

## **Gender Discrimination, Women's Health And Access To Health Services- A Critical Evaluation**

**Dr.Preeti Misra**, Lecturer, Dept. of Human Rights, School For Legal Studies, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow,226025, E-Mail : [misra9\\_us@yahoo.com](mailto:misra9_us@yahoo.com)

**-Dr.Alok Chantia**-Lecturer, Dept. of Anthropology, Sri Jai Narain Post Graduate College, Lucknow

Women's health and her access to health services play an important role in the development of a country. As mother, her health has intergenerational effects. Since she is the chief care provider, her poor health has an immediate adverse effect on her family. The Indian constitution grants women equal rights with men, but strong patriarchal traditions and centuries old customs shape women's lives. Females receive less health care than males. Gender disparities in nutrition are evident from infancy to adulthood. Girls are breast-fed less frequently and for shorter durations in infancy; in childhood and adulthood, males are fed first and better. The medical expenditures for boys are 2.3 times higher than for girls.

Adult women consume fewer calories per day than men. Nutritional deprivation has two major consequences for women, they never reach their full growth potential and anaemia. Besides posing risks during pregnancy, anaemia increases women's susceptibility to diseases such as tuberculosis and reduces the energy women have for daily activities such as household chores, child care, and professional works. Working conditions and environmental pollution further impairs women's health. India has exceptionally high rates of child malnutrition, because tradition in India requires that women eat last and least throughout their lives, even when pregnant and lactating. Malnourished women give birth to malnourished children, perpetuating the cycle.

More than 100,000 Indian women die each year from pregnancy-related causes. women in India receive no prenatal care during their pregnancies. India's maternal mortality rates in rural areas are among the worlds highest. The serious risk faced by adolescents and adult women who die with pregnancy-related causes, emphasize lack of access to modern health facilities, lack of awareness and education about HIV/AIDS, and the prevalence of harmful practices such as child marriage. The U.N. Committee monitoring compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has also voiced concern about high maternal mortality rates, unsafe abortion, and inadequate obstetric and family planning services in India.

Traditionally, women bear primary responsibility for the well-being of their families. Yet they are systematically denied access to the resources they need to fulfill their responsibility like education, health care services, job training, and access and freedom to use family planning services. Women's socialization to tolerate suffering is additional constraint in their getting adequate health care.

Though India has worked consistently to improve the status and well-being of women and has been successful in effecting changes in societal behaviour. But still a long, arduous and focused effort is required to reduce gender disparities with regard to health services.

The present paper is theoretical in nature. It makes an in depth analysis of the factors responsible for gender discrimination with regard to health services. It evaluates various policies and programmes of the government concerning women's health. Lastly, it

suggests various measures for improving access of women to health care services and for developing a public health system that is sensitive to the needs of women.