Gender Disparity, Development, and Fertility Transition in India: An Inter-state Analysis

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ABSTRACT The shift of the concept of Women in Development (WID) to Gender and Development (GAD) during last two decades has opened the scope of research in this direction. Gender disparity in different aspects of human life must have some bearing on social and economic development, female autonomy and fertility in a population or vice versa. This paper attempts to look into the matter through constructing different and combined gender disparity indices and also some development indices as well as indices of fertility transition and female autonomy. Based on mainly NFHS data and Government Publications, this work shows that gender disparity against women exists in health, economic and socio-cultural aspects. In all aspects, the states vary widely. On the combined scale, Rajasthan appears to discriminate against women the most, while disparity against women is the least in Kerala. Goa and Kerala are highly developed in their social structure while social development in other states has just been started. Fertility transition in U.P., Bihar, Haryana and M.P. is far away from the best state Goa. Social development, female autonomy and fertility transition, all three aspects are found to be important correlates of gender disparity while economic development seems to have no say in this respect. This effort, later can be supplemented by much more detailed study, while firstly to incorporate the issue in our developmental plans we need to build up a strong and quality data base for studying gender.