

# Gender Inequalities in the British Period

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## Abstract

The present paper examines the issues of mortality, parents' preference of birth of children, education, household's arrangement of house works, profession, voting rights, inheritance rights of women on property, widow remarriage, marriageable age for girls and boys, "Sati Custom" and freedom movement in the British period. The objective is to know whether the issues were free from gender inequalities. In addition, we have also examined whether the gender inequalities, if any, in the above mentioned issues are relevant to early 21<sup>st</sup> century modern India.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The British empire in India was not planned. It just happened. The British came to India for business but not for establishing an empire. The year 1757, when Nawab Sirajuddaulla lost in the battle of *Plassy* (known as *Palasy* in the locality), is often called as the beginning of the British empire. However, the British took over Delhi in 1803. In the year 1877 the Queen Victoria was proclaimed as the empress of India. Thus, the direct British rule officially started in the year 1877.

Aurangzeb was the last independent Mughal emperor. He died in 1707. In the context of British period, a few words should be spoken about how the British captured the power after the death of Aurangzeb.

After his death, the incapable successors of Aurangzeb captured power. The British took the advantage of weak successors. This led to the battle of *Plassy* in 1757. In this battle 8000 European troops and 50000 troops of Nawab Sirajuddaulla fought but Nawab Sirajuddaulla was defeated. After the battle, Robert Clive obtained the right of collecting revenues from the Mughal rulers. Then the Mughal emperors faced other challenges including the rise of regional and ethnic powers such as Marathas, Sikhs and Rajputs. However, after the Sepoy mutiny in 1857, the Mughal dynasty was terminated. The British government took over the direct rule replacing East India company's administration. In this way, the British empire was established in India.

Now, we examine the different issues as mentioned in the abstract to know whether there was any gender discrimination during the British period.

## II. MORTALITY

Mortality generally occurred in the British period due to the respiratory diseases. The mortality rates were the highest in the rural areas of India in this period. Because the rural areas were more infected than the urban areas due to the little advantage of sanitation, ventilation, etc., mortality was higher among the female adults than the male adults in this period. Thus, the higher female mortality than male mortality was due to the respiratory diseases. The females suffered more than males from the respiratory diseases. Because, the females had to cook with the leaves of the trees and woods and they directly inhaled smokes at the time of cooking. (Census of India:1921).

The Census of India, 1921 also provided the total number of death and death rates per million populations according to provinces. This is presented in the Table below.

**Table 1: Estimated Number of Deaths Due to Respiratory diseases**

| Provinces         | Estimated Number of Deaths | Death Rates per Million of population |
|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Ajmer Marwara     | 29835                      | 59.5                                  |
| Assam             | 111,345                    | 18.6                                  |
| Bengal            | 386572                     | 8.5                                   |
| Bihar and Orrissa | 709976                     | 20.5                                  |
| Bombay            | 1059,498                   | 54.9                                  |

|                              |         |      |
|------------------------------|---------|------|
| Burma                        | 137,491 | 13.6 |
| CP + Berar                   | 924,949 | 56.4 |
| Coorg                        | 2014    | 11.5 |
| Delhi                        | 23,619  | 56.6 |
| Madras                       | 682,199 | 16.7 |
| N.W.F. Province              | 89035   | 43.6 |
| Punjab                       | 896974  | 45.4 |
| United Province <sup>1</sup> | 2034257 | 43.4 |

(Census of India: Census Report, 1921)

From the Table 1, it is clear that the number of total deaths due to respiratory diseases was the highest in the United Provinces being 2034257 and the lowest in Coorg province being 2014 in the British Period. However, the death rate was the highest in Ajmer Marwara (59.5 per million population) and the lowest in Bengal (8.5 per million population). Female mortality was higher than the male mortality (according to the Census report).

In the context of higher female mortality in the British period, it can be added that many widows immolated themselves in this period due to 'Sati custom' The British Govt. prepared a Table of Statistics of 'Sati for the period 1815 to 1828.

**Table 2: Number of 'Satis' During 1815-1828**

| Name of Division                             | Number of Satis<br>1815-1828 |
|--|------------------------------|
| Calcutta Division (Predominantly Hindus)     | 5099                         |
| Dacca Division (Predominantly Muslims)       | 610                          |
| Murshidabad Division (Predominantly Muslims) | 260                          |
| Patna Division (Predominantly Hindus)        | 709                          |
| Bareilly Division (Predominantly Hindus)     | 193                          |
| Banaras Division (Predominantly Orthodox)    | 1165                         |

Source: Altekar (1938)

The Table above will show that the number of 'Satis' in the Hindu population of Bengal was much higher than all other regions. The percentage of "Satis" was also the highest in Bengal, even higher than that of Banaras, the greatest stronghold of orthodoxy. Perhaps, there was some force that induced the widows to become Satis.

### III. ISSUE OF PARENT'S PREFERENCE ON THE BIRTH OF CHILDREN

By natality inequality, in the context of sex preferences, we mean the preference of a male child to a female child. This aspect has been examined with the help of sex ratio. Indeed, the sex ratio of human population is one of the basic demographic characteristics that shows how the people treated females. This is extremely vital for any demographic analysis. Because the socio-economic relationships are related to the disparity between the number of males and females. Indian Censuses define sex ratio as the number of females per 1000 males. This ratio may be termed as Female-Male Ratio (FMR). We present the sex-ratios in India for the Census years 1901 through 1941 in the British period to examine whether there was an inequity in terms of FMR.

**Table 3: Sex Ratios for the Census years, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931 and 1941**

| Serial | Census Year | Sex Ratio (FMR) |
|--------|-------------|-----------------|
| 1      | 1901        | 0.972           |
| 2      | 1911        | 0.964           |
| 3      | 1921        | 0.955           |
| 4      | 1931        | 0.950           |
| 5      | 1941        | 0.945           |

<sup>1</sup>“The **United Provinces of British India**, more commonly known as the **United Provinces**, was a province of British India, which came into existence on 3 January 1921 as a result of the renaming of the *United Provinces of Agra and Oudh*. It corresponded approximately to the combined regions of the present-day Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. It ceased to exist on 1 April 1937 when it was renamed as the United Provinces. Lucknow became its capital sometime after 1921.”  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_Provinces\\_of\\_British\\_India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Provinces_of_British_India)

From Table 3, it is clear that the FMR values are less than 1 in all the census years during the later stage of the British period. This inequality may be explained in terms of the infanticides in this period. In this period, many Hindus killed their daughters immediately after their birth by poison or before their birth by abortion. (Cormackon, 1915). There were high cases of female infanticides in the States like Gujrat, Rajasthan, Bengal, Sindh, Punjab and Madhya Pradesh during this period. This cruel activity was particularly common among the Bengalis and Rajputs. Some socially backward tribes followed this cruel practice. It thus follows that parents in the British period, preferred a male child to a female child.

#### IV. EDUCATION

The British rulers were not at all interested in spreading education for the masses. They were more interested in spreading English language to create clerks on low wages to reduce expenditure for administration. Indeed, the British followed a half-hearted education policy in India. As a result, education was not equally taken by males and females. Indeed, the British rulers were not interested in spreading female education wholeheartedly.

The gender inequality in education may be examined through the literacy rate by gender. Table 4 presents the literacy rates of males and females by Census years since 1901.

**Table 4: Literacy Rate of Male and Female Populations (1901-1941)**

| Census Year | Male Literacy (%) | Female Literacy (%) |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1901        | 9.8               | 0.6                 |
| 1911        | 10.6              | 1.1                 |
| 1921        | 12.2              | 1.1                 |
| 1931        | 15.6              | 2.9                 |
| 1941        | 24.9              | 7.3                 |

Source: Census 2011

From the Table 4, it is quite clear that gender inequality in education existed in British period in terms of literacy rate. The Table shows that the male literacy rates were much higher than female literacy rates. In spite of the discrimination in literacy rates, it is significant to note that the female literacy rate was increasing to a great extent from 1901 to 1941.

Let us examine gender inequality in education in terms of total enrolment of boys and girls in all institutions in the British period covering the years 1922, 1927, 1932, 1937 and 1942. For this, a Table of Sex-wise Distribution of Total Enrolment of boys and girls in all institutions is presented below:

**Table 5: Sex-wise Distribution of Boys and Girls of Total Enrolment in the British period.**

| Year | Boys     | Girls   | % of boys of total enrolment | % of girls of female total enrolment |
|------|----------|---------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1922 | 6962928  | 1424422 | 83.02                        | 16.98                                |
| 1927 | 9315144  | 1842352 | 83.49                        | 16.51                                |
| 1932 | 10273888 | 2492649 | 80.48                        | 19.52                                |
| 1937 | 11007683 | 3138357 | 77.81                        | 22.19                                |
| 1942 | 13948979 | 4297785 | 76.45                        | 23.55                                |

Source: GOI, Progress of Education in India (PEI) (1948)

From Table 5, it is clear the total number enrolment of boys in absolute term was higher than the total number of enrolment of girls in all institutions in India in the British period. The Table shows that the percentage of boys of total enrolments was much higher than the percentage of girls in the years in the British period. Thus, the study reflects that there was the gender inequality in education in terms of literacy rate and in terms of the enrolment in educational institutions in this period.

In this context, it should be noted that the Muslims were far behind in the field of education in this period. According to S. Tandon (2002) the Muslims by 1875 made up only 5.4 percent of total college enrolment while Hindus made up 93.9 percent of total collage education Almost the same situation was witnessed in the secondary schools and universities.

**V. HOUSEHOLD’S ARRANGEMENT OF HOUSE WORKS**

“It has been found that in many societies the family arrangement of house works is quite unequal in terms of sharing the burden of house works and the family care. Even in the cases where there is no sign of anti-female bias or in son preferences, the family arrangement of houseworks was quite unequal.” (Sen, 2001).

We now investigate the gender inequality interms of the sharing the burden of houseworks between a husband and a wife in the British period. In the Colonial India, the social status of women seemed to be dependent on men (Mill, 1997). During that time the women were fully subordinates to men in all matters. They were denied the opportunity in education and their basic rights as individuals and they had noeconomic rights. They were confined to the four walls, of the house they showed more efficiency in domestic works. Indeed, the husbands were unable to organize their domestic life. A wife would perform all household’s duties at home.

The woman would take care of her husband, children and old parents of the husband. After performing her domestic duties at home, a wife would also help her husband outside home. For example, a wife belonging to poor agricultural family would assist her husband in various agricultural operations. When crops were brought at home, a wife of a poor farmer would help her husband when crops were threshed. It is also significant to note that a wife of rich family would take her children to a school and would takethem back from school after performing her domestic duties at home. Thus, it follows that the distribution of house works between a husband and a wife in the British period was quite demarcated and unequal in terms of sharing the burden of house-works (Goswami Bhattacharya, 2011).

**VI. PROFESSION**

The professional inequality is examined in this section interms of employment between men and women engaged in different occupations in the British period. Prof. Amartya Sen, the Nobel laureate, observed that “A country like Japan may be quite egalitarian in matters of demography or basic facilities in education, or higher education, yet progress to the elevated level of employment and occupation seems for much more problematic for women than men” (Sen, 2001).

Whether there was professional inequality between men and women in the British period is examined under the following heads.

**(a) Organized sector vs unorganized sector**

The organized sector is characterized by the modern relations of production. This sector is regulated by laws to protect the security and working conditions of labours. In this sector labour organization can bargain to raise wages for labours. This sector includes the entire public sector of services and a part of private sector which is regulated by law. On theother hand, the unorganized sector includes agriculture as well as various industries and service. This sector is characterized by the absence of all protection measures for workers.

A Table presentedis presented below to have a glimpse about the percentages of men and women worked in the organized and unorganized sectors in the British period.

Table: Percentage of Man and Women workers in the organized and unorganized sectors

| Sector             | Men | Women |
|--------------------|-----|-------|
| Organized Sector   | 90% | 6%    |
| Unorganized Sector | 6%  | 90%   |

The remaining 4 percent in both the sectors were possibly worked in organizations which cannot be characterized whether these organizations belonged to organized or unorganized sectors.

From the Table above, it is clear that there was the gender inequality in the employment of men and women in the organized sector as well as in unorganized sector though in a reverse order in the British period. In the present time this type of inequity is termed as segregation. As high as 90% men workers and only 6% women workers were employed in the organized sector. The apposite situation occurred in the cases of men and women in the unorganized sector. This reflects the gender segregation in the appointment in both the organizedand unorganized sectors. The organized sector workers could bargain for higher wages where only 65% women were employed. On the other hand, 90% women, who workedin the unorganized sector,could not bargain for higher wages. This suggests that the economic condition of women workers was very pathetic in the British period.

**(b) “Employment in Mine Sector”**

So far as the employment in mine sector is concerned, 109000 women and 549000 men worked in this sector. This statistic reflected gender segregation in the employment in mine sector. This discrimination in the employment may be attributed to the adverse effects of protective laws, the policy of equalizing wages and the

structural changes in the economy which led modernization and rationalization methods of production. Indeed, the principle of equalization had not been seriously applied in most industries.

**(c) Employment in Medical Sector**

In the British period, the total number of medical work force employed was 115000. Out of 115000 work force, women were only 11000 and the remaining 104000 were men medical forces. This statistic reflects that there was gender inequality in the appointment of medical force. But the number of qualified women doctors was 25 per hundred men. According to the census report 1971, the ratio of women physician and surgeons employed was only six per hundred men. This indicates the underutilization of women doctors and also their migration to other states for employment. The majority of the patients of women doctors were women. Thus, most of the women doctors were specialized in obstetrics, and gynecology in this period. After the independence of India, they were interested in areas like pediatrics, surgery pathology and radiology. Very few women doctors were specialized in the branch of surgery in this period. Women doctors avoided surgery as surgery took a lot of time to learn. However, women doctors were concentrated in urban areas.

**(d) Appointment in the Central Services – Indian Administration Service (IAS), Indian Foreign service (IFS), Indian Police Service (IPS) and other Central Services – Indian Economic Service, Statistical Service and Engineering Service.**

The ratio of women to men recommended for the appointment in Administrative Service, Indian Foreign Service and Indian Police Service was very low in this period. The ratio of appointment in these services was on the whole 1:81. But in other central Services like Indian Economic Service, was also low compared to men.

In fact, in most of the higher administrative professional and business categories the number of women was very low compared to men. For example, in 1936-37 Survey, it was found that the number of women appointed in these services was very negligible. After independence the number of women appointed in those services had, to some extent, gone up. (Gadgil, 1965)

From the above, it is quite clear that there was gender discrimination in the appointment of various central services.

## **VII. VOTING RIGHTS**

The women did not enjoy the voting right in the colonial India. Only men enjoyed this right. This reflects gender inequality in terms of voting right. But the women acquired partial voting right to elect the state's legislature through movement.

However, it will be interesting to see how the women acquired the right to elect the state's legislatures through the movement under the leadership of Sarojini Naidu. Sarojini Naidu drafted a plan. The plan emphasized the British Government must increase the number of girls' school and condemned the discriminations in voting right between men and women (Christian, 1977). The drafted plan also suggested that the female education should be encouraged through the scholarship and that the number of teachers should be increased. (Kaur, 1994).

The immediate result from the proposed memorandum was the formation of Montague Chelmsford Reform Act of 1919. This act gave women the right to elect state legislatures only. But the women had no right to vote in the election of Council of State for Governor General. Property and educational qualification were compulsory in the election of Governor General.

The women were not satisfied at all to elect only state legislature. They wanted equal status with men to share the responsibilities. However, as a result of Reform Act of 1919, one Million women voted to elect the state legislature. Subsequently in 1926, women were given the right to become a member of provincial legislature through the government nomination. (Trivedi, 1978). Mahalakshmi was the first Indian nominated vice present of Madras legislature. In 1931 April a special meeting of the All-India Women's Conference (AIWC) was held in Bombay under the chairmanship of Sarojini Naidu. In that meeting, AIWC drafted a memorandum, and this memorandum was supported by all women organizations. The main points of memorandum were: (1) equal rights and obligation for all Indian citizens without sex bar, (2) no disability to any citizen because of religion, casts and creed and sex bar with regard to public opportunity, (3) adult suffrage, (4) women to contest on equal terms with men in mixed general election and (5) no reservation of seats for women as such no nomination or co-option.

A 14-women deputation by Sarojini Naidu met the viceroy and demanded self-government, women's suffrage, education, and medical college for girls. When the memorandum was placed in the Round Table conference, the British government did not accept the demand and remained adamant of not giving the women full voting right like men.

Then the civil disobedience started due to the adamant attitude of the British government. In this civil disobedience the total 80000 people were imprisoned and of the 80000 people, many were women and girls who were subject to harsh prison sentences.

In 1935, the government passed an Act. under this Act of 1935 all women over 21 years could vote provided they fulfilled the conditions of property and education (Keith, 2018). In 1942, Quit India Movement was called by Gandhiji. In this movement large number of men and women were arrested. After the arrest of Gandhiji the full-fledged demand for voting rights was stopped. From the above it is clear that women could not earn the right to vote like men in the British period. They only earned the partial right to vote to elect and to be elected in the basis of property and education.

However, after the independence of India in 1947, women acquired the full-fledged right to vote like men.

### **VIII. INHERITANCE RIGHTS OF WOMEN ON PROPERTY.**

The British government observed male oriented customary practices in respect of inheritance rights of women on property. These practices of the British government denied all the inheritance rights of women on property. The government only safe guarded land and property in patrilineal line of descent. As a result, only sons enjoyed the inheritance rights on paternal property and other members of family such as unmarried daughters married daughters had no inheritance rights on paternal property.

Only widows had limited rights on the ancestral property in this period. But after her death, property reverted to her husband's male collaterals (descended from the same ancestors). This meant that basically the daughters who were potential introducers of fresh blood and new descent lines through their husbands were kept legally outside beyond the purview of inheritance rights. This was necessary to keep the land within the immediate kingship groups. Practically in the British period nothing was said about the succession, alienation of women's right. In this period the sonless proprietor (father) could give his land to the sons of the daughter. It is clear that only sons enjoyed the inheritance right on property, but the daughters (married or unmarried) had no such right. From these it follows that there was gender discrimination in heritance right on property in this period. (Chowdhuri)

### **IX. WIDOW REMARRIAGE**

In the British period, the widow could not remarry after her husband's death but the widower could easily remarry after his wife's death, which shows gender discrimination in respect of remarriage. Remarriage of Hindu women, however, was permitted by the Hindu Sastras in five situations. The situations were (i) death of husband, (ii) impotency of husband, (iii) ascetic nature of husband, (iv) long absence of husband and (v) apostasy of husband. But these practices were not followed at all due to the strict strictures imposed by Hindu religious leaders. As a result, widows often were involved in extramarital relations. Some widows even took the profession of prostitutes. Those widows who kept themselves confined in four walls, led a life of celibacy and used to spend their time in worshipping idols.

Raja Rammohan Roy and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar argued in favor of remarriage. In 1853, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar published a book in support of widow remarriage. Finally the British government passed 'Widow Act' in 1856. As a result of this act, the widow could remarry after her husband's death. It may be noted that efforts of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshab Chandra Sen and D. K Karve resulted in the enactment of 'Widow Act', 1856. In south India Kundukuri and Veeresalingam led the widow remarriage movement. Sixty-three widows in 1874 were remarried throughout the Madrash Presidency. Men who married widows, they were given homes and other benefits. In Bengal, widow remarriage started when the son of Vidyasagar married a widow. In fact, "On Thursday, the 11th of August, 1870, Narayan Chandra was married to Bhava Sundari Devi, a widowed daughter of Sambhu Chandra Mukhopadhyay of Khanakul Krishnanagar." ([https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Iswar\\_Chandra\\_Vidyasagar,\\_a\\_story\\_of\\_his\\_life\\_and\\_work/Chapter\\_27](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Iswar_Chandra_Vidyasagar,_a_story_of_his_life_and_work/Chapter_27))

### **X. MARRIAGEABLE AGE FOR GIRLS AND BOYS**

In the British period, marriage age for girls oscillated between 8 & 9 years. But there was no definite marriageable age for boys. They could marry at any age, which shows gender discrimination in terms of marriageable age. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and other reformers requested the British Government to raise marriageable age for girls. The British Government responded to their request and age of Consent Bill was passed in 1866. This bill prohibited the sexual intercourse less than 10 years of age or else it would be considered as rape.

Reformers like Mahadev Gobind Ranade, Behramgi and Tej Bahadur Sapru started movement to raise marriageable age for girls to more than 10 years of age. They argued that consummation at the age of 10 or 11 led the physical and psychological disturbances in the case of girls. Between 1884 and 1889 enormous pressures were created on the British government to raise girls marriageable age to more than 10 years. However, the

marriageable age of girls was fixed to 12 years under the enactment of the consent bill in 1891. These have been possible due to the collective efforts of the reformers (Stanely and Kumar, 2010).

### **XI. 'SATI' CUSTOM**

A barbaric or ghoulish custom, known as The 'Sati' custom, was prevalent in British India. Under this custom a widow was burned alive with her dead husband, but this same practice was not followed in the case of widower. This shows gender discrimination. The logic behind this barbaric custom was that if a widow sacrificed her life with her dead husband then she would go to heaven with him, but this logic was not applicable for a widower. However, the father of Indian Renaissance, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, had taken up the issue of 'Sati Dahan'. He, consistently, tried to convince Hindu religious leaders that the custom had no religious sanction for *Sati Dahan*. He widely circulated his opinion for the abolition of these barbaric custom based on the Hindu Law of Inheritance. At last the governor General William Bentic enacted the legislation for the abolition of this custom in 1820.

### **XII. FREEDOM MOVEMENT**

In colonial Indian, the social status of women was very pathetic. They were fully dependent on men except a few women of the upper classes. They could not go out of their home freely. They had to take permissions from their guardians for going out of their home. Thus, Indian freedom movements were generally lead by men, which shows gender bias in freedom movement. In spite of this barrier, women could not be suppressed to participate in the movement. They responded to Gandhiji's call to participate in the movement, they joined the movement breaking all the hindrances. The participation of women in the freedom movement greatly surprised the British government. Gandhiji said, "The part women played in the movement will be written in letters of gold" (Devendra, 1985. P22).

A brief account of the sacrifices of women is given below-

Renuka Roy<sup>3</sup> gives away her jewelry. (Devendra, 1985, p.22).

Sarojini Naidu was an extraordinary woman. She was sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment. Her contribution to Indian's freedom movement cannot be underestimated. It was her call for a women's section of the congress that led to the formation of All Indian Women's Conference. (Narashimhan, 1979). She went to round table conference in London. She said "I came here only because my leader was not quite sure of wisdom men of East and insisted on being reinforced by the in memorial wisdom of the women of the East" (Sahgal, 1979). In 1930 Gandhiji chose Naidu to lead the salt Satyagraha after his arrest. She was then 51 years old. She managed to 2000 volunteers to raid the Dharassana salt works while police chased them half a mile up the road with *lathis*.

The volunteers cheered Sarojini Naidu when she had shaken off the armed of the British officials who came to arrest her and marched the barbed wire stockade where she was interned before being imprisoned. (Sahgal, 1979). In Delhi 1600 women were arrested. She was very active when Gandhiji was arrested. Gandhiji's non-cooperation and civil disobedience and quit India movement had achieved great success.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Mridula Sarabai, Sucheta Kripalani, Padmaja Niadu, Durgabai Deshmukh, Aruna asaf Ali worked hard to bring out women to join the freedom movement. Women could not come out their homes so easily. The response of Indian women to Gandhiji's call surprised the British government. In Bengal Matangini Hazra of Medinapur district was killed by the British solders when she hoisted Indian National flag. Like Matangini Hazra thousands of ordinary women dedicated their lives in the freedom movement. From the above it is clear that women's contribution in the National Freedom Moment cannot be underestimated.

### **XIII. CONCLUSIONS AND THEIR RELEVANCE TO THE EARLY 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY MODERN INDIA.**

The following conclusions have been drawn on the basis of the present study.

(i) Mortality inequality between men and women existed in the British period due to the respiratory diseases of females as the females inhaled smokes at the time of cooking.

This conclusion on higher mortality of female is still relevant in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century modern India as most of the women in India suffer from respiratory diseases from smokes. They inhale smoke at the time of cooking.

(ii) Parents preferred a newborn baby to be a boy rather than a girl in the British period (i.e. natality inequality). This natality inequality still exists in early 21<sup>st</sup> century modern India. According to Sen, the sex

<sup>2</sup>*Sati Dahan*: The system of putting widow into the funerals along with her dead husband.

<sup>3</sup>Renuka Ray (1904–1997) was a noted freedom-fighter, social activist and politician of India.

selective abortion (though illegal) is seen in the present-day India. The sex-selective abortion suggests that parents still prefer a male child rather than a girl child.

(iii) The conclusion derived from the issue of education is that there was gender inequality in education in the British period in terms of the literacy rate as well as in terms of the percentage of boys and girls in total enrolments in all institutions. The study reveals that the percentage of boys enrolled in all institutions was much higher than the percentage of girls in all institutions.

This conclusion on gender inequality in education still exists in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century modern India. Amartya Sen's observation needs to be mentioned to support the relevancy of the conclusion. According to Sen, still in modern India, girls have less opportunity in schooling. He also observed the gender inequality in higher education as the enrolment of boys in colleges and universities is much higher than the enrolment of girls.

(iv) The distribution of domestic works between a husband and a wife was unequal in terms of sharing the burden of house works in the British period. A wife would bear more burden than her husband in domestic works.

The unequal distribution of domestic works seems to be relevant to early 21<sup>st</sup> century modern India specially in a poor family. Because a wife belonging to a poor family takes more responsibility in caring her children than her husband. Besides, she also takes care of her husband's old parents at home. This inequality is dominant in the case of a wife of a poor agricultural family. After performing her domestic works at home, a wife of a poor agricultural family helps her husband in various agricultural operation outside home.

(v) There was professional gender inequality in terms of the appointment in organized and unorganized sectors, mine sector, medical sector, Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Police Service and the Central Service. The study revealed that appointment of men in the above-mentioned sectors was much higher than women.

This discrimination in appointment in the different sectors is still relevant in the modern India. Recent statistics show that the appointment of men in the above sectors are higher than women.

(vi) The conclusion derived from the issue of voting right is that in the British period the women had no voting right to elect or to be elected like men reflecting gender discrimination in voting rights.

Now, every citizen irrespective of men and woman has equal voting right. After independence, woman earned this voting right.

(vii) The women (married women, unmarried women) had no inheritance right on property in the British period. Only sons had inheritance right on property. This clearly reflects the gender discrimination in terms of the inheritance right in the period.

In the early years of independence, the succession Act was passed (Hindu Succession Act No. XXX of 1950). This Act brought about radical changes in the law of succession and thus violating the past. The section 44 of this Act abrogated all the rules & laws of succession applicable of Hindu. A progressive Act was applied to women and enabled the married and unmarried daughters, windows, mothers etc. to inherit land with proprietary rights to its disposal.

(viii). In the British period there were gender discrimination in remarriage, widow could not remarry after her husband's death. But the widower could easily remarry after her wife's death.

Now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century India this discrimination has no relevance. Now both the widow and widower can remarry.

(ix). In the British period the gender discrimination on marriageable age was noticed the girls marriageable age was raised to 12 years through the reformers movement. But men could marry at any age.

This discrimination has not relevant because girls' minimum marriageable age is now fixed 18 years and the same is now applied for boys.

(x). in the British period, under the 'Sati' Custom, widows were burned alive along with their dead husband. But same was not followed in the case of widower when his wife was dead.

Now this discrimination has now no relevance at all because this Custom was totally abolished by the enactment of law by William Bentick in 1890.

(xi). In colonial Indian there was gender discrimination in the freedom movement of Indian because of the freedom movement was mainly led by men. The women could not participant in the movement freely as men due to the restriction from the guidance. However, in spite of their barriers they came out of their homes and participated in the movement. (The tales are elaborated in the text)

Now this discrimination has not at all relevance. Now the women can participate equally with men with any movement.

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