

## GENDER, ECONOMY AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: Major Policy Considerations of the EU-India Relationship

Ranjana Kumari, Ph.D  
Director, Centre for Social Research  
New Delhi  
e-mail: [ranjanakumari@hotmail.com](mailto:ranjanakumari@hotmail.com)

EU and India are trying to stabilize their relationship in the fast changing modern world system around the principles of freedom democracy and inter-dependence. They do have a large sphere of mutuality due to their commitment for social justice, gender equality, human rights, multiculturalism and environmental protection. Both of them are facing challenge of terrorism. They are confronting forces of violence and destruction that want to promote religious fundamentalism and ethnic intolerance.

But India is yet to acquire place of primacy in the EU strategy of engagement with Asia. Similarly the Indians have memories of various patterns of relationship with different nation-states of Europe. It is necessary to keep in mind that India-Europe interactions have grown through phases of (i) trade contacts, (ii) confrontation, (iv) colonization, (iv) decolonization, (v) benign neglect, (iv) strategic interactions, and (vii) creative cooperation between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The new century is asking for new terms of relationship. They should be in harmony with the interests of India and EU with reference to the challenges of globalization. It is also important that there are initiatives to define our engagement so that the inter-state relations are suitably complemented by market and civil society based process. I take this opportunity to point out four basic domains for sustainable cooperation between India and EU around the quest for participatory democracy through gender equality. They are economy, social development, security and environmental protection.

### **Economy**

From the perspective of gender and employment, there are several sectors in the Indian economy like textiles, garments, agro-products, handloom, dairy, crafts etc. that provide livelihood opportunities to a large number of women. In fact export growth in the past decade lead to more employment opportunity for women in garment, fishery and food processing industries.

The textile industry is the largest industry of modern India. After agriculture, the textiles sector is the largest employer. Direct employment in the textiles industry was estimated at 35 million in 2000-2001. It accounts for over 20 percent of industrial production and is closely linked with the agricultural and rural economy. In 2000-2001, the textiles industry contributed an estimated 14 percent to industrial production and 27 percent to India's

export earnings. In 2001-2002 textile exports contributed 28 percent, and readymade garments contributed 17 percent, to total manufacturing exports from India. There has been considerable growth in the export of readymade garments, cotton textiles and total textile exports from India between 1989-1990 (3472 and 825 crores respectively) and 1998-1999 (22208.68 and 16448.39 crores respectively). The growth in exports of man-made textiles, silk, wool and woollen products has been a lot less dramatic. Readymade garment exports have been the largest product item in India's textile exports over the entire period 1989-1990 to 1998-1999. In the year 2001-2002, readymade garments accounted for 45.08 percent of the textile exports, cotton textiles, 29.82 percent and man-made textiles, 10.27 percent. The EU is a very important destination market for Indian textile exports. India was one of the top ten suppliers of MFA clothing to the EU in 1995 and 1996.

In case of food processing activities, India has emerged as the world's second largest producer of food and the leading producer of milk. There has been a growth in the exports of India's major processed food items in the period 1993-1994 and 2000-2001, from 4889 crores to 13400 crores. Rice exports have shown a greater variability than that of other processed food products while marine products registers steady growth in export value. The value of marine exports registered more than double growth from 1993-1994 to 2001-2002 (2504 and 5800 in crores respectively). The decline in the export of all major processed food items, with the exception of rice, in 2001-2002 is partly attributed to a slow down in global economy and recession in demand from the USA, Japan and member countries of the European Union (EU).

It has to be noted that, according to the studies conducted by Centre for Social Research and other institutions from South Asia, growth in exports in all these sectors have generated increase in employment but the increase in wages or improvement in living conditions of women are not commensurate with increased exports. Thus competitiveness in global markets should not come at the cost of low wages, bad living conditions, poor health and malnutrition for women. Women are recognized as being more productive than men with higher concentration spans and should be duly rewarded. The out come of our studies was shared with a large number of academics and activists recently at consultations organized by UNCTAD and UNIFEM.

It is my suggestion that EU should include gender interests in its negotiating strategies and proposals. For this purpose there is a need to carry out systematic gender analysis of economic policies and trade agreements including engendering trade statistics. In this process, gender experts should be involved to promote a system that creates a regime of Gender Sensitive Products (GSPs) that are women friendly. The same concept could possibly be applied in services like health care, tourism, hospitality and education, where person embodied services have a high global demand and for which women in India are trained and skilled.

More studies on these issues should be carried out and a regional task force may be set up with the objective of providing inputs into Trade negotiations. India-EU relations in the field of economy also need inter-regional networks of producers, entrepreneurs, home-

based workers and regional markets. For example, there is need to examine the impact of trade defense measures of last decade such as anti-dumping, subsidies and countervailing measures on women's livelihood. Because trade liberalization by itself may not generate better living conditions and higher wages for women.

Enabling policies at the national level such as skill development, promotion of social safety nets, better enforcement of legislation for wages and affirmative action for promoting equal opportunities for women and men should be encouraged. While nurturing entrepreneurial skills in women market linkages for women should be promoted through the provision of market information, trade fairs etc. A quantum jump in the level of professionalism, organization of women workers and entrepreneurs along with a shift to bigger size targeted programmes are needed. A 1 % cess on export earnings could be used for this purpose.

There is a greater need to emphasize employment security instead of job security. Flexible labor markets are an intrinsic feature of globalization and therefore needs new approaches to address it. Social security schemes oriented towards better labor market information, redeployment, multi-skilling in traditional as well as non-traditional sectors and employment generation should be given priority. Collective organization measures like co-operative credit and marketing societies and micro-credit schemes show promises of self-empowering mechanisms for women and these require concrete support from both state and civil society actors. Physical and social infrastructure needs to be created to enable women to improve their productivity. Market development for GSPs (Gender Sensitive Products) would be very important in generating greater benefits.

Generating female employment and better incomes should also be seen as a global public good. It is also one of the main development pillars of any society and is an important Millennium Development Goal of the United Nations. India belongs to the group of countries that are progressing well towards the Millennium Development Goals, but leaving behind certain groups, areas and regions. Worldwide the number of people living on less than \$1 a day barely changed in the 1990s. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the share (percent) increased from 1.6 to 3.6 and the numbers (in million), from 7 to 17, from 1990 to 1999 respectively; while in South Asia, the share reduced from 44 to 36.9, and the number fell from 495 to 490 from 1990 to 1999. Women, rural inhabitants, ethnic minorities and other poor people are progressing slower than national average - or showing no progress - even when the country as a whole shows positive trend towards achieving many of the Goals. This is managed more easily by improving the circumstances of people already better off. This approach fits well with the letter of Goals, but fails to fit their spirit. Every third illiterate in the world is an Indian. 46% of Indian women were found to be illiterate in 2001 Census. Female literacy rates among the Scheduled Tribes were as low as 7% in Rajasthan and 9% in Madhya Pradesh. 61% lack drinking water. 44% don't have electricity. 38% Indian households live in single-room dwelling.

But over all, people are getting more income, healthier, and live longer than they did a decade ago. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in 2001 was 5.4 percent,

stronger than 4 percent in 2000. However it is below the average growth rate of 6.6 percent in the previous five years. The per capita domestic product increased from 2,337 in 1993-1994 to 2,840, in 1997-1998, an increase of 503 in four years compared to an increase of 642 in ten years (between 1981-1991). The per capita consumption expenditure has increased more than four times between 1983 and 2000. The consumption pattern in the urban centers has undergone more change than in the rural sector as the expenditure on food, which was more (58.69) in 1983, has come down to 48.06 in the year 1999-2000. There was a drop of nearly ten percent in the number of persons living below poverty line, between 1983 and 1993-1994, whereas in half that time, between 1993-1994 and 1999-2000, there was a drop by nine percent.

### **Gender and social development**

The need of wholistic orientation towards health issues is the most important challenges in the domain of gender and social development. There is ample scope of working together for taming the challenge of HIV/AIDS, and eliminating the problems of reproductive health and malnutrition.

Globally women account for half of the adults living with HIV/ AIDS. In South Asia 60% of the young people with HIV/AIDS are women. It is estimated that there are going to be 110 million cases of HIV/AIDS in India by 2025 (compared to 70 million & 13 million of China & Russia respectively). •As a result, expected reduction in life expectancy in India by 2025 is 13 years (China & Russia are 8 & 16 years respectively). India, with an estimated 3.97 million people living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 2001, is the home to 10 percent of the global HIV population. In absolute numbers, India is second only to South Africa and maximum number of infections are reported from the most productive age group ( 15-49).

In the context of reproductive health, globally 500, 000 women die in pregnancy and childbirth every year; that is, one women per minute per day. More than 100 women per 1,00,000 die at childbirth in India. Nearly 52% women in India suffer some degree of anemia - this applies to every second woman. Only 20% Indian mothers receive all the required antenatal care components. As a result the Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR - maternal deaths per 100,000 live births) in 1998 was 407. The range varies across the states from 28 in Gujrat to 707 in U.P. High mortality rate is registered among the rural poorest, particularly the mother from the scheduled casts. Nearly 52% women in India suffer some degree of anemia - this applies to every second woman.

In India, at least 35 out of every 1000 babies born die at birth and 45 out of 1000 babies born do not survive till the age of five. According to Sample Registration Survey (SRS) data 2001, out of 1000 babies' 71 girls do not survive. This ratio was 73 per 1000 in 1998. It is encouraging that the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has fallen in all the states except M.P & Rajasthan from 1991-1993 to 1997-1998.

In cumulative terms the 'missing women' phenomenon shows a little improvement in India during the past decade at the macro level. The adult sex ratio has slightly gone up from 923 females per 1000 males in last decade to 934 female per 1000 males in 2001at

the national level. Adult sex ratio is above 1000 only in Kerala (1071) and Pondichery (1007). It is a case of concern that the prosperous states of Haryana (869) and Punjab (886) are among the worst in this regard.

This is considered to be more reliable demographic indicator. Over the last decade Child sex ratio has registered a drop of as much as 18 points (from 945 girls to 927 girls per 1000 boys). The ratio ranges from 986 girls per 1000 boys for Sikkim to 820 in Haryana and as low as 793 in Punjab.

## **Security**

Terrorism is haunting us across the world. Every nation feels insecure due to spread of terrorism as a way of conflict resolution. Terrorism is growing at both levels - internally and internationally. India is facing it for last several decades. EU is also getting more and more anxious about this menace. There is evolution of a global consensus that eliminating the roots of national and international violence and cultivating culture of peace and non-violence is the most effective and humane way of ending terrorism. According to Gandhiji, non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by ingenuity of man. Therefore war against terror in our global village needs soldiers of peace, harmony and non-violence, more than professional armies, weapons of mass destruction and campaigns of ethnic cleansing. India-EU cooperation can promote a global process about it.

There is also need to look at the common urge of EU and India to reconstruct UNO - the global forum of the nation states. It is an essential task for promoting a just world order. Enlargement of security council, active assistance in regional cooperation, and effective engagements in elimination of diseases and deprivations are three common elements in India-EU approach about resisting terrorism and promoting world peace.

What are the ways of translating our commitment about it in day-to-day life? In most cases women are completely excluded from any kind of peace negotiations even though it is well accepted that women bring practical understanding of real life security concerns. Indian women's experience of peace building in the region will go a long way as example of best practices to implemented globally. At the peak time of tension between India and Pakistan a peace Bus was taken by Indian women to Pakistan to build peace with sisters of Pakistan besides women actively joined the intelligentsia on both sides of the border to light lamp of friendship.

Following the UN Security council resolution adopted in 2000, October urging member states to increase representation of women at all decision-making levels in institutions and mechanisms for preventing, managing and resolving conflict. The best practice of including four women in the Bonn Germany talks on the future of Afghanistan in December 2001 and two women to serve at senior levels in the interim government of Afghanistan also show that progress in this area is possible. I wish to emphasize here that the growing partnership between India and EU for reconstruction of Iraq should take the UN resolution into consideration and involve women at all levels of reconstruction

process.

Europe is perplexed about issues of identity and plurality. The process of economic integration around globalization and European unity is much more rapid than the process of multi cultural togetherness. It is causing anxiety in several pockets of EU. The falling share of Europe in world population and the anxiety about 'vanishing in demographic terms' are adding to its paradoxes. Europe's share of world population falls from 15.6 percent in 1950 to 6 percent to 2025. Over the same period the developing countries share increases from 65 percent to 84 percent. According to a simplistic version of the problem of Europe's ageing population., in the near future the European countries will be empty or overwhelmed by 'others' and no matter what their technological strength they will be incapable of putting it to use. We cannot ignore that the Indian and other South Asian migrants have also contributed in the aggravation of this problem in recent years.

Better understanding about the imperatives of multicultural social promotions can be achieved through focus upon the Indian experiences of the post-colonial socio-political reforms and cultural practices. India has evolved an appreciable system of multicultural togetherness with linguistic and religious plurality through half century of democratic federalization despite chronic poverty and large scale illiteracy. It has also promoted affirmative action to provide space for women and weaker section at grassroots governance.

### **Environment Protection**

The challenge of environment promotion is much more down to earth for common persons of India and EU as the natural resources for human survival has been badly affected by our endeavours of modernization of agriculture, industries and life style. At the same time, it is encouraging that global environmental problems are linking all of us in son many ways. N It is most urgent that India-EU cooperation create a basis for glo bal understanding ton meet the crisis of global warming. Indians have been helped by the EU in facing a series of natural disasters ranging from super cyclones to devastating droughts. The issue of bio-diversity has alerted the scientific community of India and EU about the potential advantages and threats from genetically modified crops. Similarly the problem of conservation o water sources, soil and forests is creating vertical and horizontal links between local and regional communiti4s, institutions and processes. It is obvious that poorer women and their households are the most acutely affected sections of our society by the problems of environmental degeneration.

An increasing number of OECD and developing countries have introduced environmental accounts, compiling different components according to the environmental accounts, compiling different components according to their environmental concerns and priorities. Resource-rich countries have usually developed asset accounts in order to design policies for better natural resource management. Countries in which pollution is a main concern have implemented physical flow accounts, often linked into environmental protection accounts so as to analyse the impact of consumption and production patterns on the environment and the impact of environmental expenditure in reducing emissions.

Pilot projects have shown that some of the components of the SEEA can be compiled using existing information from various data sources. These exercises have identified data gaps and inconsistencies, helping to improve both environmental and economic data. The results have already been used by government planning agencies in designing policies and by non-governmental organizations and academia in advocacy efforts.

There is a well knit network of civil society organizations of EU and India around the concerns for environment protection. In most of the ecological movements, women are making effective contribution as leaders, organizers and supporters. The governments of EU and India have joined forces in global debates for environmental conservation. For example both have offered unequivocal support for accepting and implementing the Kyoto Protocol.

### **An Appeal**

It is obvious that India and EU have moved closer to each other in recent years and this unity has the potential of promoting a global consensus for moving towards a humane society. So far the architects of India-EU relationship have focused primarily on trade, media and academia. This experience has created hopes as well as caused anxieties about what next?

According to Gandhi:

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test:

**Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him!**

**Will he gain anything by it: Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?**

Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away.

I am sure that if we try to listen to Gandhi and evolve our relations to include the last persons of India and EU in the future initiatives, our unity will become an example for other nations and regions of the modern world system.

**Thank you.**