-generating activities outside the home.

**Workplace:**

The division of labor that starts at home extends to the workplace, where women are often expected to perform different functions than men. A perception of the man being a head of the household can also affect hiring policies and decisions in the workplace. When competing for employment, a man may have a greater chance of being offered a full time position than a woman, especially if she is of childbearing age. Women are often discriminated against not because of their competence, but on the basis of the perception of possible family-related disruption to the employment, such as maternity leave. As a result, many women may be employed as part-time workers and in lower paid positions. Less demanding responsibilities in the workplace could be viewed as a positive form of engagement because it frees up the time to attend to the needs of the family.

**Religion:**

Since religion is often the source of cultural beliefs about leadership, authority and values, it can offer a rationale for explaining cultural constraints on the role of women. According to some cultures, women should be subservient to their husbands. Decision-making at home or in religious organizations is often reserved for men based on this tenet. The religious requirement for men to protect their families, including their wives, often excludes women from the right to own or control the use of family property. In some respect, protection of the family by the head of the household is in the interest of the protected, however, it denies women an opportunity to acquire decision-making experience, which, in turn, acts as a further hurdle to women taking up decision-making positions within the family or in society more broadly.

**3.14: Gender Inequality around the World**

"Gender inequality holds back the growth of individuals, the development of countries and the evolution of societies, to the disadvantage of both men and women."

State of World Population Report, 2000
Gender inequality is a pervasive phenomenon in many countries all over the world. Even a cursory glance at the indicators of well-being like literacy, infant mortality, life expectancy, primary, secondary or college enrollment rates, differentiated along gender lines, makes this amply clear. World Bank (2001) reports that gender inequality in various forms is still prevalent around the world. According to the report in most of underdeveloped countries, women have still not been equal to men in terms of legal, social, and economic rights since more than one decade. The gender gaps in terms of inequality and poverty have widened in those countries because women cannot access to and control over resources, benefit from economic opportunities, and influence their power in political arena. Furthermore, not only women bear the costs of inequalities but also those costs broadly spread across society, and harm everyone. Therefore, gender inequality is one of the most important developing topics for many underdeveloped countries.\(^{188}\)

**Figure No.1: Index of Gender Inequality**

![Index of Gender Inequality](http://www.eab.ege.edu.tr/pdf/3/C1-S1-2-M3.pdf) accessed on May 9th, 2011

Using an index of gender inequality, Figure No.1 illustrates the persistence of gender inequality in basic rights in every region of the world, including the developed OECD countries. It should be noted that gender equality in basic rights tends to be

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weaker in the poorer regions of the world. This indicates that gender equality tends to improve with economic development. \(^{189}\)

The *Human Development Report 1995* provides some concrete illustrations of the inequality of women and men under the law in many countries: \(^{190}\)

- **Right to nationality.** In much of West Asia and North Africa, women married to foreigners cannot transfer citizenship to their husbands, though men in similar situations can.
- **Right to manage property.** Married women are under the permanent guardianship of their husbands and have no right to manage property in Botswana, Chile, Lesotho, Namibia, and Swaziland.
- **Right to income-earning opportunities.** Husbands can restrict a wife’s employment outside the home in Bolivia, Guatemala, and Syria.
- **Right to travel.** In some Arab countries, a husband’s consent is necessary for a wife to obtain a passport, but not *vice versa*. Women cannot leave the country without their husband’s permission in Iran.

In many parts of the world, women receive less attention and health care than men do, and particularly girls often receive very much less support than boys. As a result of this gender bias, the mortality rates of females often exceed those of males in these countries. The concept of ‘missing women’ was devised to give some idea of the enormity of the phenomenon of women’s adversity in mortality by focussing on the women who are simply not there, due to unusually high mortality compared with male mortality rates. In some regions in the world, inequality between women and men directly involves matters of life and death, and takes the brutal form of unusually high mortality rates of women and a consequent preponderance of men in the total population, as opposed to the preponderance of women found in societies with little or no gender bias in health care and nutrition.


Mortality inequality has been observed extensively in North Africa and in Asia, including China and South Asia.\textsuperscript{191}

Thus, gender inequality exists in almost all spheres and stages of life starting from parental stage to the stage of old age. It is observed in developing as well as in the developed countries. But the form and nature of difference may vary depending on the regional characteristics, social customs or religious beliefs.

3.15: Gender Inequality in Indian Context

“No nation, no society, no community can hold its head high and claim to be part of civilized world if it condones the practice of discriminating against one half of humanity represented by women.”

– Dr. Manmohan Singh

The contemporary study of gender in India arose within a specific socio-historical context: the establishment of a nation-state in 1947 after two centuries of British colonialism. The nationalist movement to overthrow the British included a significant component of resistance at the level of symbolic representation and formal knowledge construction, and these knowledge systems inspire some of the work on gender. Post independence social change driven by ideas of development within the current phase of globalisation, in which state and international economic and political interests often intersect to erode local autonomy, has spawned work from Marxist, socialist and a variety of other gender perspectives.\textsuperscript{192}

While feminists often refer to western societies as ‘patriarchal’, Indian society may be more aptly termed as ‘patrifocal’. ‘Patrifocality’ refers to the kinship and family structures and ideology that give precedence to men over women.\textsuperscript{193} The term ‘patrifocality’ is preferred to ‘patriarchy’ for Indian society because, unlike the system implied in patriarchy, it is not a monolithic system in which males predominates in all settings and social contexts. Rather, ‘Patrifocality’ is specific to an intensively

\textsuperscript{191} ibid
\textsuperscript{192} Purkayastha Bandana, Mangala Subramaniam and Desai Manisha, “The Study of Gender in India: A Partial Review”, \textit{Gender and Society}, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2003, pp. 503-524
\textsuperscript{193} Subrahmanyan, L., \textit{Women Scientists in the Third World: The Indian Experience}. Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1998
agricultural social context. It highlights the complex linkage between the hierarchical family structure and male dominance, and emphasizes family purity through the control of marriage and female sexuality. The most significant features of a patrifocal society are: (a) the subordination of individual to family (a general subordination of individual goals and interests to the welfare of the family and kin group); (b) patrilineal inheritance and patrilocal descent and residence that reinforce the centrality of males (for example, a daughter shifts her residence and allegiance to her husband’s family after marriage); (c) gender differentiated family roles (women’s nurturing role and domestic roles versus men’s economic roles); (d) gender-differentiated authority structures that give males of the same generation authority over socially equivalent females; (e) the regulation of female behaviour and the marriage system (characterized by family control of marriage arrangements); and (f) an ideology of appropriate female behaviour emphasizing chastity, obedience, domesticity and adaptability.\textsuperscript{194}

The ‘Global Gender Gap Index’, introduced by the World Economic Forum, aims to be a tool for benchmarking and tracking global gender-based inequalities on economic, political and education-based criteria. The Report includes the survey of 128 countries, representing over 90% of the world’s population. Table No.3.4 brings home GGI rankings to India in its economic, political and educational criterion.

### Table No.3.4: Educational Attainment, Political Empowerment, Economic Participation and Opportunity in India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Gender Gap Index</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Attainment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Rate</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment in Primary</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment in Secondary</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment in Tertiary</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political Empowerment</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in Parliament</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women in Ministerial Position</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Years with a Female Head of State (in last 50 years)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Force Participation</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage Equality for similar</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{194} Gupta Namrata and Sharma A. K., “Gender Inequality in the Work Environment at Institutes of Higher Learning in Science and Technology in India”, Work Employment Society, Volume.17, No.4, 2003, pp. 597–616
Table No.3.4 throws light on Gender Gap in ‘Educational Attainment’, ‘Political Empowerment’ and ‘Economic Participation and Opportunity’ in Indian context. In educational attainment with 0.829 score India has 116th ranking. It is evident from the figures that the Indian women have a long way to go; hardly 48 percent of Indian women are literates. The enrollment in different levels of education shows their poor performance. In case of ‘Political Empowerment’, Indians occupy 21st place with 0.227 score. In the year 1950 Indian women received the right to vote, but their participation in Parliament and Ministerial position is negligible i.e. only 8 percent and 3 percent respectively. Indian women’s achievement in heading a state is satisfactory. They have 4th ranking in this matter. If we consider ‘Economic Participation and Opportunity’ with 0.398 score India stands at 122nd rank. It is evident that, in receiving equal wage for similar work Indian women have got somewhat better position. But the remaining three indicators of Gender Gap show their poor performance.

### 3.16: Social Costs of Gender Inequality

The social costs of gender inequality are large, though difficult to assess quantitatively. Gender-based violence can have a lasting psychological impact on its victims, lowering women’s self-esteem, productivity and wages and destroying marriages – with all of the costs that children ultimately pay. It can lead to depression, post-traumatic stress and alcohol and substance abuse. Violence before and during pregnancy also has a serious health consequence: miscarriage, premature delivery and low birth weight. Violence against women imposes financial costs – counseling fees, medical expenses and legal bills. Estimates for the region are not readily available, but in Canada the costs are about $900 million a year, indicating their potential magnitude.

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About a million Asian children, mostly girls between 5 and 15, are lured or forced to work in the commercial sex market every year. The psychological damage lasts a lifetime and perhaps into the next generation, with resentments passed from mother to child. Diminished self-esteem and aspirations restrict opportunities, leaving women feeling trapped and helpless. The key role of the mother in household affairs – particularly in children’s health and education – means that her education and aspirations can shape a stimulating home. This makes women an important defence against all the costs of shortcomings in children’s education: crime, prostitution and violence.

A mother’s illness and death deals a powerful blow to families, especially children. In nuclear families, in cities and among the middle class, widowed husbands find it especially difficult to manage household affairs without their wife. More often, girls take on the mother’s role. The death of a mother increases 3-10 times the chance that her children below age 10 will die within two years.

3.17: Solution to Gender Inequality

Gender inequality is a problem that has a solution. Promoting ‘Gender Equality’ is a simple solution for reducing ‘Gender Inequality’. Two decades of innovation, experience, and activism have shown that achieving the goal of greater gender equality and women’s empowerment is possible. Many government and non-government organisations are working hard to achieve gender inequality at global level. What follows provides a brief outline of a few such important organisations.

a. Since its inception, ‘United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation’ (UNESCO) has endeavored to promote equality between men and women through action in its fields of competence. While its primary focus has been on providing literacy and education programmes for women and girls, much attention has also been given to developing policy guidelines and advisory services to Member States on how to overcome discrimination of women and girls in areas of the Organisation's competence. UNESCO was


thus among the first to cope already in the 1980s with the complex issues of prostitution and trafficking of women and girls, the portrayal of women in the mass media, seminal work on eradication of sexist stereotypes in school textbooks, violence in the mass media, and other. Work on these topics was often of ground-breaking pioneering importance, but was later, unfortunately, placed on the sidelines or even abandoned.198

b. Often described as the international bill of rights for women, ‘Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women’ (CEDAW) provides for women’s equal enjoyment with men of civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights. CEDAW is the most important international normative instrument which guarantees women’s equality. Initiated in 1967 in the form of a General Assembly Declaration, it was adopted in 1979 as a convention that eventually came into force in 1981. CEDAW establishes a basic set of principles that are meant to serve as a model for the elimination of gender discrimination at national level. It is unique in establishing legal obligations for state parties to ensure that discrimination against women does not occur in the public sphere or the private sphere.199

c. The United Nations coordinated an ‘International Conference on Population and Development’ (ICPD) in Cairo, Egypt from 5–13 September 1994. Its resulting Program of Action is the steering document for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). According to the official ICPD release, the conference delegates achieved consensus on the following four qualitative and quantitative goals: (a) Universal education: Universal primary education in all countries by 2015. Urge countries to provide wider access to women for secondary and higher level education as well as vocational and technical training; (b) Reduction of infant and child mortality: Countries should strive to reduce infant and under-5 child mortality rates by one-third or to 50-70 deaths per 1000 by the year 2000. By 2015 all countries should aim to achieve a rate below 35 per 1,000 live births and under-five mortality rate below 45 per

1,000; (c) Reduction of maternal mortality: A reduction by ½ the 1990 levels by 2000 and ½ of that by 2015. Disparities in maternal mortality within countries and between geographical regions, socio-economic and ethnic groups should be narrowed, and (d) Access to reproductive and sexual health services including family planning: Family-planning counseling, pre-natal care, safe delivery and post-natal care, prevention and appropriate treatment of infertility, prevention of abortion and the management of the consequences of abortion, treatment of reproductive tract infections, sexually transmitted diseases and other reproductive health conditions; and education, counseling, as appropriate, on human sexuality, reproductive health and responsible parenthood. Services regarding HIV/AIDS, breast cancer, infertility, and delivery should be made available.200

d. The United Nations convened the ‘Fourth World Conference on Women’ on 4-15 September 1995 in Beijing, China. The principal themes were the advancement and empowerment of women in relation to women’s human rights, women and poverty, women and decision-making, the girl-child, violence against women and other areas of concern. The overriding message of the Fourth World Conference on Women was that the issues addressed in the Platform for Action are global and universal. Deeply entrenched attitudes and practices perpetuate inequality and discrimination against women, in public and private life, in all parts of the world. Accordingly, implementation requires changes in values, attitudes, practices and priorities at all levels. The Conference signaled a clear commitment to international norms and standards of equality between men and women; that measures to protect and promote the human rights of women and girl-children as an integral part of universal human rights must underlie all action; and that institutions at all levels must be reoriented to expedite implementation. Governments and the UN agreed to promote the "gender mainstreaming" in policies and programmes.201

e. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are an integrated set of eight goals and 18 time-bound targets for extending the benefits of globalization to the world’s poorest citizens. Millennium Development Goal 3 is ‘to promote

gender equality and empower women’. The goal has one target:’ to eliminate
gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and
to all levels of education no later than 2015’. To ensure that Goal 3 is met by
2015, the task force has identified seven strategic priorities. These seven
interdependent priorities are the minimum necessary to empower women and
alter the historical legacy of female disadvantage that remains in most
societies of the world: 1. Strengthen opportunities for post primary education
for girls while simultaneously meeting commitments to universal primary
education; 2. Guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights; 3. Invest in
infrastructure to reduce women’s and girls’ time burdens; 4. Guarantee
women’s and girls’ property and inheritance rights; 5. Eliminate gender
inequality in employment by decreasing women’s reliance on informal
employment, closing gender gaps in earnings, and reducing occupational
segregation; 6. Increase women’s share of seats in national parliaments and
local governmental bodies; 7. Combat violence against girls and women.

f. ‘United Nations Development Fund for Women’ (UNIFEM) is the
women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical
assistance to innovative programmes and strategies to foster women's
empowerment and gender equality. Placing the advancement of women's
human rights at the centre of all of its efforts, UNIFEM focuses its activities
on four strategic areas: reducing feminized poverty; ending violence against
women; reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls; and
achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace and
war. Within the UN system, UNIFEM is a source of innovative programming
and policy approaches to achieving gender equality.

g. The ‘Bureau for Gender Equality’, which reports directly to the Director-
General of the ILO, is the Organization's central gender unit. Its mandate is to
promote equality between women and men throughout the organization. The
Bureau acts as advisor, catalyst, advocate and communicator for
mainstreaming a gender perspective in all ILO policies, programmes and

202 "Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women” available at

203 "Taking Gender Inequality Seriously” available at
activities. This includes supporting and coordinating implementation of the ILO's Action Plan on Gender Equality and Mainstreaming which also encompasses the first Office-wide Gender Audit, managed by the Bureau. The Bureau for Gender Equality advocates ILO policies, instruments, work and activities on gender and gender equality. It disseminates information about gender issues in the world of work to ILO staff, constituents, and the international community. It acts as link in relations concerning gender issues with the UN system, NGOs, and academic and women's organizations. In addition, the Bureau acts as liaison with the ILO Governing Body concerning gender issues within the organization.²⁰⁴

h. Within UNICEF, the **Gender and Development (GAD)** Unit works to promote the implementation of UNICEF’s policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through gender mainstreaming. To this end, the GAD Unit develops guidelines and training materials that are used to increase the capacity of UNICEF-assisted programmes around the world to integrate a gender perspective into all areas of work. Involving men and boys in the fight against gender inequality and violence against women and girls is one important approach of the work towards gender equality. Addressing gender discrimination also requires tackling all forms of violence against women and girls, which is not only one of the most serious, but arguably the most common form of gender discrimination globally. The GAD unit has recently commissioned studies in both these areas.²⁰⁵

Thus, there are numerous organisations which are working hard to fill the gender gap. Without leadership and political will, however, the world will fall short of taking these practical steps—and meeting the goal. Because gender inequality is deeply rooted in entrenched attitudes, societal institutions, and market forces, political commitment at the highest international and national levels is essential to institute the policies that can trigger social change and to allocate the resources necessary for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

### 3.18: Elimination of Gender Inequality: Constitutional and Legal Provision by Indian Government


Gender inequality is found in varying degrees in most societies around the world, and India is no exception. Now, it is worldwide recognised that unless and until all types of inequalities, including gender inequality, are removed there will be no absolute development. Several measures have been taken by the Indian government in order to reduce gender inequality and to improve the status of women. These measures are broadly classified as (a) Constitutional Provisions and (b) Legal Provisions.

(a) Constitutional Provisions: The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution’s Preamble, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution of India has made several provisions to protect the interests of women. A few important provisions for women are as follows: 206

- **Article 14**: It ensures gender equality by conferring equal rights and opportunities on men and women in the political, economic and social spheres.
- **Article 15**: It prohibits discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of sex, religion, race, caste, etc.
- **Article 16**: It deals with equality of opportunity.
- **Article 39**: It contains the principles of policy to be followed by the state for securing economic justice.
- **Article 42**: It directs the state to make provisions for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.
- **Article 51**: It imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen to renounce the practices derogatory to the dignity of women.
- **Article 325**: It guarantees political equality to women.

(b) Legal Provisions: In order to support the Constitutional provisions the Government of India has enacted many women specific and women related laws and legislations. A few women specific legislations and laws are: 207 The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956; The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961; The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961; Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986; The

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There is no doubt these ‘constitutional’ and ‘legal’ provisions have definitely proven beneficial to half of the population in India. The evidence is everywhere; the voice of women is increasingly heard in Parliament, courts and in the streets. While women in the West had to fight for over a century to get some of their basic rights, like the right to vote, the Constitution of India gave women equal rights with men from the beginning. Unfortunately, women in this country are mostly unaware of their rights because of illiteracy and the oppressive traditions. Hence, they are not able to utilize these constitutional and legal provisions properly.

3.19: Conclusion

In this chapter an attempt is made to study a few aspects that associated with ‘status of women’ and ‘gender inequality’. It is observed that in every religion woman is praised and worshiped as goddess, but unfortunately in some part of the world she is not treated even as a ‘human being’. The dual attitude towards women has assigned her an inferior position in society. Women’s share is significantly less than men in all the matters that can be measured in economic and social terms such as, education, employment, ownership, income, life expectancy, etc. The unequal distribution of
resources between the sexes leads to ‘gender inequality’. At the same time we note that of late concentrated efforts are made by government and non-governmental organisations to improve gender equality. The results of their efforts have started bearing fruits all over the world.