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## Hindu Philosophical Traditions and the Gender Question in India: A Re-Assessment

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### **Abstract**

The gender question in India has attracted international attention consequent on the intensity of discrimination and violence against women in that part of the Asian subcontinent. The phenomenon is manifested in women's low access to education, credit facilities, employment opportunities in the organized public sector and landed assets. Again, it could be gleaned from the preponderance of gang rape, dowry deaths, female feticides and infanticides e.t.c. It has been argued that the Hindu philosophical tradition is responsible for the gender question in the country due to the Caste System and Patriarchal ideology it entrenched in the society. It is against this backdrop that the paper re-evaluates the causes and nature of gender discrimination and violence in India. It established that Hinduism cannot be solely projected as the springboard for the gender issues as capitalism and the quest for private wealth accumulation, the comparative advantage of, and economic value attached to the male-child, instilled a monopolizing culture amongst the male folks bent on dominating all spheres of the Indian society from politics to economy even socially. This, in no small measure, culminated in the relegation of women to second class citizens and/or at the commencement of life, unwanted foetus and infants. Yet, there have been series of Conventions aimed at addressing the gender question worldwide which amongst others include the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Convention which endorsed 30% women representation in politics. Despite government ratification of these and the enactment of laws to halt the tides, the gender issues in India are still on the increase. The paper therefore recommends attitudinal change towards the female gender to pave way for their contributions in the attainment of sustainable national development in India.

**Keywords:** Philosophy, Hinduism, Women, Inequality, Violence, Economic Empowerment, Political Participation, National Development.

### **Introduction**

Philosophy is a powerful force that shapes the lives of a people. It is on record that the philosophy postulated by Plato and the stoics has in no small measure impacted on the lives of millions of people right into the Hellenistic period. For, it culminated in the repudiation of material possession as a source of happiness hence vanity. Increased acquisition of wealth and other materials were considered as avenues for mounting sadness. In the same vein, the Hegelian-Marxist philosophy was instrumental to the alteration of societal structures

and also influenced the lives of several millions of people in Russian, Cuba, China and other members of the then Soviet Union who adopted the socialist system. (Omoregbe, 2001:3).

India, a country situated in South Asia with a population of over 1 billion is by no means left out of this. The Indians were influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism. The discourse of this paper however will be anchored on Hinduism. For, there is a growing concern over the gender inequalities and violence in India. Could this be connected with Hindu practices in the society? This paper therefore attempts a re-evaluation of Hindu philosophical traditions and its role in the nature of gender relations in India.

### **Conceptual Issues**

#### ***Philosophy***

The etymological meaning of philosophy emanated from the Greek word "Philosophos" which when translated; literally connotes a "lover of wisdom" and "Philosophia" indicating "love of wisdom or knowledge." (Nakamura, 1986:76). In its holistic context however, philosophy is the examination of fundamental problems related to reality, existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind and language. It is usually conducted through a critical systematic approach based on rational analysis/argument. (Source, philosophy.wikipedia, The Free Encyclopaedia) The attempt to understand the meaning, nature and purpose of human existence including the need to proffer pragmatic solutions to the human problem and attain self-realization/fulfilment, necessitated the construction of varied philosophical traditions in human societies. The development of the Hindu philosophy was also meant to serve the preceding purpose in India.

#### ***Gender***

Gender according to Mahdi (2006:11) is the "socially constructed aspects of differences between women and men" or the "cultural ideals and stereotypes of masculinity and femininity and at the structural level... the sexual division of labour in institutions and organizations." While the former constituted the social representation that relegates and/or denies recognition of women, the latter stressed the systematized patterns of unequal distribution of economic resources on the basis of gender bias in which case the men folks are major beneficiaries.

The Democratic rights of citizenship, Mahdi (Ibid, pp. 11 & 12) citing Fraser further argued, should be anchored on identity and the distribution of resources because they are inseparable and formed the yardstick for assessing

the level of justice operational in a given society. And, that the dilemma of redistribution is founded on socio-economic injustice that causes differential access to economic resources/wealth culminating in the evolution of the oppressed classes in such formation. That of recognition springs from the nature of social representation and evaluation in which case recognition is denied certain people on the basis of gender.

Oyilo (2012:67) presented gender as the social classification of men and women which constitute the platform for the allocation of responsibilities, roles, status, entitlements and the endorsement of behaviours deemed ethically right for each of the sexes. Thus, it involves the prevalent notion regarding the abilities of, and expectations from, persons based on sex differentiation. Such ideas are often cued from the family, peer groups, religious and cultural institution, schools, workplace and the media.

### **Major Philosophical Positions of Hinduism**

Hinduism is a universal philosophical belief system which is traceable to India. Unlike Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, it was not founded by a Prophet. It was therefore not the product of the teachings of a Prophet or set of teachers. (Sivananada) It incorporated the beliefs of other tribes and people into its diverse system. (See, Tokarev, 1986:179). It is regarded as one of the oldest religions in the world without a specific date of commencement. Thus, it is as old as recorded history.

Hinduism has elements of monotheism, polytheism and pantheism. It is a philosophical tradition that believed in the existence of one Supreme Being referred to as Brahma with various other gods evolving there from. Pantheism on the other hand, is the notion that the universe/cosmos and everything else in it is the manifestation of God/divinity.

It is not a dogmatic philosophy hence maintains that all other religions that are anchored on the truth are alternative means to salvation. It permits the freedom of worship and perception on the issue of the meaning and purpose of life. Thus, different forms of Hindu faith expressions, ritual practices and customs are noticeable amongst the adherents in their meditation and communion with Brahma in order to attain spiritual ecstasy and self-realization. There are four Hindu sects namely, Saivism, Shaktism, Vaishnavism and Smartism. (Source, Nine Beliefs of Hinduism At <http://www.himalayanaacademy.com>).

The Hindus maintain a cyclical view of the universe arguing that it is being continuously subjected to creation, preservation and dissolution. The Hindus believed that the practise of good ethical conduct is the foundation of material and spiritual prosperity. That good conduct destroys evil, promotes longevity and eternal bliss. Thus, Hinduism maintains that individuals should have the purest of thoughts toward others in action and words. Due to the concept of the unity of self, it is therefore stated that whatever good or evil one had executed to others is logically to one's self.

The Hindus are also of the view that all lives are sacred. Human, animals, e.t.c should not be killed for whatever purpose in war or peace. Animals must not be slaughtered for human consumption. There is also the belief in the law of Karma. This is anchored on the principle of reward and punishment for the actions of man-good or evil. It is concerned with the law of cause and effects.

In addition to this, it placed emphasis on non-violence/tolerance -Ahimsa. (Ibid) It argued that the adoption of the non-violent approach to challenges and in one's relationship with others is not a manifestation of weakness but heroism as it involves perseverance, spiritual maturity and self control. Among other things, contemporary examples of this could be seen in how Mahatma Gandhi adopted the non-violence strategy in the resistance and subsequent termination of British colonial domination in India. In this case, non-violence became a passive resistance strategy to oppressive power relations and unjust structures which was widely adopted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In other words, it represents the refusal to embrace violence as a means of resolving causes of violence including social, political and economic inequalities. Non-violence is therefore concerned with struggles for freedom and justice, the alteration of unjust and unequal power relations and the undermining of repressive socio-political and economic institutions. (See Francis, 2009:19-20 and Gandhi, 1967).

Like Buddhism, the Hindu philosophy also stressed the notion of re-incarnation of the soul involving series of birth, lifetime, death and rebirth in order to burn out the bad karma in individuals after which final liberation or salvation is attained. It is instructive to note that one's next life is dependent on his/her conducts in the previous life. Thus, an evil individual could emerge as an animal in the re-incarnated life to serve as punishment for the wrong done. (Tignor, *et al.*, 2008:257) He or she could even be back as plant, evil spirit, object and so on. However, it is more honourable to be re-incarnated as a human being. (See Tokarev, *op. cit.*, p. 306).

The philosophy segmented the Hindu society into four Caste on the basis of the quality of a man (*Guna*) and the kind of work he does (*Karma*). It is a philosophy based on social purity and on restrictions related to "touching, approaching or seeing an individual of a lower caste." (Rotimi, 2006:130) The basic thrust of the Caste System was division of labour in the Hindu Society connected to the belief that all men are not suitable for all types of works. Thus, duty was allocated to diverse classes of people in relation to their quality and aptitude. (Sivananada, op. cit).

In a nutshell, Hinduism is a less dogmatic philosophical and religious tradition. However, the Hindus have been urged to recognize the divine authority of the Vedas, doctrines on the Law of Karma and transmigration/re-incarnation of the soul including the divine origin of the Caste System. (Tokarev, op. cit, p.177).

Historiographies on Hinduism include the Vedas (Holy Books) and the Upanishads containing information on the belief system and ritual practices.

### **Hinduism and Gender Relations in India**

The entrenchment of the Caste System and relegation of women to an inferior status were some of the manifestations of the influence of Hindu philosophy and practices in the Indian society. (See, Harvilla, 2010, February 17 and L. Mohan, op. cit.) These, it was argued, immensely contributed to the prevalent rate of gender discrimination and violence against women in India. (Ibid)

### ***The Caste System***

The Caste System involved the division of the society into social classes. The Brahmans were at the apex of the socially stratified society followed by the Kshatriya and Vaisya, then the Satsudra, Sudra and the untouchables/unclean group. (Rotimi, op. cit., p. 130) The last group referred to as the untouchables are denied access to all temples and other institutions on the notion that their presence might pollute other superior caste groups. Thus, they were forced to reside outside the villages. (Ibid) The system therefore has set of rules that prevented inter-relationship between different social classes and constituted an obstacle to social mobility in India. Marriages, occupational professions and so on are strictly tied to the system. Children are expected to inherit their parents' profession within their respective Caste group (*Varna*). Also, one could only marry within his/her Caste. (Source, Hinduism: The World's Third Largest Religion. At <http://www.religioustolerance.org>) Indeed, even eating together was not permitted amongst the different social classes. In the event of contamination by the inferior caste, a purification process will be required.

(Rotimi, op. cit). This scenario was succinctly captured by Tokarev (op. cit., p.180), when he remarked that one-sixth of the Indian population falls under the Untouchables who experienced poverty and oppression consequent on the caste system. For, " ... they were deprived of basic human rights - the freedom to choose their occupation, use water from common wells and springs, means of transport.... simply touching them would supposedly defile a Hindu from the Upper Caste."

At this juncture, it can be argued, and reasonably too, that if the discrimination based on social classes was difficult for men to contend with, it was even worse for the women. Although, the Caste System was abolished in 1949, the practice still holds sway in contemporary Indian society. Thus, as a mechanism for emancipation from this "social imprisonment" some radical Hindus embraced Christianity or Buddhism renouncing Hinduism. (Rotimi, op. cit).

### ***Relegation of Women to an Inferior Status through the Patriarchal Joint Family System***

L. Mohan (op. cit.) has demonstrated in a succinct way, how the patriarchal value system in India strategically positioned the men as possessors of economic, religious and spiritual endowments from birth. The male child was regarded as the legitimate person to inherit family property, performs activities of spiritual and religious significance. He is accorded the mandate to perform funeral rituals for his deceased parents. In contemporary times, he is also considered the major bread winner of the family. Thus, enormous economic value was attached to the male-child unlike the female-child who was viewed as a financial burden to the family in terms of her up-bringing, education and marriage.

The patriarchal tradition was systematized and indoctrinated into the minds of members of the family and the society at large such that it was vigorously observed. The absence of a male-child in an Indian family therefore provokes the parents making them more violent and oppressive against the female children. Modernization did not radically change the patriarchal value system in India as even the educated Indian elite domiciled in the urban centres still stick tenaciously to it.

### **Dimensions of Gender Inequality and Violence in India**

Discrimination in employment, political under representation, low access to education, inadequate health and credit/loans facilities, dowry murders, female feticide and infanticide among others are contemporary manifestations of gender imbalance and violence in India. These are succinctly discussed below:

### ***Gender Discrimination in Employment***

The UN report on Gender equality in India indicated men's dominance of the labour force. In 2011, about 80.7% of those employed in the public sector were men while merely 29% were women. (See, Kaswan, March 21, 2013) Thus, most Indian women (over 70%) without government jobs are engaged in the agricultural sector in the rural areas as cultivators and labourers. Over 80% of women in the urban centres are operating in the informal sector as petty traders or in the household industries. They also rendered their services in building and construction activities. Again, women working outside the organized public sector are disadvantaged as they are unable to benefit from government's law on maternity leave of 12 weeks with full salary payment. (Source, Gender Equality in India. wikigender.org).

### ***Under-Representation of Women in Politics***

In the political sphere, men equally dominated the position of power and decision making in India. Women under-representation is such that by 2008 of the 543 seats in the Lower House of Parliament only 58 went to the women. In the Upper Chambers, it was 23 out of 243 seats. (Ibid) In 2011, the percentage of Indian women law makers was merely 10.9%. This is below what was obtained in Pakistan in the same period- (21.1%). (Kaswan, op.cit.) Since women representation in legislative positions is marginal, it means their ability to influence major decision that could impact positively on the interest of women generally is limited as the men will often exert their hegemony. Although India had a female President and Speaker in 2010, it did not neutralize the gender bias in its political history. Even the 1/3<sup>rd</sup> political appointments at the local government level earmarked for women by the government is still a far cry from gender balance.

### ***Low Access to Education***

Due to the deep rooted gender discrimination in Indian society anchored on patriarchy, parents preferred educating their male children than the female. Thus, female literacy rate in India is low compared to that of the male arising from inadequate access to education. In 2004, the literacy rate for men was 73.4% that of the women folk was abysmally low! In 2010, an estimated 50.4% male above 25 years had secondary education but only 26.6% female had access to the same level of education. (Ibid)

### ***Inadequate Credit Facilities***

Gender prejudice over inheritance, landed properties and other assets limited women's chances of loan procurement from commercial banks and other lending

financial institutions. This is because most women do not possess the requisite collateral which is often in the form of valuable landed properties. Indeed, despite the Hindu Succession Act of 1956 that allowed women to share ancestral property, the men still dominated the women in property inheritance because of non-recognition and ineffective implementation of the Act consequent on the patriarchal attitude of the men. Thus, the women had fewer assets while the men accumulated enormous properties. (Mohan L, op. cit.) This trend persisted. Due to women's plight in this respect, the government also intervened. In 2005, there was the establishment of macro-credit initiatives. The public sector banks were also directed to set aside 5% of their Net Bank Credit for women. Credit to the women from the latter rose from 2.36% in 2001 to 6.29% in 2009. (Source, Gender Inequality in India, wiki-gender.org). However, more effort is needed for effective women economic empowerment.

### ***Lack of Health Facilities***

There is the inadequate provision of health care facilities for the women-folks as a result of low funding of the public health sector. For instance, The UN Report stated that 200 Indian women lost their lives for every 100,000 child birth. (See, Kaswan, op. cit.) The National Rural Health Mission embarked upon by the government to resuscitate the health sector yielded no significant result. OXFAM (February 20, 2013) has indicated that government policy on the promotion of the private sector culminated in the widespread establishment of private hospitals and clinics whose interest is profit maximization. These doctors perpetuated unethical practices by forcing women to undergo needless caesarean sections or hysterectomies because they could obtain up to \$540 dollars unlike normal delivery that yields just between \$90 - \$110 dollars. In some cases, women's uterus is being cut off on the mere complaint of stomach ache with little or no regard for the consequences of this on women's health and social status. The baseless operations by the private practicing doctors were meant to accumulate financial benefits from the patients. Thus, women's health is continuously placed at risk!

### ***Dowry Murder***

The historical root of the dowry system in India is located in the Hindu Upper Caste meant to financially and economically empower the bride as she commenced married life in her husband's house. Subsequently, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it engulfed the diverse sections of the Indian society. With capitalism and commercialization, the system became abused by the bridegrooms and their relatives in order to accumulate money, jewellery, furniture, electronic appliances, farmlands and other valuable assets from the

bride's family as dowry. (Varmal, January 27, 2012) In contemporary times, in the event of the presentation of insufficient dowry, the groom and his family resort to violence against the bride. She is being abused or out-rightly burnt by pouring petrol on her. Again, the demand for dowry persists several years after marriage which further explains the proliferation of dowry murders in India. (Sydney Morning Herald, September 4, 2013) Consequently, with the exception of 2012 when there was a marginal reduction, between 2007 to 2011 the incidence of dowry deaths in country kept soaring as indicated by the table below:

**Table 1: Rate of Dowry Deaths in India 2007 - 2012**

Year	Rate
2007	8,093
2008	8,172
2009	8,383
2010	8,391
2011	8,618
2012	8,233

**Source:** Table constructed based on statistics from Times of India (September 1, 2013) Dowry Death: One Woman Dies Every Hour. Retrieved November 14, from <http://www.articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com>Home>Collections>Delhi Police>.

Despite the 1961 enactment of laws prohibiting the demands for dowry by the groom and his relatives and the amendment of the Indian Penal Code in 1986, the social ill still persists. There was a further promulgation of the Domestic Violence Act 2005, but reviewed in 2006 meant to protect women against domestic violence involving the request for dowry. Violation of the law by the husband and his family members was regarded as a criminal offence attracting punishment such as imprisonment. Yet, due to the deep rooted culture of discrimination against women, it still proved ineffective. Most policemen and male lawyers handling such cases often showed little or no interest (gender bias). (Source, Dowry Law in India. Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopaedia) For instance, conviction rates for bride burning cases dropped from 37% in 2000 to 34% in 2010. (Varmal, op. cit.)

### **Female Feticide and Infanticide**

Gender discrimination in India also took the form of preference for male children over female ones resulting in the widely practised female feticide and infanticide. Female feticide connotes the determination of the sex of a foetus through a high-tech medical instrument for the purpose of aborting the female foetuses. Infanticide on the other hand, represents the murder of a new born

female child due to its gender categorization. (Source, Hinduism: The World's Third Largest Religion. [www.religioustolerance.org](http://www.religioustolerance.org)) Thus, at the birth of a baby girl, the dudhpilao ritual is conducted signifying the parent's liberty to destroy the child through any means. Sometimes, it took the form of drowning the baby, widespread abandonment of female children, victimization and so on. (Mahan L., op. cit.) As a result of female feticide and infanticide, about 10 million girl children were murdered in India over the last 20 years. It is on record that 600,000 fetuses are aborted annually. (Baklinski, April 15, 2011).

Despite legislative action against it, the practice is still on course culminating in a higher male ratio to female in India. And, according to Mahan L. (op. cit.), this practice is especially rife amongst the Hindus as a result of which the Hindu population is witnessing a decline but due to the absence of such practises amongst the Indian Christians, Muslims and Buddhists, their populations and sex ratio kept rising at a reasonable balance. That, while the Muslim population rose from 34.5% between 1981 - 1991 to 36.0% between 1991 - 2001, that of the Hindu declined from 25.1% to 20.3% in the same periods. The Christian population on the other hand, remained relatively stable.

### **A Critical Appraisal**

The work is precipitated by the worrisome gender disparity and violence in India which has drawn international attention. On the question of the causes of the malaise, although the Hindu philosophical and religious belief system played a role, it cannot be exclusively blamed for the plight of Indian women. Patriarchy is not unique to India. For, with the exception of a few matrilineal and matri-local societies, all over the world and throughout history, human societies have been structured along the patriarchal order due to men's claim of hegemony over women and its continuous re-enforcement in modern times. Although this raises the question of the degree of its manifestation in a given society in which case the Indian example is relatively high which some have attributed to the Hindu practices requiring urgent redress. This research work however, maintains that men's greed and the increasing quest for materialism is at the heart of the gender question in India.

Again, the Hindu belief system is opposed to violence against humans and even animals. Therefore, the preponderance of infanticide and foeticide against the female gender (foetus and infant) may not have emanated from the philosophy. The law of Karma is a standing warning for the consequences of such acts.

Furthermore, if the Caste System is projected as a strong case for the role of Hinduism in the Indian gender question, then there is the need to re-assert that the system was hostile to all lower caste groups irrespective of gender categorization. Indeed, the essence of the Caste System was based on social/class superiority/purity claimed by some groups while regarding others as impure with the propensity of polluting the former in the event of any contact whatsoever. This development gave rise to what can be termed group discrimination not gender. This position is further affirmed and consolidated by the posture of the Dalit women (The Untouchables/Scheduled Caste) in modern India who are of the view and rightly so, that the women of the Upper Caste have no right to champion the national struggle for the liberation of India women from gender discrimination and violence because, they (the Dalit women) suffer from a kind of gender bias and violence which women from the other privileged caste groups may not effectively comprehend its nature and hurt! (See Wandana Sonalkar, January, 2004). Indeed, even Nakamura (op.cit. p.192) regarded philosophical Hinduism as overtly speculative and meant to serve the interest of the elites/ Upper Castes.

Furthermore, the argument that Hinduism is responsible for the gender imbalance in India gradually collapses when compared with China. The dominant philosophical and religious inclination of the Chinese has been Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. Yet, there is a noticeable gender disparity in the country consequent on the One Child Policy introduced by Deng Xiaoping since 1979 and adopted by successive Chinese governments to effectively control population growth. To this end, couples were restricted to a child. The IUDs, sterilization, abortion, sex education and even fines have been some of the strategies utilized by the government to ensure birth control in China. (Rosenberg, 16 May, 2014) The question is was this also caused by Hinduism? Certainly not! For, China was not even listed amongst the ten countries of the world with the highest Hindu population in 2010 as the statistics in the table below indicates:

**Table 2: World Top 10: Hindu Population**

Ranking	Country	Estimated 2010 Hindu Population
1.	India	973,750,000
2.	Nepal	24,170,000
3.	Bangladesh	13,520,000
4.	Indonesia	4,050,000
5.	Pakistan	3,330,000
6.	Sri Lanka	2,830,000
7.	United States	1,790,000
8.	Malaysia	1,720,000
9.	Myanmar	820,000
10.	United Kingdom	800,000

**Source:** Countries with Largest Hindu Population- World Top Ten-World Map. Retrieved June 8, 2014 from <http://www.mapsofworld.com>WorldMap>WorldTopTen>.

Realistically therefore, it was the One Child Policy that compelled most Chinese couples to opt for the male child to the detriment of the female child. Thus, like India, there is the widespread neglect of the female infant, abandonment, feticide, infanticide and others in China in preference for the male child. (Ibid) It has now been indicated that by 2020, China will have 24 million excess men who may experience difficulty finding a wife. (BBC, 28 December, 2013)

Recently however, the One Child Policy is increasingly becoming unpopular and criticized thus China's top legislators passed a resolution permitting couples to give birth to 2 children "if either parent is an only Child." Again, this was only necessitated by the leaders' concern over China's aging population the implication of which may include the reduction of active labour-force and the increase in social security for the elderly. (Ibid) The feat China has achieved in industrialization, international trade, economic development, science, space and military technology which has currently marked the nation as an emerging global power has to be sustained. How can this be? Again, this can only be feasible through the contributions of an active non aging population irrespective of gender categorization. Thus, the researcher is of the view that the relaxation of the One Child Policy in China is a step in the right direction and timely too. For, without this, the country may have to rely on migrant labour in the future!

### **Implication of Gender Inequality for India**

Gender imbalance has adverse consequences for national security. It is an instrumental factor in increasing crime rates and violence against women in contemporary India. Permanent bachelorhood does not depict a man as a responsible member of the Indian society. Thus, the frustration arising leads

the young men into intense competition and conflicts over scarce women, gang rape, robbery and the contraction of terminal ailments such as HIV/AIDs. (Trivedi and Timmons, January 16, 2013).

Apart from the preceding, it has intensified the pace of human trafficking in the country. The scenario of limited women for surplus men culminated in the kidnapping and trafficking of young women sold as wives to prospective buyers. Evidence indicated that the human traffickers derived enormous monetary benefits from the business due to high demands. Compounded by the incidence of corruption in the law enforcement agencies, most of the traffickers were able to infiltrate and bribe some officials whom otherwise should have stifled such criminal activities. In 2011 alone, an estimated 35,000 children especially girls were declared missing in India sold into forced marriage, prostitution and domestic slavery. A single trafficker is capable of supplying between 150 - 200 young girls per annum. (PRI's The World, January 19, 2013).

Western education is a significant instrument for enlightenment, economic empowerment, social mobility, inculcation of political ideals, technological development and above all the sustainability of democracy in a nation. This suggests that western education is critical to national development. However, since many Indian women are deprived the opportunity for the acquisition of western education, it indicates their systematic disempowerment in many areas-politically, socially and economically. Their contribution to nation building is therefore limited.

Lastly, high incidence of violent crime in India in contemporary times is further stimulating parents' preference for male children over female in order to contend with a violent society. (See Sen, 1999:200) The implication of this is the continuous widening of the female-male ratio imbalance in the Indian society.

### **Conclusion**

There is the need for a fundamental change of attitude towards women by the men-folks and the consideration of the former as partners in the sustainable development of India as a nation. This will be heralded world-wide as the dawn of a new era in the social, economic and political history of India consequent on the transformation that would be derived there from. It will also represent a major breakthrough in the advancement of world peace and security.

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