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DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND GENDER INEQUALITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MADHYA PRADESH AND KARNATAKA

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DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND GENDER INEQUALITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MADHYA PRADESH AND KARNATAKA[1]

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Abstract

Gender equality and empowerment of women is today recognized globally as a key element in the achievement of progress in myriad areas, the charter of the United Nations signed in 1945 was the first international covenant that proclaimed gender equality as a fundamental right. Millennium Development Goals and Main Targets for 2015 (UN, MGDs, 2005) recognize promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women is pivotal to its realization. In this paper an attempts is made to understand the demographic changes and gender inequality in the States of Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka. The analysis is primarily based on secondary data culled out from Census of India reports and other published documents. The gender gap in index of deprivation (IOD) of CLDI was lower in Karnataka than M.P. Karnataka's Sex ratio is also distinctly better than that of M.P. Similarly, men and women in Karnataka have better longevity over that of M.P.

Introduction

Demographic changes in a region, to a great extent, reflect the extent of socio-economic development. In recent years, the developed western countries have drawn our attention to the progress attained in their demographic goals. However, in order to have policy relevance, bringing out an indicator of gender inequality in India may help to draw government's attention to gender inequality and the policies needed to reduce it. We can also expect it to become an input into theoretical debates concerning the existence and nature of the relationship between gender equality and macroeconomic growth, including the question whether greater gender equality would enhance growth and development.

Over a period of time achievements in demographic goals in India have been significant. However, given the poor socio-economic

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background, these indicators are lower in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (BMARU states) than the southern states. Of course, presently India is endeavoring to emerge as a developed nation. According to 2001 census, India remains the second most populated country in the world, the first being China, and the projected population shows that, if the current trend continues India will overtake China by 2011.

In this paper an endeavor has been made to understand the demographic changes and the other aspects of gender inequality from available data on education, health and employment for the states of Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka. These important issues relating to population and developments are useful to understand and also improve the demographic, social and economic characteristics through government intervention with appropriate policies and programmes.

Objectives

The prime objectives of the study are as follows:

i. to understand and analyze the demographic changes in Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka for the decades 1981-1991 and 1991-2001

ii. to study gender inequality in education, health and employment and to some extent to link the gender relations of the States under consideration

iii. To suggest policy measures and to make appropriate policy suggestions to reduce gender inequality in the states of Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh in India

Methodology

Data for the study have been collected from the Statistical Abstract of India and other related documents published by Census of India. The comparative analysis has been done for the years 1991 and 2001 to understand the demographic changes and gender inequality for the States of Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. In the context of demographic changes

for these states the main focus of our study has been to understand gender inequality from the available data on education, health and employment. For detailed understanding of literacy, the deprivation index (DI) has been prepared by using methodology from UNDP-HDI frame work. The IOD has been calculated for the states of Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and also for all- India. Conclusions and policy suggestions found appropriate have been adopted.

Study Area

The States of Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka have a proportion of 5.88 and 5.14 per cent of Indian population respectively, and contribute 6.54 per cent and 4.29 per cent respectively to the total population growth of India (2001). Madhya Pradesh is the second largest State in the country and is bounded by Chhattishgarh in the east, Rajasthan and Gujarat in the west, Uttar Pradesh in the north and Maharastra in the south. Karnataka's neighbours are Tamilnadu and Kerala in the south, Maharastra and Goa on the north, Andhra Pradesh in the east and the west, it opens out on the Arabian Sea. Karnataka State is predominantly rural; it has 59 per cent of the country's coffee production and 47 per cent of ragi production. Similarly, the economy of Madhya Pradesh depends mainly on agriculture. About 74.73 per cent of its population is rural. Madhya Pradesh is a leader in mineral production, traditional handicrafts and production of handloom cloths. The State is also rich in low grade coal suitable for power generation; it also has immense potential of hydro-energy.

Previous Studies on the Issue of Demographic Change in India

Several studies on demographic transition like fertility, mortality, but no comparative studies like Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh on demographic changes and gender inequality. Hence the possibilities of relevant literature on the present topic are very few. However, the study, Socio-Economic Implications of Demographic Change in India (1999) which was carried out by Mahendra K. Premi gives the overall knowledge on the demographic

changes since 1961. The author in his paper has done on in-depth analysis over demographic transition in India. In this study the author states that the decline in IMR would be less than one per cent in Karnataka and Kerala. Especially Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa would continue to have IMR of more than 60 even in 2016. Further the author in his study pointed out that the states which are going to be slow in demographic transition would have a faster decline in their IMR.

Another study by Sulaba Parasuraman (1999) on Mortality Transition in India and its Socio-Economic Consequences, the author found in the study that in spite of lower levels of mortality in 1951-1961, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan could not progress well in mortality transition. The slowest decline has been in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh through the transition period so far.

The Demographic Variation of Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka

This section briefly explains the overall demographic changes in the States of Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka over the period of two decades, 1981-1991 and 1991-2001. The vital statistics of a region throw light on the characteristics of socio-economic development in the State.

During the decade 1981-1991, India's total population growth rate was 19.03 per cent; it decreased to 17 per cent by 2001. Table-1 indicates that, Madhya Pradesh has always had above national- average growth rates of population in total, male, female, rural and urban categories. On the other hand, Karnataka has shown below national-average growth rates in all the categories cited above.

Carving out Chhattisgarh as a separate state from Madhya Pradesh on November 1, 2000 and the consequent changes in its geographical boundaries has caused the population to be accounted under the two separate states during the year 2001. Therefore, the growth rates of population for total, male and female were shown as negative. The average birth rate in India was 29.5 in 1991; it decreased to 25.4 by

2001. A similar decrease could be seen both in rural and urban birth rates in India. If we compare these figures for states of Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka, we find that birth rate registered is below-national average in Karnataka State. However, these vital rates were above the national-average in Madhya Pradesh in both the years (32.4 in 1991 and 31 in 2001). A similar variation could be seen in rural and urban rates of birth for Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. Death rates are also above national average for Madhya Pradesh; and below national-average for Karnataka (see Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic Indicators for India and its States of Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh

(1) Growth Rate of Population

	India			Madhya Pradesh			Karnataka	
	1981-1991	1991-2001	Decadal variation	1981-1991	1991-2001	Decadal variation	1981-1991	1991-2001
Total	19.03	17	-2.03	21.15	-9.6	-30.75	17.4	14.89
Male	19.31	17.41	-1.9	21.53	-8.9	-30.43	17.6	14.67
Female	18.74	18.02	-0.72	20.74	-10.4	-31.15	17.3	15.12
Rural	16.42	15.35	-1.07	18.19	-14.6	-32.74	15	10.94
Urban	26.59	23.94	-2.65	21.15	-9.66	-30.81	22.9	22.56

Note: The above Figures are in percentage

Table 1 a

(2) Birth rate	INDIA		M.P		Karnataka	
	1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001
Total	29.5	25.4	32.4	31	23	22.2
Rural	30.9	27.1	34.2	32.9	24.1	23.6
Urban	24.3	20.3	22.9	23.1	20.3	19
(3) Death rate						
Total	9.8	8.4	11.5	10.1	8.1	7.6
Rural	10.6	9.1	12.5	10.8	9.2	8.2
Urban	7.1	6.3	7.6	7.2	7.1	6.4
(4) IMR						
Total	80	66	97	86	77	58
Rural	87	72	102	92	87	69
Urban	53	42	61	53	47	26
(4) Life expectancy						
Total	58.3	61.1	64	55	61.9	63.3
Male	58.1	60.8	54.1	55.6	60.2	61.6
Female	58.6	62.5	53.8	55.2	63.5	64.9
(5) Sex-Ratio						
	927	933	960	964	931	920

Source: Statistical Abstract, India, 1993 and 2003

The average death rates in India decreased from 9.8 in 1991 to 8.4 by 2001. The reduction in the rate of death in rural and urban categories is also reported in table-1.

The number of infant death below one year of age in a year, per 1000 live births, is termed as Infant Mortality Rate (IMR). In this regard the IMR in India was 80 in 1991; it decreased to 66 by 2001. Further IMR is higher in rural as compared to urban areas. This rate was much higher at 86 (2001) in Madhya Pradesh as compared to 58

in Karnataka in 2001. Due to increased health facilities in India, over a period of time, IMR tend to decline from 80 in 1991 to 66 in 2001. Due to the backwardness in socio-economic infrastructure (Table 6), higher per cent of SC/STs, in the population, poverty and relatively low health care facilities in Madhya Pradesh IMR rate is higher (86 per 1000 live births) as compared to Karnataka where it was 58 per 1000 live births in 2001. Madhya Pradesh has 28 excess infant deaths per 1000 live births (Table 1) over Karnataka**.** The excess IMR in total, rural and urban in M.P was 28, 23 and 27 respectively when compared to Karnataka. As can be seen from Table-1, infant death in urban areas of M.P was almost double as compared to Karnataka. Relatively low literacy, low socio-economic development and lack of health facilities in M.P. are the reasons for higher growth rate of population and also higher infant deaths.

The average number of years of a new born child is expected to live under current mortality conditions is called expectation of life at birth. A low life expectancy reflects that the region poor socio-economic status and lack of basic health care facilities, it needs for human development. Life expectancy increases with improvement in female literacy, economic development and rising standards of living of the people. One of the important features of life expectancy in India has been contrary to normal biological expectations of life, i.e., women having a longer life than men. However, if we examine the life expectancy for males and females in states of Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka, for males it can be seen that, life expectancy of males was higher in Madhya Pradesh. 55.6 years for males as against 55.2 years for females in 2001. But, life expectancy for females in Karnataka corresponds well with the statistical evidence given in Table 1 a (61.6 for male and 64.9 for female in 2001).

The study shows that, the life expectancy of total population, as well as male and female life expectancy was lower in Madhya Pradesh than in Karnataka (see Table 1a). The socio-economic development indicators given in Table 6, clearly show that, the progresses in socio-economic development in Karnataka is relatively better than in M.P. Life expectancy for both male and female in M.P. is not only lower than that of Karnataka but also across all states in India (See Table-2).

Sex-ratio of population in a region, i.e., the ratio of females to males in that region is a significant variable. Generally, in a given region, the number of females per 1000 males is not equal. It is varying from one region to another. For instance the sex ratio of Kerala is higher i.e 1058 females per 1000 males. Table-1 shows changes in sex ratio in India and both in Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka. As per 2001 census the sex ratio of India was 933. Sex-ratio was consistently low in Madhya Pradesh (920 in 2001) which is also below the national average. But Karnataka has relatively a better status as compared to the other states in the country. The sex ratio of 964 per 1000 males in Karnataka shows higher by 44 over that of Madhya Pradesh. From this angle, we could note that comparatively there is a better status in sex ratio in Karnataka, and it has kept pace with the all India trends. A disturbing trend in regard to sex-ratio is observed in states like Haryana (861), Punjab (874), and Uttar Pradesh (898). In this view we could state that Karnataka is secure with a better position in sex-ratio, as compared to the other States of the country. The continuing in sex ratio in M.P. is a matter of serious concerned and the state is mostly to join the ranks of Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh in this regard.

Education, Literacy and Gender Inequality

In India as per 2001 census, women account for about 48 per cent (495.7 million) of the total population. Men and women are equal natural partners in evolution and the growth process. Therefore, if the natural human eco-systems is to function properly, it is necessary that, apart from numbers, both the men and women enjoy equal social, economic and political status, and only such a society can be progressive or considered developed.

Since there is wide inequality between men and women in India, in terms of their socio-economic status, the question of women empowerment has been raised time and again in the recent decades with the aim of reducing the gender gap and improving our demographic, social, economic and political institutional set up.

In order to assess gender inequality in literacy, both in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh, the Index of Deprivation (IOD) of Crude Literacy Development Index (CLDI) has been computed, making use of the methodology of UNDP-HDI frame work.

Table 2: Life Expectancy at Birth (in years) in Selected States of India

1993-1997			
State	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Andhra Pradesh	61.2	63.5	62.4
Assam	56.6	57.1	56.7
Bihar	60.4	58.4	59.6
Gujarat	60.9	62.9	61.9
Haryana	63.7	64.6	64.1
Karnataka	**61.6**	**64.9**	**63.3**
Kerala	70.4	75.9	73.3
Madhya Pradesh	**55.6**	**55.2**	**55.5**
Maharashtra	64.1	66.6	65.5
Orissa	57.1	57.0	57.2
Punjab	66.7	68.8	67.7
Rajasthan	59.1	60.1	60.0
Tamilnadu	63.2	65.1	64.1
Uttar Pradesh	58.1	56.9	57.6
West Bengal	62.2	63.6	62.8
All India	**60.4**	**61.8**	**61.1**

Source: Statistical Abstract-India 2003.

Table-3 represents the IOD for the states of Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh, as also for all India. It is noticed that, IOD of India for male was 0.359 in 1991 it decreased to 0.241 in 2001 and IOD of female decreased to 0.458 in 2001 from 0.608 in 1991.

Both in 1991 and 2001, IOD of CLDI both for male and female was below the national average in Karnataka (See Table-3), whereas in M.P. the IOD was above the national average in 2001 (except for male). What is worth noting is that, there has been a wide gender gap in Index of Deprivation in Crude Literacy in Madhya Pradesh than in Karnataka. The IOD difference was more than double when compared to Karnataka, i.e., 0.238 in Karnataka as against 0.498 in M.P. The gender gap under IOD in CLDI is comparatively lower in Karnataka than in M.P.[3] Infact, both the states were among the pioneers in computing HDI in India. That the two States undertook such exercise testify their concern for understanding reasons for imbalances in development of human resources.

Further in order to understand the gender gap in education, we turn to the status of women enrolment in school education in recognized educational institutions (general and technical together). Table-3 (a) reveals that, in 2001 about 42.11 per cent of women were enrolled for school education in India. This percentage is lower at 40 per cent in M.P. which is below the national average and is 45 per cent in Karnataka, which is above the national average. This considerable gender gap in women's enrollment in school education calls for detailed block level studies of women enrollment in schools and taking remedial measures to make good any shortcoming in M.P. performance.

Table 3: Index of Deprivation (IOD) in Crude Literacy Development Index of all India, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh

Year	India		Karnataka		Madhya Pradesh	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1991	0.359	0.608	0.328	0.557	0.415	0.707
2001	0.241	0.458	0.238	0.426	0.232	0.498

Source: Computed by the author using HDI frame work developed by UNDP.

[3] C.M.Lakshmana, 2005, Dimensions of Literacy and Index of Development in Karnataka, ISEC Working Paper series No-163

Health, Longevity and Gender Gap

In the earlier section, some of the issues of human development such as CLDI, IOD and level of women's literacy were discussed. This section briefly explains the health and longevity and their gender related aspects. The major areas of concern for women's health and longevity are morbidity and infant mortality, maternal mortality and infanticide, and female foeticide. Strong preference for sons coupled with the need to adopt small family norms lead to female foeticide and female infanticide, as is reflected in the unbalanced as well as and declining sex-ratio.

Table 3 (a): Enrolment for School Education in the Total recognized Institutions (General and Technical) 2001.

	India	Karnataka	M.P
Total (in no.s)	18,22,08,637	1,09,86,171	1,60,18,880
Women	7,67,40,891	49,42,167	63,82,538
%	42.11	44.98	39.84

Source: Statistical Abstract: INDIA, 2003

The 2001 census has shown that, there was a slight increase in sex-ratio from 927 in 1991 to 933 in 2001 for India. But, states like Punjab, Haryana, and Uttara Pradesh and Union Territories like Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Andaman Nicobar Islands have consistently registered much lower sex-ratios (Table-4), as compared to states like Maharastra, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. The position is distinctly better in southern states like Kerala, Karnataka, Tamilnadu with higher sex-ratios. M.P,s position is somewhere in between these two extremes with a sex-ratio of 920.

The reality of "missing females" still remains a mystery wrapped in social and cultural taboos (Sudhesh Nagia, 2005). Aforementioned factors like strong preference for sons, female foeticide, female infanticide, maternal mortality and several such factors are responsible for declining sex-ratio.

Table - 1 shows that, Life expectancy was 61.6 and 64.9 for males and females respectively in Karnataka. The corresponding figures

for M.P. were 55.6 and 55.2 in 2001. In this context it is to be noted that, both men and women in Karnataka have higher longevity as compared to Madhya Pradesh. Further it is interesting to note that, longevity for men and women in Madhya Pradesh was

Table 4: Sex-Ratios (Females per 1000 Males) in India by States and Union Territories- 2001

Sl.No.	State/Uts	Sex-Ratio	Sl.No.	State/Uts	Sex-Ratio
1	A.P	978	19	Megalaya	975
2	Assam	932	20	Lakshadweep	947
3	Andaman Nicobar	846	21	Manipur	978
4	Arunachal Pradesh	901	22	Mizoram	938
5	Bihar	921	23	M.P	920
6	Chandigarh	773	24	Maharastra	922
7	Chhatisgarh	990	25	Nagaland	909
8	Delhi	821	26	Orissa	972
9	Daman & Diu	709	27	Punjab	874
10	Dadra &Nagar Haveli	811	28	Pondichery	1001
11	Gujarat	921	29	Rajasthan	922
12	Goa	960	30	Sikkim	875
13	Haryana	861	31	Tamilnadu	986
14	Himachal Pradesh	970	32	Tripura	950
15	Jammu &Kashmir	900	33	Uttaranchal	964
16	Jharkhand	941	34	Uttar Pradesh	898
17	Karnataka	964	35	West Bengal	934
18	Kerala	1058		**India**	**933**

Source: Statistical Abstract-India 2003.

almost same. It is assumed that, low life expectancy reflects, in a region like M.P., lack of basic amenities like safe drinking water, health care facilities, besides better nutrition. Life expectancy increases with economic development and rising standard of living of the people that is when they are provided better amenities of life. From this angle, Madhya Pradesh needs infrastructure development, particularly in backward areas in the state than Karnataka.

Gender Inequality in Employment, Wealth and Income

The general phenomenon in India is the low occupational status of women in both urban and rural areas. The proportion of women workers to total workers is low. There is also a wide gap in the percentage of workers between men and women. In India as per 2001, about 52 per cent of men are workers. Among women, this is only 26 per cent at the all India level (Table 5). Hence, economic dependence on men is a general characteristic of Indian women.

Percentage of women to total workers in India was 39.26 per cent. Percentage of male workers was almost double that of female workers in India's total working population in 2001. Interestingly, this was below the national average both in Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka. Again, percentage of male workers were higher (almost 57 per cent) in Karnataka than in Madhya Pradesh (51.62). Percentage gap between male and female workers was 18.52 in Madhya Pradesh and 24.99 in Karnataka. This gender inequality adversely affects women's empowerment and their socio-economic development.

Gender Inequality in Wages

Here, an attempt has been made to understand gender inequality in the effective (adult) wage rates in agricultural and non-agricultural sectors both in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh (Table 5 (a). There is a general disparity in wages and earnings between men and women for a similar work. Work participation rate for women in Madhya Pradesh is higher (32.68) when compared to Karnataka (29.29). Here, one could note that, lower the work participation rate, higher is the gender gap and vice-versa. High work participation rate in M.P. may be due to the higher proportion of tribal population among workers where they are engaged in forest based primary and mining activities rather than urban based tertiary activities. This aspect needs further study to ascertain the nature of women's economic activities.

Majority of the population (60-70 per cent) in total population in both the States depend on agriculture. It indicates that both the states appearing in agrarian economic situation. From table 5 (a) it can be seen that, agricultural wage at the national level is Rs. 23.4 per day for men and Rs.16.4 per day for women. A similar wage rate variation can also be seen in both Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. But the wage rate in non agricultural sector was comparatively better

Table 5:. Percentage of Workers to Total Workers -2001

	India	Karnataka	M.P
Total	39.26	44.6	42.75
Male	51.93	56.87	51.62
Female	25.68	31.88	33.10

Source: Human Development Report, INDIA, 1999.

Table 5 (a): Effective (Adult) Wage Rate for Agricultural and Non-agricultural Wage Work (Rs. Per day)

Agricultural Wage work				Non-agricultural Wage Work		
	India	Karnataka	M.P	India	Karnataka	M.P
Male	23.4	19.3	18.2	30.5	27.9	24.3
Female	16.4	14	14.1	18.7	14	17.6

Source: Human Development Report, INDIA, 1999.

than in agriculture sector for men at the national level at Rs.30.50. Non- agricultural wage rate at Rs.18.7 at the national level is much lower for women, slightly higher than the wage rates prevalent in both M.P. and Karnataka. This shows that, there is a significant gender gap in the wage rates both in agriculture and non-agriculture sectors in India as well as in the States of Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. This also emphasizes the need for in depth studies at block levels to understand the extent of participation of women in tertiary occupation and factors like school drop-out among girls.

Table 6: Selected Social and Economic Indicators of Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh (2001)

Indicators	Karnataka Pradesh	Madhya
A. Social		
1. Total Literacy (in percentage)	67	64
2. Female Literacy	57.5	50.5
3. Ratio of Sc/Sts	20.64	35.44
4. No.of total educational institutions per 100000 population	112	191
5. No. of government hospital beds per 1,00,000 population	107	34
B. Economic		
1. No. of industrial units per lakh population	13	5
2 No.of motor vehicles (transport and non transport) per lakh population	6879	5257
3 No. of industrial workers per lakh population	1139	667
4. Ratio of urban population to total population	33.98	26.67
5. No. of commercial banks per 1,00,000 population	9	6

Source: Statistical Abstract: India 2003

Summary and Policy Implications

Both Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka are predominantly rural agrarian economies. In socio-economic spheres, Karnataka is far better placed than Madhya Pradesh which is also a progressive state in India. In this background, this comparative study attempts to given an overall demographic and gender inequality picture of Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh to draw government's attention to the need to bring down gender inequality.

India's total decadal growth rate of population declined over the years from 24.66 per cent in 1981-1991 to 17 per cent in 1991-2001. The demographic variables like birth rate, death rate, infant mortality rate and also fertility in Karnataka have always been below the national

average. Unlike in M.P., increased health facilities and programmes initiated over the years through planned interventions at the national level have brought down IMR from 80 in 1991 to 66 in 2001 in Karnataka. Though IMR is still higher in Madhya Pradesh (28 excess infants' death per 1000 live birth) compared to Karnataka. Further the analysis shows that infant deaths in urban areas of Madhya Pradesh are almost double that of infant deaths in Karnataka (26 in Karnataka, 53 in Madhya Pradesh). However, life expectancy of men has been found to be higher in Madhya Pradesh.

In literacy, there has been a wide gap in index of deprivation of CLDI in females of Madhya Pradesh. The gender gap in IOD of CLDI was lower in Karnataka than M.P.

The women's enrollment in school education is almost 45 per cent in Karnataka and 40 per cent in M.P. The sex-ratio in Karnataka is satisfactory and is above the national average. Both men and women in Karnataka have better longevity than in M.P. Life expectancy for men and women in M.P. is almost identical. There is visibly wide gender gap in workers wage work between agricultural and non-agricultural sectors in both M.P. and Karnataka.

Work participation rate for females in M.P. is much higher (32.68 per cent) than Karnataka (29.29 per cent). Hence, M.P. has relatively lower gender gap in work participation over that of Karnataka. Also the wage rate in non-agricultural sector in M.P. is comparatively better than that of agricultural sector for both male and female workers. Both the states have lower wage rate for males and females compared to the national average. However, there is a significant gender-gap between the All India wage rates of both agricultural and non-agricultural sector and corresponding rates for Karnataka and M.P.

As can be noted from Table 6, M.P. has higher percentage (35.44) of SC/STs in the total population. This aspect calls for further focused development initiatives. From this angle Karnataka has considerably low (21 per cent) proportion of SC/STs in its total population. To bring down

the gender inequality and also to achieve further socio-economic development in M.P. the following suggestions and policy initiatives are recommended:

1. Promote female literacy through planned interventions by block level studies.
2. Augment social infrastructure and lay special emphasis on health infrastructure.
3. Provide more employment to the workers in the industrial and tertiary sectors.
4. Provide innovative forms of irrigation to marginal and small farmers.
5. There is also a need to introduce special programmes and schemes for development of SC/STs for improvement in their socio-economic status. Detailed studies are also suggested to tackle cover the children school drop-out especially in SC/ST's and weaker sections of the society including minorities.

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