

# Reviewing the Status of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in India: A Study based on Accomplishment of the Third Millennium Development Goal

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## ABSTRACT

*The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of United Nations have been cited as a 'powerful stimulus' for alleviating inequality and curtailing the 'development gap' worldwide. Specifically speaking, the third goal seeks to promote gender equality and empower women. The indicators underpinning this target are the ratio of girls' to boys' enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education, the ratio of literate females to males among 15–24 year olds, the share of women in non-agricultural wage employment and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. The gender dimension of education is extremely important since education is a pre-requisite for all kinds of economic activities and acts as an enabling agent for women empowerment. Participation of women in economic activities and political decision making are other parameters contributing to upliftment of the socio-economic status of women and thereby ushering in women empowerment. This paper makes an attempt to assess whether our country is on the right track as far as accomplishment of MDG 3 is concerned both at the national and state levels. It is observed that although the country has made noticeable progress in terms of enrolment and literacy rates, she is yet to bridge the gender gap. Gender disparities with regard to participation of women in economic activities and political decision making are quite predominant as well. Until and unless necessary steps are taken to redress gender discrimination in every sphere of activity, accomplishment of women empowerment shall remain a distant illusion.*

## Keywords

*Millennium Development Goals, Women Empowerment, Enrolment, Gender Parity Index, Non-agricultural wage employment, Economic Participation, Participation in Decision making*

## INTRODUCTION

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a set of eight goals aimed at development and poverty reduction with quantitative targets to be achieved by 2015. These goals were endorsed by 189 countries through the Millennium Declaration and were adopted at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations (2000). The goals have specific targets and indicators and harp on income deprivation, hunger, gender equality, education, environment, health and global partnerships. The MDGs have been cited as a 'powerful stimulus' for alleviating inequality and curtailing the 'development gap'. The Third Millennium Development Goal (MDG3) seeks to promote gender equality and empower women. The target underlying this goal is elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels no later than 2015. The indicators underpinning this target are the ratio of girls' to boys' enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education, the ratio of literate females to males among 15–24 year olds, the share of women in non-agricultural wage employment and the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. Empowerment of women requires a cross-cutting approach for addressing the diverse social structures governing women's lives and redressal of problems that they have to confront and it is in this regard that MDGs have a very important role to play.

## OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

This research paper reviews the indicators pertaining to MDG 3 (both at the national and state levels) and makes an attempt to assess whether our country is on the right track as far as accomplishment of MDG 3 is concerned. We categorize the broad indicators, for the sake of convenience, into three sub-groups: i) Educational attainment and literacy ii) Economic Participation (with main focus on non-agricultural employment) iii)

Participation in decision making. We shall study these indicators, first for the country as a whole and then consider the performance of the states and union territories in this respect. Data, collected for the purpose of this study, is secondary in nature. We take the help of descriptive statistics to present the data and then analyze our findings.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND LITERACY

The gender dimension of education is extremely important since education is a pre-requisite for all kinds of economic activities and acts as a catalyst in gender sensitization and an enabling agent for women empowerment. It has a very crucial role to play in improving the quality of life of women and equipping them with critical abilities to face challenges.

At the very outset we take a look at the overall position of literacy in India.

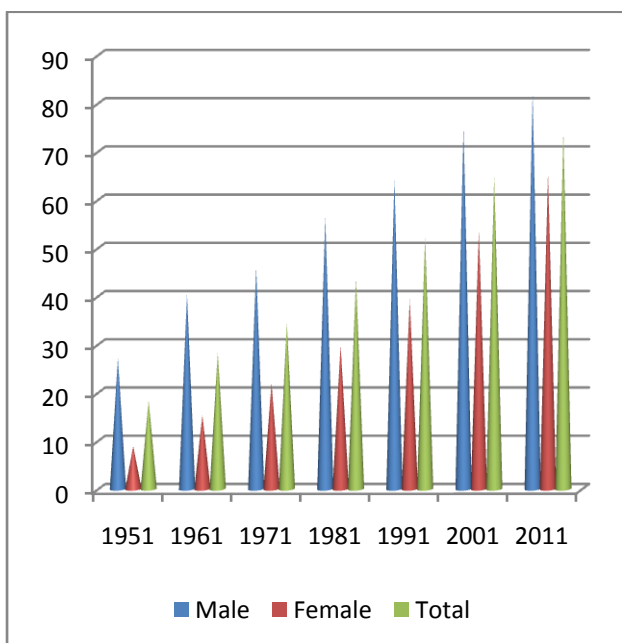


Fig. 1: Male- Female Literacy Gap in India (%)

Source: Census 2011

The literacy rate in India has increased from 64.8% in 2001 to 74.04% in 2011. What has been encouraging for the country is increase in female literacy rate (10.9%) has been much higher than the increase in male literacy rate (5.6%). In spite of these encouraging facts, gender gap in education is still very much a cause of concern. Although

the gap between male and female literacy rates has come down from 21.6 in 2001 to 16.3 in 2011, it is still quite pronounced. It is worth mentioning that the gap is more prominent in rural areas where it is 19.3% in 2011. Therefore, until and unless curtailment in the male female literacy gap is made possible, gender-equitable development shall remain inconceivable in the context of our country.

We now show the growth in literacy among population aged 7 years and above.

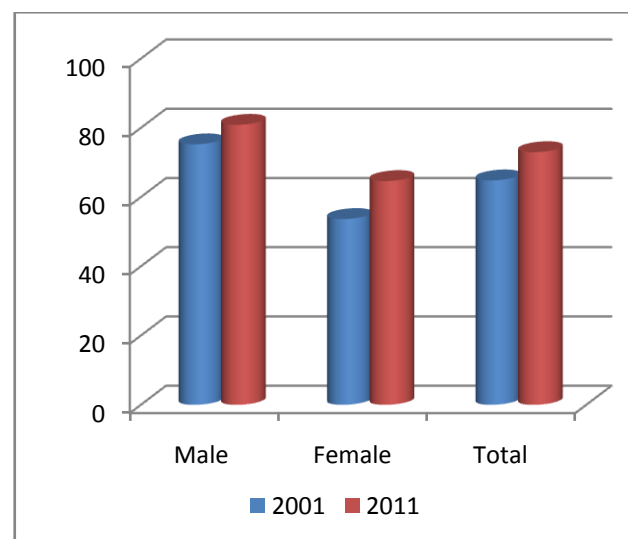
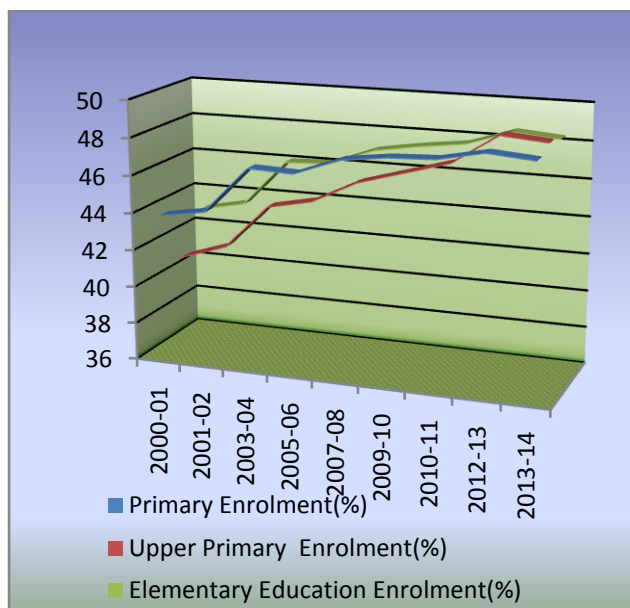


Fig 2: Growth in literacy rate among population aged 7 years and above (%)

Source: Census 2011.

It is quite evident from the figure that as compared to males, literacy rate among females has been quite low. Policy makers have often ignored the role of education in empowering females. Moreover, a misconception widely prevalent among parents in the rural areas is that the need of education is simply to prepare girls for their future domestic roles. Such an outlook acts as a great impediment in reaping the benefits of education.

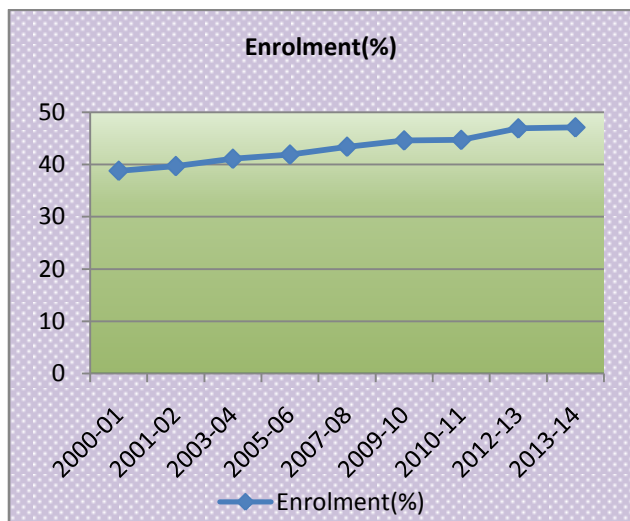
We now make an attempt to depict the specified indicators underlying MDG 3 in the context of our country viz. ratio of girls' to boys' enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education.



**Fig 3: Enrolment of Girls as % of Total Enrolment in Primary, Upper Primary & Elementary Education (Classes I-VIII)**

Source: School Statistics at a Glance, MHRD & Educational Statistics at a Glance 2014

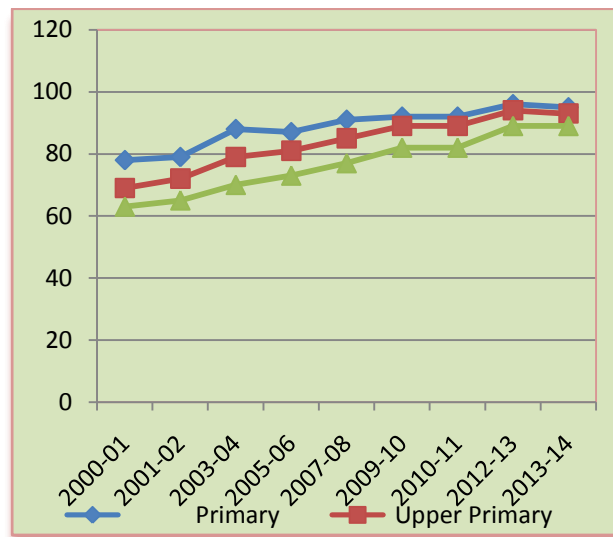
This figure represents the percentage enrolment of girls in Primary(Classes I-V), Upper Primary(Classes VI-VIII) and Elementary (Classes I-VIII). The common trend is increasing though nominal in some cases.



**Fig 4: Enrolment of Girls as Percentage of Total Enrolment in Secondary & Higher Secondary Education (Classes IX-XII)**

Source: School Statistics at a Glance, MHRD & Educational Statistics at a Glance 2014.

It can be seen from the figure that the percentage of girls' enrolment in secondary and higher secondary education has been increasing since 2000-01 although this increase has been quite modest.

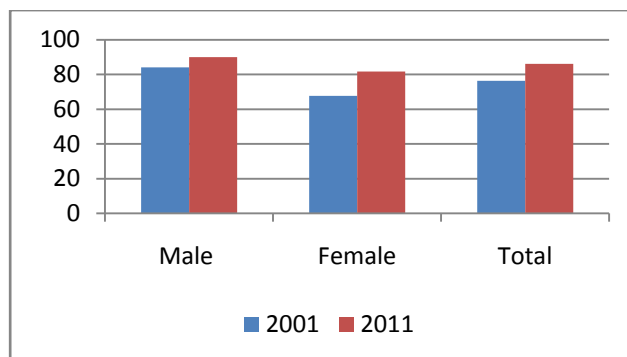


**Fig 5: No. of girls per 100 boys enrolled in Primary, Upper Primary and Secondary Education (2000-01 to 2013-14)**

Source: School Statistics at a Glance, MHRD & Educational Statistics at a Glance 2014

It is evident that between 2001-01 to 2013-14, the enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment as also the number of girls per 100 boys enrolled has improved, on the whole, although gender gap still persists.

Another indicator pertaining to MDG 3 is ratio of literate females to males in the age group 15-24 years. We show the youth literacy rate in this age group in the figure below.



**Fig 6: Youth Literacy Rate (15-24 years)**

Source: Census 2011

In the specified age group literacy rate of females has been quite low compared to males. However, the gender gap has come down from 16.45% in Census 2001 to 8.2% in Census 2011, which is indeed a great achievement.

of students enrolled to the total population in that age group) is an important determinant of accessibility to education. We now present the GER figures in higher education for different categories of population, males and females.

Gross Enrolment Ratio (which is the ratio of the number

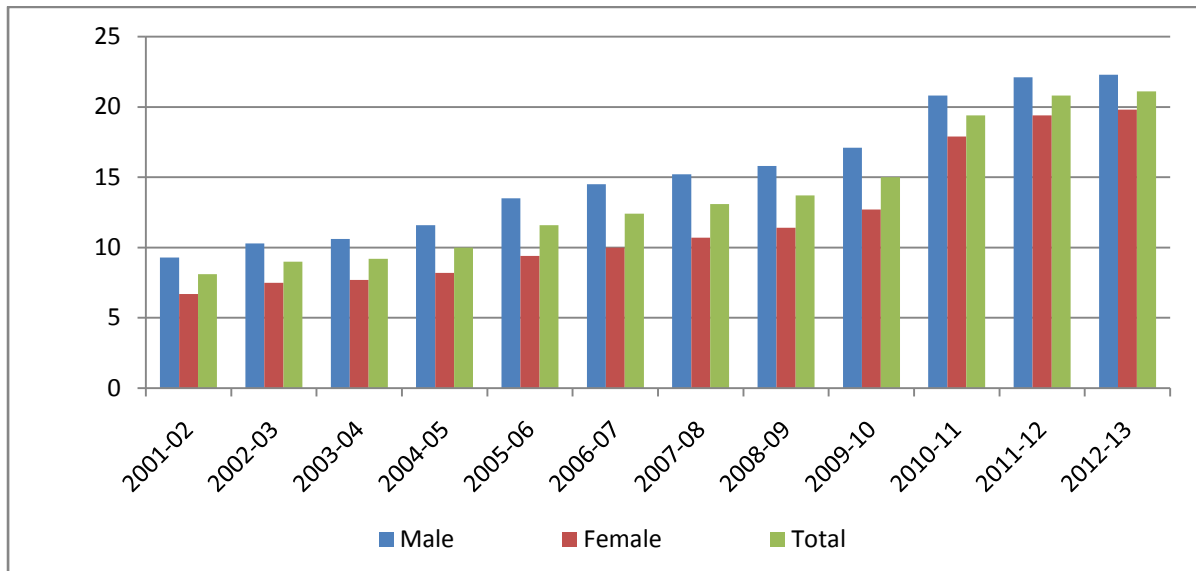


Fig 7: Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education (All)

Source: Educational Statistics

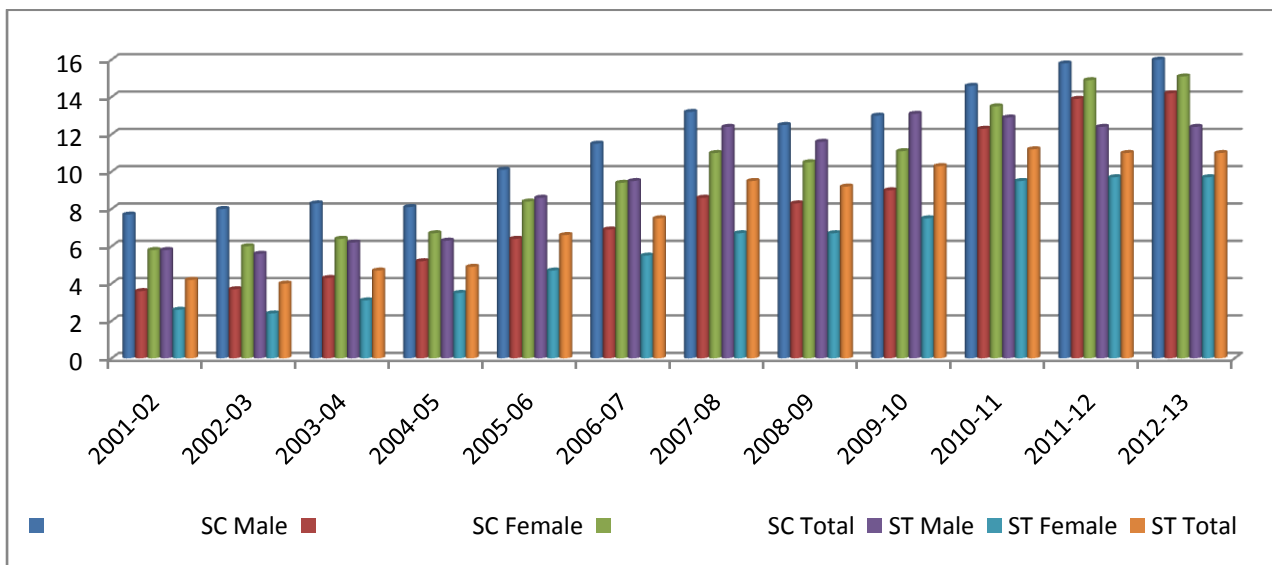


Fig 8: Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education: SC & ST Students

Source: Educational Statistics

It is clearly evident from the figures above that there exists wide gender gap in the GER in the country and

women are significantly under-represented in higher education as compared to their male counterparts. This is

indicative of confinement of women within the household, curtailment of their rights and decision-making power as also deprivation and exploitation, all of which retard the empowerment potential of women. Lesser women enrolment is due to certain socio-cultural factors and inadequate infrastructural support. For female students and, in particular, for the students from disadvantaged backgrounds, the lack of financial resources and challenging social conditions limit access to higher education.

Gender Parity Index (GPI) in enrolment at any level of education is the ratio of the number of female students enrolled to the number of male students enrolled at that level. A GPI of 1 indicates parity between the sexes or no gender disparity. A GPI that varies between 0 and 1 typically means a disparity in favour of males whereas a GPI greater than 1 indicates a disparity in favour of females. The GPI values in primary, secondary and tertiary education are shown in the table below.

**Table 1: GPI in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education in India**

| Year    | Primary (I-V) | Upper Primary (VI-VIII) | Elementary (I-VIII) | Secondary (IX-X) | Senior Secondary (XI-XII) | IX-XII | Higher Education |
|---------|---------------|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------------|--------|------------------|
| 2005-06 | 0.94          | 0.88                    | 0.92                | 0.80             | 0.80                      | 0.80   | 0.69             |
| 2006-07 | 0.94          | 0.90                    | 0.93                | 0.81             | 0.83                      | 0.82   | 0.69             |
| 2007-08 | 0.98          | 0.91                    | 0.96                | 0.85             | 0.84                      | 0.85   | 0.70             |
| 2008-09 | 0.99          | 0.93                    | 0.97                | 0.86             | 0.85                      | 0.85   | 0.72             |
| 2009-10 | 1.00          | 0.94                    | 0.98                | 0.88             | 0.87                      | 0.88   | 0.74             |
| 2010-11 | 1.01          | 0.95                    | 0.99                | 0.88             | 0.86                      | 0.87   | 0.86             |
| 2011-12 | 1.01          | 0.99                    | 1.00                | 0.93             | 0.92                      | 0.93   | 0.88             |
| 2012-13 | 1.02          | 1.05                    | 1.03                | 0.99             | 0.98                      | 0.99   | 0.89             |
| 2013-14 | 1.03          | 1.08                    | 1.04                | 1.00             | 0.98                      | 1.00   | 0.92             |
| 2014-15 | 1.03          | 1.09                    | 1.05                | 1.00             | 0.99                      | 1.01   | 0.92             |

Source: Educational Statistics at a Glance, MHRD

There have been significant increases in the values for each category. As of 2014-15, enrolment in primary education is favourable to females as GPI has crossed the level of 1 and gender parity has been attained in secondary education (with value equalling 1). In tertiary level of education, a rapid increase has been noted in GPI values between 2010-11 and 2012-13. With respect to these GPI values it may be asserted that India is on the right track as far as accomplishment of the first indicator of MDG 3 is concerned and we can indeed be optimistic about attainment of complete gender parity at all levels of education in the near future.

## ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

The next indicator is participation of women in economic activities. Along with overall work participation rates we focus on the share of women in the non-agricultural sector. It is the share of female workers in the non-agricultural sector expressed as a percentage of total employment in the sector. The importance of this indicator lies in the fact that it depicts the degree and extent to which labour markets offer job opportunities to women in the secondary and tertiary sectors. This reflects economic participation of women and is a determining factor of their economic empowerment.

At first we take a look at the overall work participation rates of women in both rural and urban areas.

**Table 2: Workforce Participation Rate in Rural and Urban areas**

| Year    | Rural  |      | Urban  |      |
|---------|--------|------|--------|------|
|         | Female | Male | Female | Male |
| 2004-05 | 32.7   | 54.6 | 16.6   | 54.9 |
| 2005-06 | 31.0   | 54.9 | 14.3   | 54.0 |
| 2007-08 | 28.9   | 54.8 | 13.8   | 55.4 |
| 2009-10 | 26.1   | 54.7 | 13.8   | 54.3 |
| 2011-12 | 24.8   | 54.3 | 14.7   | 54.6 |

Source: NSSO 68<sup>th</sup> Round (2011-12)

The table above reveals that workforce participation rates of women have always been lower than that of men both in rural and urban areas. The rates are very low among urban women, much below their rural counterparts. This statistics can be justified by the fact that many rural women are engaged in physical labour based activities to meet their financial needs unlike women in urban areas. However, meagre women participation rates among both types of women point at the gruelling reality—women in our country are still far away from being economically ‘empowered’.

The NSS 68<sup>th</sup> Round (2011-12) has estimated the share of women in non-agricultural wage employment to be 19.3% (with corresponding figures for rural and urban areas to be 19.9% and 18.7% respectively). This is an improvement over the NSS 66<sup>th</sup> Round (2009-10) figure of aggregate non-agricultural wage employment of 18.6%. At this rate of progress this share is likely to reach 22.28% by 2015. In the table below we show the figures for percentage share of females in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector in India.

**Table 3: Percentage Share of females in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector in India**

| Year    | Share of females in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (%) |
|---------|--|
| 2004-05 | 18.6   |
| 2009-10 | 18.6   |
| 2011-12 | 19.3   |

Source: Millennium Development Goals, India Country Report 2015

The labour market of non-agricultural sector in India is still male dominated and a 50:50 situation for men and women is too ideal to be true and attainment of this MDG indicator appears a distant target, given the market dynamics and existing socio-cultural framework. This situation is obviously not conducive for empowerment of women.

## PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

Finally we take up the indicator-- the proportion of seats held by women in National Parliament which reflects the political participation of women. Participation in decision making and self confidence are effective tools of women empowerment. However, women participation and representation in politics in India is meagre. In 2014 there were 7 women ministers out of 45 in the Central Council of Ministers. This figure is a little above 15% of the total against 10% women participation in 2004. In 2014 General Elections 65.6% women exercised their voting rights as against 55.8% in 2009 General Elections.

In spite of being the world's largest democracy, India has only 65 women representatives out of 542 members in Lok Sabha and 31 women representatives out of 242 members in Rajya Sabha. Currently, as in January 2015, women occupy 12.24% seats in the National Parliament. Although the World Economic Forum, in its Global Gender Gap Report has stressed that India is above world average with regard to women's participation in politics,

the current statistics clearly points at the dearth of women representation in National Parliament. India ranks 115<sup>th</sup> in the world in proportion of seats held by women in National Parliament as per data released by Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU).

We now depict the proportion of seats held by women in National Parliament.

**Table 4: Proportion of seats held by women in National Parliament**

| Reference Year | No. of Women Representatives |             |           |       |
|----------------|------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-------|
|                | Lok Sabha                    | Rajya Sabha | Total     | %     |
| 1991           | -                            | -           | 77 of 789 | 9.7   |
| 2004           | 45 of 544                    | 28 of 250   | 73 of 794 | 9.2   |
| 2007           | 47 of 544                    | 25 of 250   | 72 of 794 | 9.1   |
| 2009           | 59 of 545                    | 21 of 234   | 80 of 779 | 10.3  |
| 2011           | 60 of 544                    | 26 of 241   | 86 of 785 | 10.96 |
| 2013           | 62 of 543                    | 28 of 242   | 90 of 785 | 11.46 |
| 2015           | 65 of 542                    | 31 of 242   | 96 of 784 | 12.24 |

Source: Millennium Development Goals, India Country Report 2015

We now briefly summarize the progress achieved by India, so far, with regard to attainment of MDG targets.

**Table 5: Progress towards attainment of MDG Targets**

| Indicator  | Estimated /Actual value | Latest Status         | MDG Target (2015) |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Ratio of girls to boys in primary education (GPI of GER)               | 0.73 (1990)             | 1.03 (2013-14)        | 1.00              |
| Ratio of girls to boys in secondary education                          | 0.60 (1991)             | 1.00 (2013-14)        | 1.00              |
| Ratio of girls to boys in tertiary education                           | 0.54 (1991)             | 0.89 (2012-13)        | 1.00              |
| Ratio of female literacy rate and male literacy rate (15-24 years old) | 0.67 (1991)             | 0.91 (2011)           | 1.00              |
| Share of women in wage employment in non-agricultural sector           | 12.7% (1990)            | 19.3% (2011-12)       | 50%               |
| Proportion of seats held by women in National Parliament               | 9.7% (1991)             | 12.24% (January 2015) | 50%               |

Source: Millennium Development Goals, India Country Report 2015

It is apparent that India has already accomplished the MDG target in respect of the first two indicators. However, India is yet to reach the set target in case of



ratio of girls to boys in tertiary education and ratio of female and male literacy rates, though she is not very far off from the target. As far as share of women in wage employment in non-agricultural sector and proportion of seats held by women in national parliament are concerned, she is indeed lagging behind the stipulated target.

## MDG INDICATORS IN THE CONTEXT OF INDIAN STATES

We now take up these indicators in the context of the Indian states and union territories. Our primary focus in case of the state-wise analysis shall be on the indicator pertaining to educational attainment and literacy. However, we shall briefly touch upon the other two indicators viz. economic participation and participation in decision making.

At first we take up the indicator of educational attainment and literacy.

**Table 6: GER in Primary, Upper Primary and Elementary Education (2013-14)**

| State/UT                  | Primary |        | Upper Primary |        | Elementary Education |        |
|---------------------------|---------|--------|---------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
|                           | Boys    | Girls  | Boys          | Girls  | Boys                 | Girls  |
| Andaman & Nicobar Islands | 95.88   | 91.97  | 94.70         | 88.98  | 95.43                | 90.81  |
| Andhra Pradesh            | 96.62   | 96.87  | 82.81         | 84.38  | 91.34                | 92.07  |
| Arunachal Pradesh         | 129.12  | 127.77 | 112.64        | 115.27 | 123.64               | 123.58 |
| Assam                     | 111.77  | 115.16 | 87.85         | 98.69  | 103.32               | 109.37 |
| Bihar                     | 95.03   | 101.15 | 80.60         | 94.92  | 90.36                | 99.22  |
| Chandigarh                | 88.42   | 96.09  | 99.93         | 103.02 | 92.76                | 98.62  |
| Chhatisgarh               | 104.06  | 103.92 | 100.35        | 101.10 | 102.69               | 102.87 |
| Dadra & Nagar Haveli      | 89.50   | 81.89  | 100.76        | 91.43  | 93.60                | 85.35  |
| Daman & Diu               | 87.80   | 89.78  | 84.06         | 90.61  | 86.44                | 90.08  |
| Goa                       | 104.97  | 105.32 | 106.29        | 105.16 | 105.47               | 105.26 |
| Gujarat                   | 100.32  | 102.06 | 91.82         | 89.72  | 97.05                | 97.39  |
| Haryana                   | 96.62   | 100.57 | 91.24         | 98.01  | 94.57                | 99.63  |
| Himachal Pradesh          | 99.80   | 101.27 | 101.57        | 102.04 | 100.47               | 101.56 |
| Jammu and Kashmir         | 84.03   | 85.88  | 71.64         | 73.33  | 79.41                | 81.23  |
| Jharkhand                 | 109.57  | 110.92 | 91.70         | 99.09  | 103.44               | 106.93 |

|                |               |               |              |              |              |              |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Karnataka      | 101.18        | 100.73        | 91.72        | 91.91        | 97.58        | 97.41        |
| Kerala         | 95.68         | 95.15         | 98.35        | 98.32        | 96.72        | 96.38        |
| Lakshadweep    | 83.42         | 77.76         | 100.53       | 94.14        | 89.76        | 84.42        |
| Madhya Pradesh | 111.85        | 111.09        | 96.04        | 105.88       | 105.98       | 109.20       |
| Maharashtra    | 99.93         | 99.68         | 96.63        | 96.76        | 98.68        | 98.59        |
| Manipur        | 145.68        | 152.81        | 111.62       | 115.08       | 134.10       | 139.97       |
| Meghalaya      | 132.89        | 137.89        | 102.24       | 119.99       | 122.88       | 132.05       |
| Mizoram        | 127.88        | 123.96        | 119.38       | 118.03       | 125.08       | 122.03       |
| Nagaland       | 116.66        | 121.05        | 99.06        | 106.65       | 110.66       | 116.20       |
| NCT of Delhi   | 108.78        | 112.95        | 117.76       | 129.50       | 112.02       | 118.68       |
| Odisha         | 107.15        | 104.48        | 86.44        | 85.95        | 99.34        | 97.49        |
| Puducherry     | 89.53         | 95.38         | 92.38        | 98.13        | 90.62        | 96.42        |
| Punjab         | 104.33        | 107.20        | 94.04        | 97.03        | 100.35       | 103.39       |
| Rajasthan      | 102.35        | 100.60        | 86.83        | 81.94        | 96.74        | 94.01        |
| Sikkim         | 128.15        | 120.58        | 132.96       | 144.98       | 129.89       | 129.32       |
| Tamil Nadu     | 102.40        | 102.72        | 97.16        | 99.46        | 100.31       | 101.44       |
| Tripura        | 112.70        | 113.95        | 113.20       | 114.90       | 112.87       | 114.27       |
| Uttar Pradesh  | 93.34         | 99.88         | 67.32        | 80.11        | 84.01        | 92.99        |
| Uttarakhand    | 99.98         | 101.30        | 85.23        | 87.95        | 94.40        | 96.21        |
| West Bengal    | 103.16        | 104.88        | 92.84        | 106.87       | 99.28        | 105.62       |
| <b>India</b>   | <b>100.20</b> | <b>102.65</b> | <b>86.31</b> | <b>92.75</b> | <b>95.11</b> | <b>99.09</b> |

Source: Education for All 2015

This table reveals that enrolments in primary, upper primary and overall elementary levels is quite appreciable and majority of the states have very high girls' enrolment ratios; which, in some cases exceeds that of the boys.

Interestingly, Lakshadweep has a very low primary, upper primary and overall enrolment figures for girls inspite of being the 2<sup>nd</sup> rank holder in terms of youth literacy rate and having a gender bias tilted in favour of females. Another striking case is that of Bihar where girls' enrolment at each level (i.e. primary, upper primary and elementary) exceeds that of boys, although the state has the lowest youth literacy rate with high gender gap. Another aspect is the extremely high elementary (Classes I-VIII) enrolment figures for all the North Eastern states (except Assam) which are much above the national average. Though the North Eastern states, due to their remoteness, suffer from communicational and infrastructural constraints, which hinder developmental efforts, their statistics in respect of primary education is exceptional.

**Table 7: GPI for Enrolment in Primary, Secondary & Higher Secondary and Tertiary Education**

| State/UT                  | 2011-12 Primary | 2011-12 Secondary & Higher Secondary | 2012-13 Higher Education (Tertiary) |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Andaman & Nicobar Islands | 1               | 0.99                                 | 1.22                                |
| Andhra Pradesh            | 1.02            | 1.01                                 | 0.78                                |
| Arunachal Pradesh         | 0.96            | 0.91                                 | 0.90                                |
| Assam                     | 1.04            | 1.19                                 | 0.99                                |
| Bihar                     | 0.98            | 0.93                                 | 0.80                                |
| <b>Chandigarh</b>         | <b>1.04</b>     | <b>1.02</b>                          | <b>1.14</b>                         |
| Chhatisgarh               | 0.97            | 0.93                                 | 0.90                                |
| Dadra & Nagar Haveli      | 0.99            | 0.90                                 | 1.31                                |
| Daman & Diu               | 0.96            | 1.37                                 | 2.06                                |
| Goa                       | 0.97            | 1.0                                  | 1.20                                |
| Gujarat                   | 1.01            | 0.82                                 | 0.79                                |
| Haryana                   | 1.09            | 1.06                                 | 0.96                                |
| <b>Himachal Pradesh</b>   | <b>1.01</b>     | <b>1.0</b>                           | <b>1.02</b>                         |
| Jammu and Kashmir         | 1.04            | 0.94                                 | 1.03                                |
| Jharkhand                 | 1.02            | 0.98                                 | 0.95                                |
| Karnataka                 | 0.98            | 1.05                                 | 0.94                                |
| <b>Kerala</b>             | <b>1</b>        | <b>1.07</b>                          | <b>1.42</b>                         |
| Lakshadweep               | 0.96            | 0.92                                 | 2.80                                |
| Madhya Pradesh            | 1.04            | 0.72                                 | 0.65                                |
| Maharashtra               | 0.99            | 0.95                                 | 0.88                                |
| Manipur                   | 1.04            | 0.99                                 | 0.99                                |
| <b>Meghalaya</b>          | <b>1.04</b>     | <b>1.21</b>                          | <b>1.02</b>                         |
| Mizoram                   | 0.94            | 1.04                                 | 0.98                                |
| Nagaland                  | 1               | 1.02                                 | 0.71                                |
| <b>NCT of Delhi</b>       | <b>1.03</b>     | <b>1.03</b>                          | <b>1.03</b>                         |
| Odisha                    | 0.98            | 0.84                                 | 0.85                                |
| Puducherry                | 0.98            | 1.09                                 | 0.86                                |
| <b>Punjab</b>             | <b>1</b>        | <b>1.03</b>                          | <b>1.09</b>                         |
| Rajasthan                 | 0.99            | 0.73                                 | 0.80                                |
| <b>Sikkim</b>             | <b>1</b>        | <b>1.20</b>                          | <b>1.21</b>                         |
| Tamil Nadu                | 1.02            | 1.13                                 | 0.85                                |
| Tripura                   | 1.01            | 0.96                                 | 0.71                                |
| Uttar Pradesh             | 1.03            | 0.84                                 | 1.00                                |
| Uttarakhand               | 1.02            | 0.98                                 | 1.05                                |
| West Bengal               | 1.03            | 1.09                                 | 0.78                                |
| India                     | 1.01            | 0.93                                 | 0.89                                |

Source: Education for All 2015

In case of primary, secondary and higher secondary education most of the states have succeeded in attaining gender parity and some even display disparity in favour of females. The rest are very close to the complete parity status. In case of tertiary or higher education the states/UTs below national level in 2012-13 are Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat,

Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland, Odisha,

Puducherry, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and West Bengal. The states/UTs which have attained complete parity and/or disparity in favour of females (i.e. which have GPI values equalling 1 or exceeding 1) at all levels of education are Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Meghalaya, Delhi, Punjab and Sikkim. Their performance is indeed commendable. They are successful in attainment of MDG target as well.

Youth literacy is a determinant of productive capacity because it is the educated youth who can contribute their full potential to the cause of development in a rational and holistic manner. Hence, we now make an attempt to review whether states with high youth literacy rates have succeeded in bridging the gender gap in education and proceeded towards the accomplishment of women empowerment.

**Table 8: Youth (15-24 years) Literacy Rate (%)**

| State/UT                  | Male         | Female       | Total        | Female/Male Literacy Rate |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| Andaman & Nicobar Islands | 97.07        | 96.21        | 96.66        | 0.99                      |
| Andhra Pradesh            | 90.77        | 83.15        | 87.02        | 0.92                      |
| Arunachal Pradesh         | 84.88        | 76.44        | 80.69        | 0.9                       |
| Assam                     | 85.21        | 79.57        | 82.41        | 0.93                      |
| <b>Bihar</b>              | <b>79.56</b> | <b>63.69</b> | <b>72.29</b> | <b>0.8</b>                |
| Chandigarh                | 93.21        | 91.11        | 92.31        | 0.98                      |
| Chhatisgarh               | 92.00        | 82.84        | 87.45        | 0.9                       |
| Dadra & Nagar Haveli      | 93.32        | 76.35        | 86.78        | 0.82                      |
| Daman & Diu               | 93.10        | 91.04        | 92.50        | 0.98                      |
| Goa                       | 96.65        | 95.57        | 96.15        | 0.99                      |
| Gujarat                   | 92.84        | 85.00        | 89.17        | 0.92                      |
| Haryana                   | 92.80        | 86.54        | 89.96        | 0.93                      |
| Himachal Pradesh          | 97.02        | 95.77        | 96.41        | 0.99                      |
| Jammu and Kashmir         | 89.56        | 76.25        | 83.15        | 0.85                      |
| Jharkhand                 | 87.21        | 71.36        | 79.62        | 0.82                      |
| Karnataka                 | 93.13        | 88.28        | 90.79        | 0.95                      |
| <b>Kerala</b>             | <b>99.04</b> | <b>99.03</b> | <b>99.04</b> | <b>1</b>                  |
| <b>Lakshadweep</b>        | <b>98.28</b> | <b>98.31</b> | <b>98.30</b> | <b>1</b>                  |
| Madhya Pradesh            | 89.09        | 77.60        | 83.71        | 0.87                      |
| Maharashtra               | 95.01        | 92.13        | 93.66        | 0.97                      |
| Manipur                   | 90.27        | 85.53        | 87.90        | 0.95                      |
| <b>Meghalaya</b>          | <b>84.03</b> | <b>85.48</b> | <b>84.76</b> | <b>1.02</b>               |
| Mizoram                   | 95.12        | 91.66        | 93.40        | 0.96                      |
| Nagaland                  | 89.10        | 87.28        | 88.21        | 0.98                      |
| NCT of Delhi              | 94.19        | 91.93        | 93.17        | 0.98                      |
| Odisha                    | 90.93        | 81.16        | 86.03        | 0.89                      |



|               |              |              |              |             |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| Puducherry    | 97.91        | 97.08        | 97.49        | 0.99        |
| Punjab        | 90.44        | 88.94        | 89.75        | 0.98        |
| Rajasthan     | 91.03        | 71.30        | 81.73        | 0.78        |
| Sikkim        | 94.98        | 93.38        | 94.20        | 0.98        |
| Tamil Nadu    | 97.16        | 94.99        | 96.09        | 0.98        |
| Tripura       | 96.16        | 92.45        | 94.30        | 0.96        |
| Uttar Pradesh | 86.63        | 75.77        | 81.57        | 0.87        |
| Uttarakhand   | 94.00        | 89.95        | 92.03        | 0.96        |
| West Bengal   | 89.18        | 85.22        | 87.25        | 0.96        |
| <b>India</b>  | <b>90.04</b> | <b>81.85</b> | <b>86.14</b> | <b>0.91</b> |

Source: Millennium Development Goals, India Country Report 2015

The overall youth (15-24 years) literacy rate has increased from 61.9% to 86.14 % during the period 1991-2011. If this rate of growth continues India is likely to reach 93.38% which is very near to the target of 100% youth literacy by 2015. Among the State / UTs, the highest youth literacy rate has been noted in Kerala (99.04%) and the lowest in Bihar (72.29%). Our findings in respect of youth literacy highlight some interesting facts.

Except Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya and Odisha all the states are above country average in youth literacy. As far as female literacy rates are concerned, the states failing to reach national average are Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand and Dadra & Nagar Haveli . Dadra & Nagar Haveli is another exceptional case where male literacy exceeds female literacy by almost 12% which puts the UT marginally above the national average.

The states/UTs having literacy rates exceeding 90% for both males and females are Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Daman & Diu, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Delhi, Puducherry, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu and Tripura. Bihar stands at the last position in respect of all three rates male, female as well as total. Other poor performers are Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Assam, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha.

Meghalaya is a very interesting case where total and male literacy rates are much below the all-India average but, female rate by far exceeds the national standards. Consequently, the female male literacy ratio is the highest in Meghalaya with value exceeding 1. This implies greater number of female literates than males in the specified age group. Kerala and Lakshadweep have complete parity between male and female literacy rates.

The states with below average female-male literacy ratio (i.e. which depict bias in favour of males according to national standards) are Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Dadra & Nagar Haveli , Madhya Pradesh and Odisha.

The states/UTs successful in attaining the MDG target in this respect are Kerala, Lakshadweep and Meghalaya.

**Table 9: Rank and Gender Gap in Youth (15-24 years) Literacy Rate**

| State/UT                  | Rank      | Gender Gap in Youth Literacy(%) |
|---------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------|
| Andaman & Nicobar Islands | 4         | 0.86                            |
| Andhra Pradesh            | 24        | 7.62                            |
| Arunachal Pradesh         | 33        | 8.44                            |
| Assam                     | 30        | 5.64                            |
| Bihar                     | 35        | 15.87                           |
| Chandigarh                | 14        | 2.1                             |
| Chhatisgarh               | 22        | 9.16                            |
| Dadra & Nagar Haveli      | 25        | 16.97                           |
| Daman & Diu               | 13        | 2.06                            |
| Goa                       | 6         | 1.08                            |
| Gujarat                   | 19        | 7.84                            |
| Haryana                   | 17        | 6.26                            |
| Himachal Pradesh          | 5         | 1.25                            |
| Jammu and Kashmir         | 29        | 13.31                           |
| Jharkhand                 | 34        | 15.85                           |
| Karnataka                 | 16        | 4.85                            |
| <b>Kerala</b>             | <b>1</b>  | <b>0.01</b>                     |
| <b>Lakshadweep</b>        | <b>2</b>  | <b>-0.03</b>                    |
| Madhya Pradesh            | 28        | 11.49                           |
| Maharashtra               | 10        | 2.88                            |
| Manipur                   | 21        | 4.74                            |
| <b>Meghalaya</b>          | <b>27</b> | <b>-1.45</b>                    |
| Mizoram                   | 11        | 3.46                            |
| Nagaland                  | 20        | 1.82                            |
| NCT of Delhi              | 12        | 2.26                            |
| Odisha                    | 26        | 9.77                            |
| Puducherry                | 3         | 0.83                            |
| Punjab                    | 18        | 1.50                            |
| Rajasthan                 | 31        | 19.73                           |
| Sikkim                    | 9         | 1.60                            |
| Tamil Nadu                | 7         | 2.17                            |
| Tripura                   | 8         | 3.71                            |
| Uttar Pradesh             | 32        | 10.86                           |
| Uttarakhand               | 15        | 4.05                            |
| West Bengal               | 23        | 3.96                            |
| <b>India</b>              | <b>-</b>  | <b>8.19</b>                     |

We have ranked the Indian states and union territories according to their youth literacy rates and computed the gender gap in youth literacy rates. The motive is to check whether the states/UTs with high youth literacy rates have been able to close gender gap in this respect.

The top 10 rank holders are Kerala, Lakshadweep, Puducherry, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Himachal Pradesh, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Sikkim and Maharashtra respectively. The lowest ranking states are Bihar(35<sup>th</sup>) followed by Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya and Odisha respectively.

Meghalaya, once again, deserves mention because of an exceptional feature. With the most unusual case of gender bias in favour of the weaker sex she is among the lowest rank-holders in terms of youth literacy.

Lowest gender gap is noted in case of Kerala, Puducherry and Andaman & Nicobar Islands. Chandigarh, Daman & Diu, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Nagaland, Delhi, Punjab, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and West Bengal depict gender gap figures which are below 4%. The figures for Lakshadweep and Meghalaya are negative implying gender disparity in favour of females and against males.

The states/UTs with very severe gender gap in literacy rates (above 10%), which, by far, exceed the national mark of 8.19% are Bihar, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. These states/UTs indeed pose an alarming situation.

The picture that emerges is, barring a few exceptions, most of the states with high youth literacy rates have been able to restrict the gender gap. However, the states/UTs like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Jharkhand (with low literacy rates) still have a long way to go in terms of bridging this gap.

We show the percentage share of females in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector in India in the table below.

**Table 10: State- Share of females in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector in India(%)**

| State/UT                  | Share of females in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (%) |
|---------------------------|--|
| Andaman & Nicobar Islands | 26.4   |
| Andhra Pradesh            | 22.9   |
| Arunachal Pradesh         | 16.6   |
| Assam                     | 13.2   |
| Bihar                     | 6.1  |
| Chandigarh                | 13.9   |
| Chhattisgarh              | 29.3   |
| Dadra & Nagar Haveli      | 16.8   |
| Daman & Diu               | 6.6  |
| Goa                       | 28.9   |
| Gujarat                   | 14.5   |
| Haryana                   | 12.0   |
| Himachal Pradesh          | 20.4   |
| Jammu and Kashmir         | 11.1   |
| Jharkhand                 | 9.1  |
| Karnataka                 | 20.9   |
| Kerala                    | 30.8   |
| Lakshadweep               | 15.2   |
| Madhya Pradesh            | 18.3   |
| Maharashtra               | 20.1   |
| Manipur                   | 41.6   |
| Meghalaya                 | 30.0   |
| Mizoram                   | 27.6   |
| Nagaland                  | 14.5   |
| NCT of Delhi              | 17.1   |
| Odisha                    | 18.4   |
| Puducherry                | 24.0   |
| Punjab                    | 14.5   |
| Rajasthan                 | 22.6   |
| Sikkim                    | 22.2   |
| Tamil Nadu                | 32.5   |
| Tripura                   | 33.8   |
| Uttar Pradesh             | 10.0   |
| Uttarakhand               | 9.1  |
| West Bengal               | 19.1   |
| <b>India</b>              | <b>19.3</b>  |

Source: NSSO 68<sup>th</sup> Round (2011-12)

Manipur has the highest female employment in the non-agricultural sector followed by Tripura, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Meghalaya, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Mizoram, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The rates are very low for Bihar (lowest), Daman & Diu, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand. It must be mentioned that none of the Indian states have been successful in attaining the MDG target of 50%, which probably points at the inadequacy of the labour market to absorb sufficient women in the workforce.

We now take up the final indicator and show the state-wise representation of women in both houses of the national parliament.

**Table 11: State-wise Women Participation in the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha**

| State/UT                  | Women MPs | Total Seats | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| Andaman & Nicobar Islands | -         | -           | -          |
| Andhra Pradesh            | 3         | 42          | 7          |
| Arunachal Pradesh         | -         | -           | -          |
| Assam                     | 2         | 14          | 14         |
| Bihar                     | 3         | 40          | 8          |
| <b>Chandigarh</b>         | <b>1</b>  | <b>1</b>    | <b>100</b> |
| Chhatisgarh               | 1         | 11          | 9          |
| Dadra & Nagar Haveli      | -         | -           | -          |
| Daman & Diu               | -         | -           | -          |
| Goa                       | -         | 2           | 0          |
| Gujarat                   | 4         | 26          | 15         |
| Haryana                   | -         | 10          | 0          |
| Himachal Pradesh          | -         | 4           | 0          |
| Jammu and Kashmir         | 1         | 6           | 17         |
| Jharkhand                 | -         | 14          | 0          |
| Karnataka                 | 1         | 28          | 4          |
| Kerala                    | 1         | 20          | 5          |
| Lakshadweep               | -         | 1           | 0          |
| Madhya Pradesh            | 5         | 29          | 17         |
| Maharashtra               | 5         | 48          | 10         |
| Manipur                   | -         | -           | -          |
| Meghalaya                 | -         | -           | -          |
| Mizoram                   | -         | -           | -          |
| Nagaland                  | -         | 1           | 0          |
| NCT of Delhi              | 1         | 7           | 14         |
| Odisha                    | 2         | 21          | 10         |
| Puducherry                | -         | 1           | 0          |
| Punjab                    | 1         | 13          | 8          |
| Rajasthan                 | 1         | 25          | 4          |
| Sikkim                    | -         | -           | -          |
| Tamil Nadu                | 4         | 39          | 10         |
| Tripura                   | -         | 2           | 0          |
| Uttar Pradesh             | 13        | 80          | 16         |
| Uttarakhand               | 1         | 5           | 20         |
| West Bengal               | 12        | 42          | 29         |

Source: Election Commission

It is clearly evident that women representation is extremely low in all the states and union territories with some having no representation at all. Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal have the highest number of women parliamentarians. Chandigarh is the only union territory, which has cent percent women representation in parliament( its singular seat in the parliament is represented by a woman).

## CONCLUSION

Among all the indicators studied, in pursuit of MDG 3, education, perhaps, is the most crucial factor which leads to the accomplishment of human development leading to gender equity and women empowerment. Attainment of gender based equity and parity coupled with increased accessibility to education is vital for empowerment of all sections of women, irrespective of class, caste and creed. However, it has been noted in the case of many states and union territories that gender biases are deeply rooted within the educational systems. This is probably because of a deeply embedded under-valuation of female labour in our country with the underlying belief that educating a female child brings low returns.

As per the report of All India Survey on Higher Education although female enrolment is higher than male enrolment in the general streams, it is just the reverse in case of specialized and expertise oriented professional courses. This points at the inadequacy of our higher education system to cater to the priorities of job-oriented programmes for women. This trend is obviously not conducive for the attainment of economic empowerment of women. High elementary enrolment levels in all the backward states pose a very pertinent question. Why do these states with high primary and secondary enrolment rates fare miserably in the context of youth literacy rates and are unable to bridge the gender gap in youth literacy? A plausible answer may relate to high drop-out rates and social evils like child marriage, caste system, dowry, female infanticide etc coupled with inadequate governmental support.

Statistics on work participation rates and proportion of seats held by women in national parliament, both at the national and state levels, are indicative of insignificant women participation in economic activities and political decision making. This unfortunately acts as a deterrent factor in realization of their full potentiality and is, quite obviously, not conducive for their empowerment.

After the lapse of the deadline set for attainment of MDGs (2000-2015), a close examination of statistics reveals that, although progress has been made in certain aspects, much still remains to be done. Hence, a new set of goals were announced at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2015---termed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Agenda contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets which aim to achieve what the MDGs could not. Specifically speaking, SDG 5 seeks to

“achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. The underlying targets have been put forth as ---- ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls, eliminating all forms of violence against women, ensuring effective participation and equal opportunities to women at all levels of decision making, undertaking reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources etc.

Mere statistics do not necessarily reveal the true picture with regard to gender disparities and women empowerment. Indeed, achieving gender equality in the spheres of education, economic and social opportunities in a class dominated society like India is quite difficult. Nevertheless, implementation of the SDGs is of utmost necessity for upliftment in the social and economic conditions of women and also their empowerment. Demolishing the vicious cycle of multiple deprivations of women will empower them to break all shackles of exploitation and bring about ‘renaissance’ in their lives. It is only then that the true spirit of the MDGs and SDGs can be synchronized with developmental pursuits.

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