Status of Women in India: A Comparison by State (Demographers' Notebook)

*By D. Radha Devi **

* The author of this paper is D. Radha Devi, Reader at the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Deonar, Bombay, 400-088, India.

The concept "status of women" eludes precise definition and hence precise measurement. Status can be perceived in different ways: the extent of a woman's access to social and material resources within the family, community and society (Dixon, 1978), or her authority or power within the family/community and the prestige commanded from those other members (Mukerjee, 1975), or her position in the social system distinguishable from, yet related to, other positions (Committee on the Status of Women in India, 1974), or the extent to which women have access to knowledge, economic resources and political power as well as the degree of autonomy they have in decision-making and making personal choices at crucial points in their life-cycle (United Nations, 1975). The idea of status also connotes the notion of equality (Krishnaraj, 1986). There can be self-perceived status, group-perceived status or objective status (Mukerjee, 1975), a situation which can lead to status inconsistency when a person is very high in one type of status and very low in another.

Women's status in retrospect

During the Vedic and Rigvedic periods (approximately 4000-1000 BC), women in India held equal status with that of men (Kuppuswamy 1975; Choudhury, 1978). The degradation of women started only since 300 BC. The patriarchal joint-family system, structure of property ownership, early marriage, self-immolation of widows (*sati*) or state of permanent widowhood, all became obstacles to the development of women (Neera Desai, quoted in Kuppuswamy, 1975:243). Since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of the common era, several reformers fought against those aspects of the system that have resulted in the oppression of females. To them, women should labour under no dissatisfaction not suffered by man, and as a result of their efforts, independent India has adopted several rules and regulations to protect the rights of women and establish equality of status.[1/]

India is home to a diverse group of people characterized by different languages, customs, traditions, religions, life-styles or habits. Virtually each State has its own culture, which is very important in studying any aspect of this society (Davis, 1973) including the status of its women.

Objectives and indicators

Three types of comparison are attempted in this paper: (a) an inter-state comparison of the status of women, (b) an intra-state comparison of the status of women vis-a-vis that of men in each State, and (c) a comparison of status of women in relation to overall development.

This analysis of the objective status of women (as perceived by others on the basis of the outward manifestations of some selected characteristics) uses secondary data. Fourteen States having a population of 10 million or more are considered in the study, which together accounted for 313 million females in 1981 and 379 million in 1991. Some generally accepted proxies for "status" are identified and used within the constraints of data availability. Indicators such as a woman's control over resources and the laws of inheritance governing her right to property, perhaps would have reflected female status better, but could not be included because of the non-availability of data.

In all, 28 variables are considered; they reflect the status dimensions of education, employment, health, demographic situation and overall development. Owing to data limitations, the study relates to the early 1980s since most of the pertinent information is available only for that period rather than the current decade. However, this situation should not be of much concern in assessing a slowly changing society like India where drastic social changes normally do not occur in the short span of 10 years.

A list of the selected variables and the abbreviations by which they will be referred to in the text of this paper is provided below:

No.	Description of variables	Abbreviation
1	Percentage of female enrolment in classes I-V to the population in the 6-10 year age group	PSE
2	Percentage of female enrolment in classes VI-VIII to the population in the 11-13 year age group	MSE
3	Percentage of female enrolment in classes IX-XII to the population in the 14-17 year age group	HSE
4	Percentage of female enrolment in colleges for general education to the population in the 18-23 year age group	CE

5	Literacy rate in the 10-29 year age group	LR
6	Percentage of the female population with graduate or higher level of education in the 20-24 year age group	PG
7	Percentage of the female population (60 years and above) educated to the level of matriculation and above to the total population of older persons	OEP
8	Percentage of female paid workers in the 20-39 year age group to total population of workers in the same age group	APW
9	Percentage of females working in the modern sector	MSW
10	Percentage of female elected officials per 100,000 workers	EO
11	Infant mortality rate	IMR
12	Expectation of life at birth	ELB
13	Total fertility rate	TFR
14	Percentage of ever-married girls aged 10-19 years	EMG
15	Singulate mean age at marriage	SMAM
16	Urban population as a percentage of the total population	PUP
17	Net irrigated area as a percentage of the net cropped area	PNIA
18	Electricity consumption per capita (kwh)	ECPC
19	Total road length per 100 km^2	TRL
20	Motor vehicles per 10,000 population	MV
21	Daily newspaper circulation per 1,000 population	DNPC
22	Percentage contribution of the manufacturing sector to the total gross domestic product	PCMS
23	Per capita income at 1970/71 prices	PCY
24	Percentage of the population below the poverty line	PBPL
25	Number of beds per 1,000 population	BPTP
26	Percentage of births attended by trained professional	PIB
27	Government expenditure on health as a percentage of total government expenditure	GEH
28	Percentage of villages electrified	PVE

$$\frac{X_{ij} - \overline{X}_j}{S_j}$$

where	i	$=1,2,3,...,n;$
	j	$=1,2,3,...,m;$
	$\overline{X}_j$	=mean of the jth indicator; and
	S_j	=standard deviation of the jth indicator.

-7 represent the situation with regard to education; variables 8-10 are employment indicators; 11-12 health indicators; and 13-15 demographic indicators relevant to female status. The remaining variables (16-28) indicate various aspects of overall development.

Education

In order to create a sense of community among men and women at home and at work as fellow and equal human beings capable of playing many roles -- many of them shared and interchangeable -- women must be educated and allowed to participate in all activities (OECD, 1975).

In India, the roles traditionally assigned for men and women are that of bread-winners and home-makers, respectively. Thus, the education of girls is not seen as an important requirement for preparing girls for their future role as "home-makers". As such, in States where, besides economic need, the social and individual demand for education is also recognized, one would expect a higher rate of enrolment of girls in schools and a higher proportion of educated women in the population than is actually the case. In reality, women's creative and intellectual potentials are either ignored or underplayed in education in India. As a consequence, generally fewer women are found to have had the opportunity of gaining a higher level of education in India. This pattern of behaviour cannot be

attributed to current attitudes alone; they have been molded over several generations. This particular aspect is represented by the percentage of educated older persons in each State.

Employment

Remunerative employment is considered to be one of the major status-deciding factors. The common belief is that man's high status within the family is due to his position as bread-winner. It is argued that, if a woman's economic dependence can be reduced by her ability to earn an income outside the household, she would enjoy a higher status, which would be the case if there was not much difference in the nature of the work done by males and females (Lal, 1979).

In this study, employment is represented by adult paid workers, modern sector workers and elected officials. Women's participation in paid employment has been found to be highly related to their status (Safilios-Rothschild, 1986 and 1990), because it shows the tendency among women to earn a living or to augment the family's income by working for others. Women's participation in modern sector work is a step ahead of any other type of paid employment. The modern sector is defined in this paper as including all professional, technical, administrative, executive, managerial, clerical and similar work. Until recently, some of these occupations have been monopolized by males. Consideration of the indicator "elected officials" helps to show the extent of female participation in overall decision-making from the *panchayat* (village council) to the central Government levels.

Health

Infant mortality rate and expectation of life at birth are accepted indicators of the health situation of any population. In societies where there is no discrimination between the sexes, women, on average, survive for a longer period than men (Sinha, 1983). In view of this situation, female mortality should be either less than or equal to that of males. Where this is not the case, it can be argued that women do not receive adequate attention (reflecting low status), which leads to higher female mortality rates.[2/] Other things remaining equal, higher mortality of women would indicate low status compared with States where female mortality is lower.

Women, marriage and fertility

Marriage is practically universal in India and large families seem to be the norm even today after more than 40 years of implementing a family planning programme. Early marriage of girls, although illegal, is an accepted practice in many parts of the country. The majority of girls and women in India are infant not allowed by their parents to decide on either the age at which they would like to get married or their partners. This indicates that, in societies where a large segment of the population are poor and where the age at marriage is low, parents are transferring the burden of feeding their female children to someone else as soon as they possibly can (Dandekar, 1974). Thus, it may be concluded that the status of females is comparatively lower in India than in societies where females marry at an older age. The singulate mean age at marriage and the proportion of ever-married girls in the 10-19 year age group are two of the three indicators used in this regard. The total fertility rates has been selected as the third indicator under the assumption that a high TFR indicates little control by women over their fertility behaviour owing to their low status.

Overall development

The development indicators 16-28 are used to determine whether the differences in status, if any, are reflections of differences in the levels of overall development. The various development aspects covered here are urbanization, agriculture, manufacturing, electricity consumption, transport and communication, health and economic situation. In all, 13 variables are included.

Methodology

All the States studied are ranked on the basis of each of the selected indicators: the better the situation is, the higher is their rank. These ranks are examined below to determine status differences; however, it is possible that the same State may not be ranked uniformly high or low for all the chosen indicators. Hence, we use a taxonomic method to rank States on the basis of different dimensions of status. The taxonomic method, which was designed by a group of Polish mathematicians in 1952, enables the determination of homogeneous units in an n-dimensional space without having to employ statistical tools such as regression, variance and correlation. The method, although lengthy, is comparatively more lucid and simple than the other types; central to its use is the concept of average value. We chose this method because it is suited for ranking, comparing and classifying regions of a country by levels of development, standard of living, status or any other such aspect. (For a detailed description of the method, see Harbinson and others, 1970; Reddy, 1977.) Briefly stated, the steps involved in this method are given below:

(a) A set of n points representing states 1,2,3,...,n for a group of indicators 1,2,3...,m are arranged in a matrix form;

(b) Since the aim of the method is to construct a single index, it is necessary to add the values of the indicators at some stage of the computation. Thus, in order to eliminate the influence of the different units of measurement, the indicator values are standardized using the following formula:

A new matrix can be formed using the standardized values.

(c) The "distance" or difference from each state to every other state (1,2,3...,n) for each of the standardized values of the selected indicators is obtained by simple subtraction, with the results being arranged in matrix form.

(d) These several distances from the n-dimensional space have to be converted into a single mathematical expression with which states can be compared. The following formula can be used for this purpose:

$$Cab = \sqrt{\sum_{k=1}^{m} (Dak-Dbk)^2}$$

where Caa = O;

Cab = Cba; ......; and

Cab ⩽ Cak + Ckb.

This will result in a symmetric matrix known as the distance matrix.

(e) The next step is to determine the graphical relationship (which has not been attempted in our study).

(f) A model or ideal state is then created with the best standardized values of the status indicators and the composite distance from this state to every other state in the matrix is calculated. The ranking of the differences from the ideal state is called the pattern of development and is obtained by using the following formula:

$$Cio = \sqrt{\sum_{k=1}^{m} (Dik-Dok)^2}$$

where	Cio	is the pattern of development;
	i	= 1,2,3,...,n and 0 is the best standardized value as determined from the matrix of standardized values [Step (b)].

(g) The measure of development is obtained by using the formula:

$$di = \frac{Cio}{Co}$$

where   di   is the measure of development

$$Co = \overline{Cio} + 2 \, Sio$$

$$\overline{Cio} = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{Cio}{n}$$

and

$$Sio = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{(Cio - \overline{Cio})^2}{n}}$$

Based on the expected relationship between the chosen indicators and status, this method creates an index between 0 and 1: the nearer the index is to zero, the better is the situation for females. Although some of the variables overlap to a certain extent, the taxonomic method is not sensitive to such factors.

Findings and discussion

Inter-State comparison of the status of Indian women

For the comparison, States are ranked on the basis of each indicator value separately and also on the basis of a combined status index obtained by using the taxonomic method for each dimension. Table 1 presents the results for education and employment; table 2, health and demographic indicators. Even though women's status is the subject under investigation in this section, male status ranks are also given in the tables to facilitate comparison of the pattern of status ranks between the two gender groups.

Table 1: Ranks of States on the basis of educational indicators

State	PSE(1) M	PSE(1) F	MSE(2) M	MSE(2) F	HSE(3) M	HSE(3) F	CE(4) M	CE(4) F	LR(5) M	LR(5) F	PG(6) M	PG(6) F	OEP(7) M	OEP(7) F
Andhra Pradesh	3	7	3	6	2	5	13	12	1	5	4	3	5	5
Bihar	5	3	1	1	1	1	11	2	2	2	2	1	7	4
Gujarat	12	10	8	9	11	11	3	7	11	10	11	10	10	9
Haryana	4	5	11	8	5	6	7	9	10	7	8	13	6	7
Karnataka	8	8	6	7	7	8	12	10	8	8	6	7	8	10
Kerala	11	14	14	14	14	14	10	14	14	14	1	9	9	14
Madhya Pradesh	6	4	5	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	7	6	2	2
Maharashtra	13	11	10	11	12	12	5	8	13	12	12	12	13	13
Orissa	7	6	2	5	4	7	8	3	6	6	3	2	1	1
Punjab	9	12	12	13	9	10	9	13	9	13	10	14	11	8
Rajasthan	2	1	4	2	8	3	6	1	3	1	9	4	3	3
Tamil Nadu	14	13	13	12	13	9	2	5	12	11	13	5	12	11
Uttar Pradesh	1	2	9	4	6	2	14	11	5	3	14	8	4	6
West Bengal	10	9	7	10	10	13	1	6	7	9	5	11	14	12

Notes: For an explanation of abbreviated indicator names, see pages 60-62 of text; M= male and F= female; in parentheses are the reference numbers of the variables provided in the list of variables on pp. 60-62.

Table 2: Ranks of states on the basis of employment, health and demographic indicators

State	Employment APW(8) M	APW(8) F	MSW(9) M	MSW(9) F	EO(10) M	EO(10) F	Health IMR(11) M	IMR(11) F	ELB(12) M	ELB(12) F	Demographic TFR(13) F	EMG(14) F	SMAM(15) F
Andhra Pradesh	3	1	2	1	9	5	9	11	7	10	9	5	4
Bihar	4	5	5	5	12	9	5	4	5	4	2	3	3
Gujarat	5	4	3	12	10	13	4	5	6	8	6	11	11
Haryana	10	13	12	13	2	2	10	6	12	9	5	6	6
Karnataka	12	8	8	4	14	11	13	13	11	12	11	9	9
Kerala	2	9	1	9	13	14	14	14	14	14	14	13	14
Madhya Pradesh	9	3	1	2	6	6	1	2	2	2	3	2	2
Maharashtra	14	10	13	11	11	12	11	12	10	11	12	10	7
Orissa	6	2	14	3	8	1	3	3	3	3	7	7	8
Punjab	1	14	6	14	1	10	12	10	13	13	10	14	13
Rajasthan	8	6	11	8	7	7	6	7	4	5	4	1	1
Tamil Nadu	13	11	9	6	4	3	8	8	9	7	13	12	12
Uttar Pradesh	7	7	4	10	3	4	2	1	1	1	1	4	5
West Bengal	11	12	7	7	5	8	7	9	8	6	8	8	10

Notes: Regarding abbreviations, see the list of variables.

Education

Table 1 shows the ranks of the States based on the seven educational status indicators (1-7). As can be seen from the table, there is no consistency with respect to all the variables in any State, although Kerala, Punjab and Maharashtra generally rank high, whereas Rajasthan, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar rank low.

Employment

The ranks of the three indicators of employment (8-10) in table 2 show that, for Nos. 8 and 9 Punjab stands out with the highest

rank for women whereas Andhra Pradesh has the lowest rank. Other states with high ranks are Haryana, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu for No. 8 and Haryana, Gujarat and Maharashtra for No. 9. In addition to Andhra Pradesh, on the lower side are Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat for No. 8 and Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Karnataka for No. 9. The situation with respect to No. 10 is slightly different, in which case Kerala, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Punjab rank high and Orissa, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh rank low.

Health

Ranks based on the two health variables show that Kerala has the highest rank for both No. 11 and No. 12; the ranks are more or less the same for both the indicators in all the States (table 2). Uttar Pradesh has the lowest rank for the health status of women followed by Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Bihar in that order.

Demographic situation

Table 2 also provides values for Nos. 13-15 in an attempt to determine how fertility, marital status and age at marriage reflect on inter-State variations in female status. Because these indicators are fertility related, status ranking is restricted to females only. The result shows that Rajasthan has the lowest rank followed by Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh in that order. Kerala has the highest rank followed by Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Karnataka, respectively.

Intra-State comparison of women's status vis-a-vis that of men's

Because a variable-by-variable gender comparison would be very cumbersome to perform, a combined status measure was calculated with the help of the taxonomic method to represent the variables for each dimension of status (the results are presented in the Appendix). The status measure shows that, except for a few cases such as Kerala, Punjab, Karnataka and Maharashtra for health; Kerala for female education; Maharashtra and Karnataka for male employment; and Punjab for female employment, the measures indicate low status for both males and females in all States. Table 3 ranks the States on the basis of this status measure. The ranking of States based on the educational index, which reflects overall educational development, shows Bihar to be the lowest in terms of educational status for women. It is followed by Rajasthan, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh in that order. By contrast, Kerala, Punjab, Maharashtra and West Bengal show higher educational status for women.

Table 3: Ranks of States on the basis of different dimensions of status

State	Education		Employment		Health		Total *	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Andhra Pradesh	4	6	5	1	7	10	2	6
Bihar	1	1	9	7	5	4	3	2
Gujarat	10	10	7	11	4	6	8	10
Haryana	7	7	6	10	10	7	10	7
Karnataka	8	8	13	9	12	12	11	9
Kerala	14	14	2	12	14	14	7	14
Madhya Pradesh	2	4	11	3	2	2	4	3
Maharashtra	13	12	14	13	11	11	14	12
Orissa	5	3	4	2	3	3	5	1
Punjab	11	13	1	14	13	13	9	13
Rajasthan	3	2	10	5	6	5	6	4
Tamil Nadu	12	9	8	4	9	9	13	8
Uttar Pradesh	6	5	3	6	1	1	1	5
West Bengal	9	11	12	8	8	8	12	11

Note: * = Combining all educational, employment and health variables.

Table 4: Male-female difference in status measure for education, employment and health indicators

State	Education	Employment	Health	Total *
Andhra Pradesh	0.1459	-0.2777	0.1138	0.1540
Bihar	0.0062	-0.1386	-0.0904	0.0443
Gujarat	0.0688	0.1249	0.0468	0.1505

Haryana	0.0451	0.1486	-0.1958	0.0303
Karnataka	0.0695	-0.3725	-0.0529	0.0611
Kerala	0.2513	0.3277	0.0000	0.5070
Madhya Pradesh	0.0923	-0.3044	0.0542	0.0379
Maharashtra	0.0471	-0.2962	-0.0224	0.0077
Orissa	0.0442	-0.2317	0.0253	-0.0116
Punjab	0.1697	0.6994	-0.0998	0.3040
Rajasthan	0.0061	-0.1706	0.0138	-0.0091
Tamil Nadu	-0.0316	-0.1225	-0.0353	-0.0115
Uttar Pradesh	0.0622	0.0550	-0.0574	0.1148
West Bengal	0.1178	-0.1622	-0.0245	0.0759

Note: * = Combined for all educational, employment and health variables.

The differences in gender status, which can be determined by a comparison of the ranks given in the table, show that five States, namely Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka and Kerala, have the same rank for both male and female educational status. In Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and West Bengal, female status ranks are better than that of males even though the difference is not very significant. In Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, males have higher ranks which indicate better status, although the rank differences are negligible.

Status rank differences between males and females are higher in the case of employment than in health or education. Also see table 2 where the status rank is quite high for females compared with males in Punjab and Kerala, and quite low in Madhya Pradesh for variable No. 8. As for variable No. 9, wide differences are noticeable, i.e. Gujarat, Kerala, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh show a high rank for females whereas Orissa shows a noticeably low rank. In the case of variable No. 10, there is a wide gap in the rank of States, with Orissa favouring males and Punjab favouring females.

It seems that males are favoured with regard to employment status in nine States: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal; females are favoured in the remaining five States: Gujarat, Haryana, Kerala, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.

In terms of health status, a comparison of the ranking of males shows that their status is not much different from that of women, since nine out of the 14 States show the same rank for both sexes.

Wide variations in ranks can be observed in Kerala and Punjab, where female status is comparatively higher than that of males. Similarly, in Madhya Pradesh the difference between males and females is quite wide, with males being favoured. The relevant information for comparing status according to gender is shown in table 4. The values in this table have been obtained by subtracting the values for female status from that of males. Thus, an equal status, whether high or low, will give a zero value. Similarly, the larger the difference is between the values, the higher is the status difference, a positive sign indicating better female status and a negative sign indicates the opposite.

Interestingly, the differences obtained are negligible in most cases, particularly so in terms of health and education. Thus, one may be tempted to conclude that, with respect to these two dimensions, the status of males and females is more or less the same. There are few exceptions: the health and educational status of females is comparatively high in Andhra Pradesh, and in Haryana, male health status is high; in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and West Bengal, female educational status is better.

Employment status differences, according to gender, are quite noticeable. Of the 14 States, males enjoy better employment status in all States, except for Gujarat, Haryana, Kerala, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. In the case of Uttar Pradesh, the difference is not as noticeable as in the case of the others. The maximum difference in employment status is in Punjab where it favours females. Similarly, a fairly noticeable difference favouring females can be observed in Kerala also.

The last column of table 4 represents the total of all three dimensions. The differences are negligible, expect for Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Kerala, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, all of which favour females. The difference is exceptionally high in the case of Kerala, with Punjab following not far behind.

The close relationship between male and female status within the States in terms of health and education, and the lack of such a relationship in terms of employment are further substantiated by the rank correlations calculated for each variable and presented below:

	Variable No.	Rank correlation coefficient	Variable No.	Rank correlation coefficient
Education	1	0.8769	2	0.8374

	3	0.8066	4	0.4725
	5	0.8769	6	0.4022
	7	0.8725	Total	0.9277
Employment	8	0.2835	9	0.1035
	10	0.5912	Total	-0.0374
Health	11	0.9253	12	0.9253
	Total	0.9473		

The male-female status ranking is highly correlated with health and education, except for higher-level education where the relationship is comparatively weak. As for employment, except for variable No. 10, the other rankings show almost no relationship at all.

Women's status and development

Table 5: Ranks of States based on selected overall development indicators circa 1981

State	PUP (16)	PNIA (17)	ECPC (18)	TRL (19)	MV (20)	DNPC (21)	PCMS (22)	PCY (23)	PBPL (24)	BPTP (25)	PIB (26)	GEH (27)	PVE (28)	Total
Andhra Pradesh	8	9	8	5	4	6	3	8	7	6	8	9	8	6
Bihar	2	10	1	6	2	2	7	1	1	2	3	5	1	2
Gujarat	12	7	12	3	11	11	11	11	12	10	10	1	9	10
Haryana	7	13	13	8	10	1	8	13	13	7	14	4	13	9
Karnataka	11	3	9	9	12	8	12	9	8	8	9	2	7	8
Kerala	4	2	5	14	9	14	9	7	11	14	13	13	13	12
Madhya Pradesh	5	4	6	2	6	4	6	3	2	1	5	8	2	3
Maharashtra	14	1	11	4	13	13	14	12	9	13	7	6	10	13
Orissa	1	6	4	11	1	3	1	2	4	4	2	11	5	1
Punjab	10	14	14	12	14	9	5	14	14	12	12	7	13	14
Rajasthan	6	5	3	1	5	7	2	5	10	5	1	14	6	4
Tamil Nadu	13	11	10	13	8	10	13	6	5	9	11	12	11	11
Uttar Pradesh	3	12	2	7	3	5	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	5
West Bengal	9	8	7	10	7	12	10	10	6	11	6	10	4	7

Notes: The totals provided in the last column are based on the index developed with the help of the taxonomic method; regarding abbreviations, see pp. 60-62.

Table 6: Ranks of States based on the combined measure of different dimensions of status and overall development

State	Development	Education, employment and health		Demographic
		Male	Female	
Bihar	1	5	1	7
Orissa	2	3	2	2
Madhya Pradesh	3	4	3	3
Rajasthan	4	6	4	1
Uttar Pradesh	5	1	5	4
Andhra Pradesh	6	2	6	6
Karnataka	7	11	9	11
West Bengal	8	12	11	8
Haryana	9	10	7	5
Tamil Nadu	10	13	8	13
Kerala	11	7	14	14

Gujarat	12	8	10	10
Maharashtra	13	14	12	9
Punjab	14	9	13	12

As stated previously, 13 indicators were selected for development and their rankings are given in table 5. With the help of the taxonomic method, a combined development measure has been computed. It produced a value for most States that was above 0.6 (see Appendix), indicating that actually no State is well developed in terms of the variables selected. The lowest value of the development measure is 0.4184 for Punjab, indicating that it is comparatively better developed than the others, although Maharashtra, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat have fairly high values too. Orissa seems to be the least developed State; others with low levels of development are Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

Table 6 gives the status ranking of the States based on the combined variables of education, employment and health, demographic situation, and overall development. The table shows that in six out of the 14 States, the ranks of the total female status measure and that of development are the same; however, it is of particular importance here to note that they are all at the lower level. Orissa is at the lowest rank for both women's status and development. Similarly, other States with the same ranks for both status and development (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh) are all at the lower level of development also. States that rank higher in development and lower in women's status are Gujarat, Haryana, Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamil Nadu. States which rank high in women's status and low in development are Karnataka, Kerala and West Bengal. The results of the rank correlation between the ranks of development and that of the status dimensions are as follows:

Sex	Health	Education	Employment	Demographic development
Male	0.6923	0.8769	-0.0374	-
Female	0.7319	0.9121	0.7980	0.7846

Except for male employment, the coefficients are quite high and positive, thus indicating a fairly high and direct relationship between status and development.

Conclusion

It may be clearly observed from this study that the efforts made by the Government of India for over four decades to bring women into the mainstream of society are slowly paying off as the status indicators are found to have more or less the same ranking for both males and females in many States. But some States, such Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, have been found to be at a low level with respect to health, employment and educational status. They also have the same low status ranks with respect to overall development. These findings point to the direct relationship between status and development; many of the (objective) status indicators are reflections of overall development. Hence, these States need special attention in order to raise them up to the level of the other States in terms of development.

One important question that arises from this study is: Is women's status a phenomenon to be studied at the macro level using macro-level data? If the answer is yes, the lack of significant differences between the status of males and females either reflects on the choice of indicators (though often used elsewhere for status measurement), or indicates that there are only negligible status differences between males and females in many States of India, unlike what is generally believed to be the case. We suspect that this conclusion is not correct because of the observed direct relationship between ranks of development and status, which indicates perhaps that what are read as status differences are nothing more than differences in levels of development. This confusion can be overcome only by making in-depth studies focusing more on the perceptions of men and women about their own status and comparing the results with the results of macro-level analyses. In the final analysis, status is a personal, innate experience of an individual resulting from his or her life situation and that of others acting upon and reacting to each other. As such, it is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, which, in essence, should be handled very carefully in order to derive any meaningful conclusion.

Appendix: Measures of status according to education, employment, health, demographic aspects and development, by State

State	Education		Employment		Health		Total *		Demo-graphic M	Develop-ment F
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F		
Andhra Pradesh	0.8558	0.7099	0.6896	0.9673	0.5155	0.4017		0.9084 0.7544	0.5972	0.7551
Bihar	0.8877	0.8815	0.5332	0.6718	0.6291	0.7195	0.8990	0.8466	0.8391	0.9100
Gujarat	0.6319	0.5631	0.6094	0.4845	0.6338	0.5870	0.7248	0.5743	0.3663	0.5722
Haryana	0.7085	0.6634	0.6719	0.5233	0.3470	0.5428	0.6708	0.6405	0.6190	0.6078

Karnataka	0.6908	0.6213	0.2255	0.5980	0.2841	0.3370	0.6582	0.5971	0.3384	0.6381
Kerala	0.4205	0.1692	0.7730	0.4453	0.0000	0.0000	0.7559	0.2489	0.0000	0.5686
Madhya Pradesh	0.8759	0.7836	0.4956	0.8000	0.8544	0.8002	0.8585	0.8206	0.7993	0.8665
Maharashtra	0.5342	0.4871	0.1427	0.4389	0.3445	0.3669	0.4832	0.4755	0.3699	0.5356
Orissa	0.8423	0.7981	0.7151	0.9468	0.7892	0.7639	0.8445	0.8561	0.4270	0.9060
Punjab	0.5983	0.4286	0.9900	0.2906	0.2277	0.3275	0.7061	0.4021	0.2331	0.4184
Rajasthan	0.8692	0.8631	0.5099	0.6805	0.6216	0.6078	0.8086	0.8177	0.8567	0.8488
Tamil Nadu	0.5370	0.5686	0.5775	0.7000	0.4455	0.4808	0.5941	0.6056	0.1992	0.5695
Uttar Pradesh	0.8042	0.7420	0.7330	0.6780	0.9134	0.9708	0.9223	0.8075	0.7798	0.8404
West Bengal	0.6514	0.5339	0.4613	0.6235	0.4934	0.5179	0.6475	0.5716	0.3968	0.6735

Note: * Combining all education, employment and health variables.

Footnotes

1. The fundamental rights incorporated in the Indian Constitution embody several favourable provisions. For example, Article 14 assures equal protection for males and females; Article 15 ensures equal accessibility to public places such as shops, restaurants, wells and water-storage facilities; Article 16 guarantees equal opportunities in matters of public employment; Article 39 calls for equal pay for equal work irrespective of sex; and Article 51-A deals with the preservation of the dignity of women. Besides these, there are statutory enactments which concern women exclusively: for instance, the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976. On 18 September 1982, the Supreme Court gave the right to all labourers (in particular, women) to approach the Supreme Court directly for redressing violations of the Equal Remuneration Act (Data India, 1982). Another example is the Maternity Benefit Act of 1961. The Factory Act of 1948 specifies that women should not be employed for jobs that are dangerous or hazardous. The setting up of creches was made mandatory in establishments employing more than 50 women through the Plantation Labour Act of 1951. Other legislation of interest includes the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, which made monogamy the rule for both men and women of Hindu religion; the Hindu Succession Act of 1965 conferred the right of inheritance and property on Hindu women; the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act of 1956 made it possible for unmarried, widowed and divorced women to adopt children, including female children which until then had been forbidden. The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 prohibits the giving or taking of a dowry; this law was amended in 1984 by elaborating on the provisions. The Child Marriage Act of 1929 fixed the age at marriage for girls at 14 years and for boys 18 years; it was amended in 1978 when the female age at marriage was raised to 18 years and that of boys to 21 years. The Medical Termination Act of 1971 made legal the termination of pregnancies, if the pregnancy involves (a) a risk to the life of the child and/or mother, (b) if the child is likely to be deformed, and (c) if the pregnancy is the result of rape, contraceptive failure etc. According to the Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act of 1983, cruelty to a woman in terms of mental and physical torture by her husband or her husband's relatives, can be punished. It also allows for a thorough enquiry by a police officer concerning the death of a woman within seven years of her marriage (See also "dowry deaths", Karkal, 1985; Tempest, 1988).

2. It is well known that son preference is rampant in India and that the vast majority of the population are poor and their meager resources have to be apportioned among the various members of the family, with the result that current and future bread-winners of the family (male members) get the greater share of those resources. Wherever this is keenly felt, females get secondary attention and treatment, resulting in higher death rates among females. Further, adult mortality among females is due mainly to repeated and complicated pregnancies and a lack of adequate ante- and post-natal health care as well as proper care during child-birth.

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