

Gender Inequality and Development in Indian Scenario: Consequences, Causes, Challenges and Cures

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Abstract:- Gender is an important aspect of social and economic stratification. Regardless of one's socioeconomic class, there are systematic gender differences in material well-being, although the degree of inequality varies across countries and over time. The importance of gender equality, women's empowerment and the realization of women's rights in achieving development has been increasingly recognized in recent decades and it has also been realized in India. Women play an important role in every section of the society. A woman equally contributes to development of a nation as a man does. Thus, linking gender inequality and development is important for several reasons and this paper tries to highlight some of its reasons. This paper is an attempt to analyze the role of gender inequality in India, with specific focus on issues that might be expected to be the most critical for overall development of the country.

Keywords- *Gender Inequality, development, women, discrimination, India.*

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of the problem:

Gender Inequality, to a great extent, reflects the extent of socio-economic development. In recent years, we have seen that many developed countries have laid a lot of emphasis on the concept of Gender inequality. However, in order to have policy relevance, bringing out an indicator of gender inequality in India may help to draw government's attention to gender inequality and the policies needed to reduce it. We can also expect it to bring an answer to the question that whether greater gender equality would enhance growth and development. Over a period of time we have seen that achievements in India's developmental process have been significant. But still a lot of things are yet to achieve and one of the main thing is Gender equality. For more than two decades, the goal of reducing gender inequality has held a prominent place in international organizations and in national strategy statements. Millennium Development Goal 3 reflects the global attention to the issue of gender inequality and has been providing the impetus for governments to eliminate gender inequality in primary and secondary education by 2005 and in all levels by 2015(Gender Inequality, UN).

1.2. Objectives:

The prime objectives of the study are as follows:

- To understand and analyze gender inequality in India.
- To study gender inequality in education, health and employment and to some extent to link the gender relations to the development of the nation.
- To suggest cures to reduce gender inequality in India.

1.3. Methodology:

1.3.1. Data collection- For proper understanding of a place or about an aspect some methods are essential. There are several methods to study about the earth's surface. Due to shortage of time and manpower, the method applied for the paper is Secondary Data Collection method. For the present work, data for the study have been collected from the Statistical Abstract of India and other related documents published by Census of India, and from other world reports on India. The comparative analysis has been done for the years to understand the demographic changes and gender inequality for India. In the context of demographic changes for India the main focus of our study has been to understand gender inequality from the available data on education, health and employment and to correlate it with development.

1.3.2. Data processing and analysis- The data after collection has to be processed and analyzed in accordance with the outline laid down for the purpose at the time of developing the search plan. In the present study, the secondary data collected were processed by using cartographic and statistical technique. With the help of bar graph, pie diagram, line graph etc. The variable was found out in the form of information. With the

computation of data, interpretation and analysis is been made, compared between the decadal years in respect of change in literacy, population growth etc.

1.3.3. Study Area- India is a land of diversities located at an extension of 8°4'N to 37°6'N latitude and 68°7'E to 97°25'E longitude. It is land to the second highest population of the world with a female population of 48.5% within the country according to 2011 Census report, India. India is a country of varied cultures, religion, tribes, communities etc. In such diverse society, the study of status of women is very much complicated. In a developing nation like India, women's lower status is reflected not only in their work being underpaid, un-recognized, but also in their limited access to productive resources and support services such as health and education. The focus of this paper is on issues concerning gender disparities in the context of India so as to examine the nature of prevalent discrimination and biases against women.

1.4. Review of Literature:

The first review on the relevant work is on the "World survey on the role of women in Development 2014- Gender equality and Sustainable Development." This paper of U.N. highlights various role women plays all around the globe on sustainable development and how women can contribute a lot towards it. It says that linking gender equality and sustainable development is important for several reasons. First, it is a moral and ethical imperative: achieving gender equality and realizing the human rights, dignity and capabilities of diverse groups of women is a central requirement of a just and sustainable world. Second, it is critical to redress the disproportionate impact of economic, social and environmental shocks and stresses on women and girls, which undermine the enjoyment of their human rights and their vital roles in sustaining their families and communities. Third, and most significantly, it is important to build up women's agency and capabilities to create better synergies between gender equality and sustainable development outcomes.

Another relevant abstract that is reviewed was "Development and Gender Equality: Consequences, Causes, Challenges and Cures" by Anne Mikkola of University of Helsinki and Carrie Miles of Center for the Economic Study of Religion at George Mason University, Institute for the Studies of Religion at Baylor University. This paper reviews economics literature on the relationship between gender equality and economic development. Stylized facts indicate that women's roles are, although restricted, in the midst of quite dramatic change, both in developing and in developed countries. Results of both empirical and theoretical research, explanatory models and studies exploring both forces that challenge and those that facilitate greater equality are presented. The literature covers issues in gender inequality and economic development as they relate to: values and religion, cultural restrictions and roles, legal and inheritance laws and practices, education of girls, resource allocation within marriage patterns, labor market access, education, fertility, gender specific market failures in finance, and power in the political decision making.

II. GENDER INEQUALITY IN INDIA

2.1. Role and position of Women in present India:

Women, one half of the nation, are still under social bondage and have suffered greatly in Indian history. They have suffered from lack of social liberty. They have faced social evils like child marriages, polygamy, and enforced widowhood. Women still are much less educated than their male counterparts. As mothers, women represent the unfathomable depths of human sentiments. It is really impossible to describe individually the various roles women play to make the world better. The whole family revolves around the efforts of the women, so also the whole society and the nation.

The position of women in society is not exactly what it should be. In the social and cultural fields, they have lost their position. In the economic sphere of activity, though they play a major role, their contribution is not recognized, and as a class they continue to occupy a secondary position. Unfortunately, their helplessness in different walks of life has led to their exploitation at almost every step. Lots of women in the society are subjected to cruelty and exploitation. What is most degrading for women is that they are not only being neglected in the social milieu but are subjected to harsh cruelties and atrocities as a class. These atrocities are of many types ranging from mental torture to psychological assaults, which often result in murder or suicide. Deprived of all education, confined within four walls of the house, seeing little of the world and knowing little of it, our women are not better than slaves.

2.2. Gender Inequality and Development:

Development- a nice word to hear involves various factors. Development of a nation in a complete sense means the overall upliftment of the entire population as a whole. It means each sector of the country has to develop equally. In the past years everyone is saying that India has developed a lot. But is it true? How can we say that only based on some values such as GDP and GNP? Yes it is true we as a nation have achieved a lot in

the past years but at the same time we cannot ignore the fact that half of the population of the country specially the women are deprived of many things. And the entire country can achieve the pace of development only when these section of the society i.e. the women begins to equally contribute to the nation. For this it is very important that all possible steps must be taken to eradicate gender inequality.

There is growing evidence of the synergies between gender equality, on the one hand, and economic, social and environmental sustainability, on the other. For example, when women have greater voice and participation in public administration, public resources are more likely to be allocated towards investments. Yet this is also a time of opportunity. There are many examples around the world of alternative development pathways that move towards sustainability with gender equality. Gender equality and development can reinforce each other in powerful ways. Achieving gender equality and realizing the human rights, dignity and capabilities of diverse groups of women is a central requirement of a just and sustainable world. Increasingly, women's full participation is recognized as central to policymaking. For example, their decisive involvement in community forest management bodies yields positive outcomes for both forest sustainability and gender equality (Agarwal, 2010). Further, certain aspects of gender equality, such as female education and women's share of employment, can have a positive impact on economic growth, although this impact is dependent on the nature of growth strategies, the structure of the economy, the sectoral composition of women's employment and labour market segregation, among other factors (Kabeer and Natali, 2013).

Following are some facts which show gender inequality in India and how it affects the overall development process:-

2.2.1. Social discrimination of the girl child:-



Figure.2.1.

The girl child often faces discrimination from the earliest stages of life, through childhood and into adulthood. Her low status is reflected in the denial of fundamental needs and rights and in such harmful attitudes and practices as preference for sons, early marriage, female genital mutilation, domestic abuse, incest, sexual exploitation, discrimination, less food and less access to education. Welfare and efficiency are the two ends of the spectrum of the discourse on development and women.

The girl child in India embodies both children and adolescents and constitutes more than a quarter of the country's population. Although the principle of gender equality and gender equity is basic to Indian thinking, girls in our country are still deprived of equal opportunities for survival and development. Unfortunately this begins early in life rather before birth. The girl child in India is subjected to inequality, disparity and neglect. Born into indifference and reared on neglect, the girl child is caught in a web of cultural practices and prejudices that hamper her development both physically and mentally.

Discrimination against girls actually starts in the womb. Many parents have aborted female fetuses because society places a high emphasis on giving birth to male children. Still in this modern age in many families son preference is going on. Girls are often denied the right to be healthy. The infant mortality rate of girls is higher than those of the boys. Girls are often more susceptible to all types of violence.

2.2.2. Health:-

India has made considerable progress in social and economic development in recent decades. However, improvements in women's health have lagged behind gains in other areas. India is among the few countries where males significantly outnumber females, and its maternal mortality rates in rural areas are among the world's highest. Females experience more episodes of illness than males and are less likely to receive medical treatment before illness is well advanced. Women, especially the poor women, are often trapped in a cycle of ill health exhausted by childbearing and hard physical labour.

The cultural norms that particularly affect women's health are the attitudes to marriage, age of marriage, the value attached to fertility and the sex of the child, the pattern of the family organization and the ideal role demanded of the women by social conventions. In India, most women suffer from malnutrition. Malnutrition can be a factor in maternity-related complications and infant deaths. Undernourished mothers are

more likely to have undernourished children. Indian women have high mortality rates, particularly during childhood and in their reproductive years. Unwanted pregnancies terminated by unsafe abortions also have negative consequences on women's health. Maternal mortality rate is also high in India. In a study conducted by the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), it was found that 37% of all pregnant women in India received no prenatal care during their pregnancies. According to NFHS, Indian children, especially girls, are the most malnourished in the world.

2.2.3. Infanticide and Female Foeticide :-

Female foeticide and infanticide are the most hideous outcome of sex discrimination. Son preference a deep-rooted social value combined with poverty, illiteracy and low status of girls are among the few of the factors associated with the female mortality before and at birth. Female foeticide- a practice of denying birth of a female child-though prevalent in many parts of the country, remain largely invisible.

According to a recent report by the UNICEF up to 50 million girls and women are missing from India's population as a result of systematic gender discrimination in India. In most countries in the world, there are approximately 105 female births for every 100 males. In India, there are less than 93 women for every 100 men in the population. The accepted reason for such a disparity is the practice of female infanticide and female foeticide in India is mainly the costs involved with the raising of a girl, end eventually providing her an appropriate marriage and dowry, was the single most important factor in allowing acceptance of the murder at birth in India. Female infanticide is leading to a serious imbalance in the sex ratio in the country.

The ratio of female to male population in India has been low. As per Census data, sex ratio of women to per thousand men is as given below:-

TABLE 2.1: SEX RATIO OF WOMEN TO PER THOUSAND MEN

| YEAR | SEX RATIO |
|------|-----------|
| 1901 | 927 |
| 1951 | 946 |
| 1961 | 641 |
| 1971 | 930 |
| 1981 | 933 |
| 1991 | 927 |
| 2001 | 933 |
| 2011 | 940 |

In the above table it is clear that the ratio of female to male population in India has been low for a long time and this has been declining since 1901. According to 1991 census it declined sharply again and touched the lowest ever recorded 927. The growing female infanticide in the rural India might be a cause for this. But the 2001 census shows the modest increase (933) which is a good sign but nothing in comparison to 946 of 1951 census. The census 2001 comes up with an alarm of the sharp decline in sex ratio among the children in the zero-six age group. In this category the country's sex ratio has declined from 945 (1901) to 927 (2001).

2.2.4. Education:-

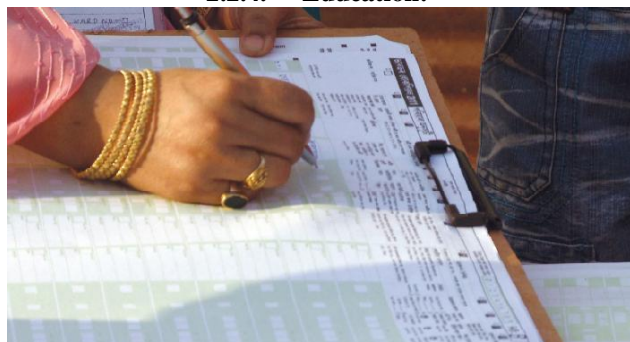


Figure . 2.2.

Education is the right of each and every child despite of gender. Education is the main factor that contributes to the overall development of a nation. For a nation to grow one must make assure that everyone in the country have got proper education. Only then we can say a country to be developed. Over the past decades there have been large and successful efforts to extend primary education to all children, including girls in India.

But despite of such efforts gender inequality can be seen in matters of education. A large number of girls in India have not even seen a school in their life. Many societies think that girls are not meant to go to school. According to them they are only meant to do household works. With such thinking how can we think that our country will become develop. UN has taken various steps to promote education to everyone around the globe. And it is our duty too that we must make every girl in our country to provide education.

Little girls face the debilitating discrimination of all few chances of attaining any education. Either girls are not sent to school or at an early age their education is discontinued. In India, very conspicuous gender disparities persist in all educational indicators, especially with regard to enrolment and retention at the primary, upper primary and higher levels of school education. The situation is much worse in rural and tribal areas due to social attitudes, poor access to education and family-oriented role and responsibilities of the girl child. Girls form more than half of the illiterate children in the age group of 5-9 years. Although girls' enrollment at various levels of school education has improved appreciably, girls account for only 43.2% of enrollment at the primary stage and 39% at the upper primary stage. The incidence of dropout and stagnation for girls is much higher than that of boys at primary and upper primary stage. It is estimated that every 10 girls who enter class 1st, only 6 reach to class 5th. Access to education continues to be a major problem especially for rural girls. In India the literacy rate of women is much lower than men because boys receive more schooling than girls. There are parts of India where the literacy rate of women today is as low as 3 percent. So stark is the gender inequality in India that it is one of the 43 countries in the world where male literacy rate are at least 15 percent higher than female rates. As per the census of 2011, an effective literacy rate for men was 82.14% whereas for women it was 65.46% Educational deprivation is intimately associated with poverty. The UNICEF Executive Director Mr. Carol Bellamy says; "No country has ever emerged from poverty without giving priority to education."(Indian Currents, 13 June 2004).

Low female literacy rate means an overall sluggish growth of India, as it impacts every arena of the development. India is struggling hard to stabilize its growing population through family planning programs. But if females are illiterate, then this has a direct and negative impact on these initiatives.

When a girl or a woman is not educated, it is not only she who suffers but the entire family has to bear the consequences of her illiteracy. It has been found out that illiterate women face more hardships in life than literate ones. They have high levels of fertility as well as mortality; they suffer from malnutrition and all other related health problems. In one of the surveys, it has been found out that infant mortality is inversely related to mother's educational level. In such a scenario not only women but their kids also go through the same conditions. She, who does not know the importance of education in life, does not emphasize the same for her kids. This hampers the family as well as the nation's progress as a whole.

Lack of education means lack of awareness. Illiterate women are not aware of their rights. They know nothing about initiatives taken by the government for their welfare. Illiterate women keep on struggling hard and bear harshness of life, family and even their husbands.

TABLE. 2.2.:-

| Census Year | Persons | Males | Females | Male-Female gap in literacy rate |
|-------------|---------|-------|---------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1951 | 18.33 | 27.16 | 8.86 | 18.30 |
| 1961 | 28.3 | 40.4 | 15.35 | 25.05 |
| 1971 | 34.45 | 45.96 | 21.97 | 23.98 |
| 1981 | 43.57 | 56.38 | 29.76 | 26.62 |
| 1991 | 52.21 | 64.13 | 39.29 | 24.84 |
| 2001 | 64.83 | 75.26 | 53.67 | 21.59 |
| 2011 | 74.04 | 82.14 | 65.46 | 16.68 |

SOURCE- National Commission on Population.

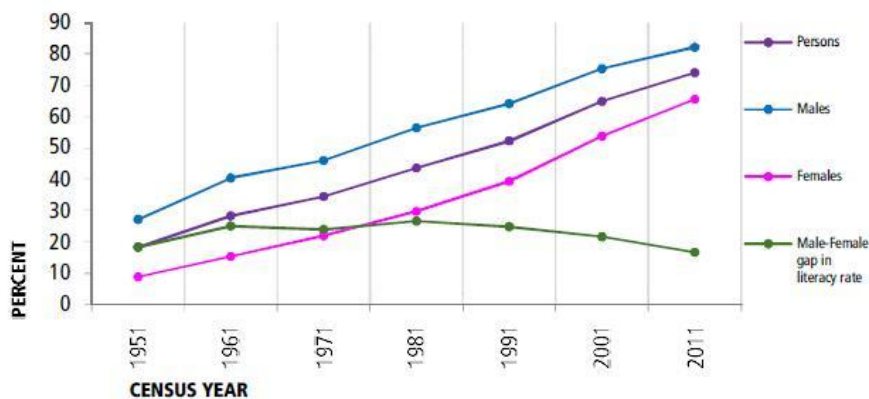


Figure . 2.3.
SOURCE- National Commission on Population

2.2.5. Employment:-



Figure 2.4.

Gender inequality can also be seen in case of employment. Women in India are primarily responsible for child care and household responsibilities. The size and composition of female labour force are a reflection of their overall submerged socio-economic status. A majority of women are to be found in the vast rural and urban unorganized sector. According to an Estimate by the National Commission on Self-Employed women, 94% of the total female workforce operates within this highly exploited sector. Employment in this sector is characterized by low pay, long works of trade unions/organizations to facilitate the mobilization of workers and knit them into a conscious workforce. This is all due to varied nature of occupation in this sector, inadequate legislation and ineffective enforcement of legal safeguards to protect these workers, particularly in regulating their work conditions. Due to various prevailing social relations between men and women as well as the structure of the economy women lack the opportunity to acquire skills and training, which could facilitate occupational shifts. Since women have to bear the major burden of domestic chores, which in poor household is time-consuming and labour intensive, they do not have the time and opportunity to acquire skills and training for better jobs.

On the other the ‘organized sector’ accounts for approximately 10% of the female labour force. Employment opportunities in the governmental and public sectors and the private corporate sector are limited in view of the general constraints on resources for major expansion and dependence on the dictates of market mechanisms, which are prejudicial to women.

The status of women is intimately connected with their economic status, which in turn, depends upon rights, roles and opportunity for the participation in economic activities. The economic status of women is now accepted as an indicator of a society’s stage of development. However, all development does not result in improving women’s economic activities. Pattern of women’s activities are affected by prevailing social ideology and are also linked with the stage of economic development

2.2.6. Violence against women:-

We are talking about things like development, modernization etc. but still half of the women in India are going through different kinds of violence every day. All those women too have right to contribute towards

our economy but the only thing is that they are not getting the opportunity. They deserve to live a normal life but gender inequality is making their life a hell. Violence against women in India is going side by side to the technological improvement in modern world in the country. Violence to the women is of various types and can happen at any place like home, public place or office. It is the big issue related to the women which cannot be ignored as it is hindering almost one half growth of the country. Women in the Indian society have always been considered as the things of enjoyment from the ancient time. They have been victims of the humiliation, exploitation and torture by the men from the time of social organization and family life. From the origin of social life in the country various centuries came and gone, time has changed people's mind and environment a lot, however violence against women is not seems to change a little bit. According to the research it is found that violence against women begins at home in the early age especially in the rural areas by the family members, relatives, neighbors, and friends.

Situation of the women varies all over the country according to the place, culture and tradition of people. Women in the north-eastern provinces and south have better position than other regions. Because of the practice of female infanticide, the number of girl child has been very less in comparison to the male child (almost 940 women to 1000 men according to the 2011 census). Such a huge decrease in the percentage of female child is because of the sex-selective abortions and negligence of young girls during infancy.

Women age 15-49 who have experienced physical violence since age 15 by wealth quintiles, India, 2005-2006:

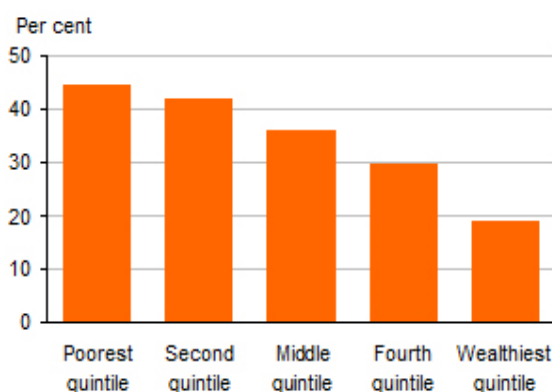


Figure 2.5

Source: International Institute for Population Sciences and Macro International, 2007.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau, women in India are very much unsafe in their marital home. Other common violence against women in the society is domestic violence, acid attacks, rape, honor killings, dowry deaths, abduction, and brutal behavior by husbands and in-laws.

Wife battering – It is the most prevalent form of domestic violence. In order to maintain their superiority and dominant position at home, men try to impose some or the other kind of violence and torture their wives. In spite of this problem being so serious, there are no substantial research findings in this area. It has been a problem which is largely unnoticed and neglected. This is because it is a widely prevalent crime but is 'too private' to be spoken of.

Sexual Harassment at the workplace- Nowadays women are getting good education and their economic independence has encouraged them to look out for jobs. They are quite successful in acquiring good jobs. However, they are not been free from torture of male-dominated society at their places of work. There are many instances in India where superiors subject them to sexual harassment. Those women who come from respectable and cultured families have some other financial means and they easily give up their jobs as a protest for such harassment. But women who belong to lower middle-class and who are the sole-supporters of their families financially bear their bosses sexual overtones silently. In India, it has been only few years since sexual harassment was for the first time recognized by the Supreme Court as human rights violation and gender-based systematic discrimination that affects women's right to life and livelihood.

Dowry- Dowry has become a major problem of gender inequality in India. Dowry is generally given by the bride's parents in order to assure security for their daughter so that she can lead a happy married life. But this

has become a social evil, mainly due to the greed of the bridegroom's parents. Women are ill treated, disrespected, manhandled, tortured and subject to all sorts' cruelties in the name of dowry. Newly married girls are always the victims of harassment, violence, murder and suicide. Dowry is demanded as though it is fundamental right of the bridegroom. Violence against women who bring less dowry or no dowry includes- physical battering, emotional neglect, torture, verbal abuse, refusal of sufficient food, imposition of heavy physical work and so on.

In spite of the varied legislation to ban the practice of dowry, the regret is that it still persists. Demands for dowry have even caused dowry death. For every 17 minutes one dowry death occurs in our society. Further some girls, who remain unmarried due to dowry system, take decision to carry on illegal sexual relations in order to satisfy their sexual urge and there by pollute the whole society.

India, with its large population, reports the highest number of dowry related deaths in the world according to **Indian National Crime Record Bureau**. In 2012, 8,233 dowry death cases were reported across India, while in 2013, 8,083 dowry deaths were reported. Continuation of dowry system has an effect on not only the individual or family, community but also the society at large.

Rape- Rape is such a shameless crime and it is found that incidents of rape are rising in India. Rape is regarded as the beastly crime where women at that particular moment are in no position to defend her against physical assault. Delhi recorded the highest number of rape cases in the country in 2013 at 1,636, more than double the number in 2012 (706). This was followed by 391 cases in Mumbai, 192 cases in Jaipur and 171 cases in Pune in 2013. Ninety-two women were raped on an average every day in India and the national capital with 1,636 cases recorded the highest number of such crimes among all cities last year.

According to figures released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), the total number of rape cases reported in India has gone up to 33,707 in 2013 from 24,923 in 2012. In 15,556 cases, the rape victims were aged between 18 and 30 years in 2013. The number of rape cases has doubled in Delhi in 2013 compared to the previous year. A total of 1,636 rape cases were reported in the city last year, while 706 such cases were reported in the year 2012. On an average, four rape cases were reported in Delhi everyday in 2013. The number of rape cases in Delhi was followed by 391 cases in Mumbai, 192 cases in Jaipur and 171 cases in Pune in 2013. As per the NCRB data, Madhya Pradesh at an average records 11 rapes every day, with a total of 4,335 such cases, which is the highest in 2013 among all other states. Madhya Pradesh is followed by Rajasthan with 3,285 cases, Maharashtra with 3,063 and Uttar Pradesh with 3,050 rape cases. The data showed that 13,304 cases were reported in 2013 where the victim was a minor, which were 9,082 in the previous year. The data also unveiled a disturbing fact that in the majority of the cases, the offenders were known to the victims. NCRB statistics shows that in 94 per cent of the cases the offenders were familiar to the accused. These offenders included parents in 539 cases, neighbours in 10,782 cases, relatives in 2,315 cases and other known persons in 18,171 such cases reported over the year.

2.2.7. Decision making Power

It is the fundamental right of every citizen to contribute to the decision-making process. As the future of the people of the country lies in women's hands, their effective participation in the political matters of the country is extremely important. Gender equality is a prerequisite for effective participation of women in strengthening the institutional structure of democracy. On the question of peace, since women are one of the most vulnerable groups in the region effected by armed conflicts, special attention has to be drawn to the need to eliminate by armed conflicts, special attention has to be drawn to the need to eliminate obstacles to the maintenance of peace. Women's equal role in decision making with respect to peace and related issues should be enhanced and encouraged at all levels. Women have been marginalized because of because of several socio-economic constraints. But however, the number of women in leadership position at the local, village, district and national level is still not commensurate with the numbers in society. The number of women contestants in parliamentary elections has not increased significantly over the years. Political parties seem uniformly reluctant to field women candidates. Women in Parliament are under-represented and are often ignored in the decision-making process.

There are many social, political and cultural factors which come in the way of women who are interested in entering the political field. The prevalence of the masculine model of political life and of elected governmental bodies-men dominates the political arena. As a result of these women often remains suppressed.

2.3. Gender Inequality Index of India:

- The United Nations Development Programme's GII measures the human development costs of gender inequality.
- A higher GII value — 0.563 in the case of India — indicates a greater disparity between men and women.
- India ranks 130 of 155 countries on GII.
- It is a composite index of the reproductive health for women (Maternal mortality rate + adolescent birth rate), their empowerment (based on the share of parliamentary seats held by them + the per cent of 25 year plus population with secondary education) and their economic status (labour force participation). India ranks 130 of 155 countries on GII.
- India's record is particularly distressing when it comes to representation of women in Parliament and their labour force participation.

2.4. How can women promote India's economic development

- Across the globe, educating and empowering women has proven to be the catalyst for rapid socio-economic growth. Conversely, societies where women are repressed are among the most backward.
- Denying women opportunities to realize their potential is a waste of human capital and bar to economic progress.
- Women are undoubtedly the foundation of the basic unit of society – the family. Even in traditional roles they demonstrate great innovation, skill, intelligence, hard work and commitment.
- If we can harness these attributes effectively, India's growth can be more inclusive and equitable. The education of women is therefore the key to the development process..
- When we educate and empower one woman, we set off a chain reaction that transforms the life of her family and the community she lives in. An exemplary model is the network of trained Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA), created under the National Rural Health Mission, who has played a crucial role in improving the health of women and children across India.
- In India, social evils and a rising rape rate are confronting women in urban and rural areas, regardless of which political party is at the helm. Women are not being given a chance to become stronger in the political sector.
- Social and economic scenario of India has undergone a huge change, and in time we have seen how women have contributed a lot in various sectors. The women of today have made significant contributions in several fields. They have broken the prejudice that women are a homemaker and that they cannot compete with men. Along with being homemakers, women have also become great achievers in the outside world.
- Women have made their presence felt in all fields be it Business, Education, Fashion, Entertainment, Finance, Information Technology. Earlier it was said that if a woman is working she is just fit to do administrative or lower management jobs. But women have proved them wrong and they have been successful leaders and mentors. Some examples of women who have made notable contribution to the economy are Kiran Mazumdar Shaw - the founder and head of Biocon, one of the leading organizations in the field of Biotechnology in India. Naina Lal Kidwai the Deputy Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited, India (HSBC), Chandra Kochar is the MD of ICICI banks India. These women have created history in the business world of India not only because of their personal achievement, but also because of their initiative to boost India's corporate performance.
- These are the example of women who had the opportunity and the education to become successful, but there another side to this also. Though women have made successful contributions in the business world, the bias against them still exists they still have to work double hard for their performances to get noticed in the society. People are still prejudiced to give women important roles in business.
- Women of rural India in spite of not having proper facilities and education still engage themselves various actives such as agriculture handicrafts, weaving etc and gain additional income. The agriculture and handicrafts also contribute to the national economy.
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III. CONCLUSION

3.1. Suggestions

- Education is the most important way to erase gender inequality. So, steps must be taken in order to promote education among women. Women should be given free education upto post-graduate level. Every girl must get the opportunity to go to school.
- Sufficient number of seats must be reserved for the eligible women candidates for services in all autonomous institutions, semi-government and government institutions.

- Setting up of large number of training institutions for women and girls in rural areas is essential to provide them with skills that have a real value in their own environment, and which will provide them with a steady income.
- Special health care programmes must be adopted in order to give special attention to the health of women. Every girl child from their time of birth should be given proper nutritious foods.
- Strict punishments must be given to those who show violence towards women. Some kind of rehabilitation homes must be established to provide shelter for battered women, when their lives are threatened. The rehabilitation centers for the battered women should be linked with some organizations, which can provide women to start some sort of self-employment.
- Dowry system should be strictly prohibited. Public awareness must be created in order to stop the system of dowry. Social education must be provided to the general public and create an awareness among them about the changing modern values like value of equality when status of women, role of women, irrelevance of dowry in modern social system. Educated youth should take initiative in the abolition of dowry.
- Sex education should be imparted to adolescents and youths in order to prevent crime against women.
- All those who commit crime like rape must be strictly punished. Rape victims should not be maltreated at the hands of the police. The burden of stigma should not be attached to the victim and her family, but rather it should be shifted from the victim to the offender.
- More police protections should be given around cities and towns especially during nights so that the employed women can move on freely to complete their tasks.
- More political and decision making power must be given in the hands of women.

3.2. Summary

- Gender inequality is a major problem in India and it acts as a hindrance in the pace of development.
- Gender inequality against women exists everywhere. It varies from time to time and place to place in type, frequency, intensity and control.
- Women, who constitute one half of the nation in the present India, are still in the social bondage and have suffered a lot.
- The girl child is facing discrimination right from their birth.
- Health problems such as infant mortality, maternal mortality are very high.
- Female foeticide and infanticide are a major problem that shows gender inequality.
- Many girls are still deprived of education.
- Violence in the form of wife battering, dowry, rape, sexual harassment can be widely seen in India.
- Biasness can be seen in the field of employment both in the organized and unorganized sector.
- Women lack the power of decision making in the country.
- Women have contributed a lot towards economic growth.
- Measures must be taken in order to stop gender inequality.

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