

Perspective

Gender-human security interface: critical perspectives with special reference to India

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Abstract

The theme of 'Human Security' was first articulated by Mahbub-ul-Haq in the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report in 1994. Freedom from fear and freedom from want are the two cardinal principles of human security. Human Security puts individual as the prime referral point in its exposition and analysis. Since, there is a lot of emphasis upon gender-specific discourses in the last three decades this article seeks to bring into limelight the critical perspectives of the interfaces between gender and human security, with special reference to India. This article raises some fundamental and pertinent questions. What impact does gender have on human security? What are the different dimensions of Human Security? To what extent we have been able to establish a gender-specific human security discourse in India? This article tries to answer all these substantive questions and establish a gendered-human security discourse in contemporary India.

Keywords Gender · Human security · India · Human Development Report · Human Development Index · Gender Development Index

1 Introduction

Discourses on 'Gender' and 'Human Security' have proliferated in the last few decades as a result of turbulent developments taking place within the realm of International Relations (IR). The dominant notion of security as it had gradually evolved since the Peace of Westphalia (1648) is the statist notion of security as propounded by the realist paradigm in IR in the 1930s. It assumed that IR is always conflictual and international conflicts are only resolved by war. Realists were primarily guided by the axioms of power politics and had a complete anathema to the normative IR based on values. In other words, it emphasized on empiricism and facts and the question revolved around the theme of 'what is?'. The Realist discourse on security was dominant in the 1950s and 1960s also. The dominant trend towards bipolarity and Cold War, nuclear arms race, military and economic agreements pursued by the two super-powers, US and the former USSR—all bears testimony to supporting the realist discourse. And, the realist/neo-realist discourse in IR is primarily patriarchal and masculine in nature and outlook; and had been challenged by the alternative liberal notion of 'Human Security' in the early 1990s, which seeks to prioritize the individual human being as the prime referral point in understanding security studies. The paradigm of Human Security seeks to revive the liberal idealist notion of security, which was so dominant in the 1920s. The central objective of this article is to understand the nuances of human security through the prisms of a gendered lens and draw out the interfaces between gender and human security especially from an Indian perspective.

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This article concludes by arguing that human security, and especially gendered human security is at a worrisome level in India, as can be reflected through various parameters, like Human Development Index, Gender Development Index, Gender Inequality Index and Global Gender Gap Report 2022.

This article accordingly has been divided into four sections. The first section evaluates the theoretical foundations of gender discourse, by focusing on the different waves of feminism. The second section analyzes threadbare the discourse on 'Human Security'. The third section evaluates the interfaces between gender and human security, and more specifically from an Indian perspective. It uses the latest UNDP's (United Nations Development Programme) Human Development Report 2021–2022 in laying the foundations of an egalitarian society in India. The fourth section deals with a brief Conclusion, by forging the arguments developed in the first three sections. This article is essentially a conceptual and theoretical article using secondary data from books, articles for systematic literature review. The author's argument is supplemented with suitable references. The article combines the theoretical framework with adequate and relevant gender-specific data pertaining to our theme from UNDP's (United Nations Development Programme) Human Development Report 2021–2022 and Global Gender Gap Report 2022.

2 Theorizing gender discourses

Feminism as a school of thought seeks to advance the social, economic and political role of women as a discreet human category. The objective of feminism is twofold. 'First, it analyses the institutions, processes and practices through which women have been subordinated to men; and second, it explores the most appropriate and effective ways in which this subordination can be challenged' [1]. The core concept in feminist theory is its resistance and aversion to patriarchy and male domination and reversing this systemic binary. Feminist political theorists have debated and brought out the distinction between sex and gender. They seek to emphasize the differences and commonalities between men and women. One striking commonality between the sexes is that both are human beings and individuals and therefore must be treated equally in all spheres. While, the term 'sex' refers to biological differences between men and women; 'gender' is a socially constructed identity.

There are five major waves of feminism. The first wave of feminism can be traced back to the decades of 1840s and 1850s. It treated both men and women as equals in every respect, including having equal rights, and was the core idea of liberal feminism, as espoused by Mary Wollstonecraft [1]. 'The second wave of feminism', argued Andrew Heywood, emerged precisely between the years 1965–1980, and was primarily concerned with women's liberation and emancipation [1]. The third wave of feminist political theory emerged after 1980, and is based on the assumption that women do not constitute a single, monolithic and homogenous category and there are various differences among them [2].

The fourth wave of feminism began in 2012, and can be regarded as a watershed in the development of open feminist activism. This wave of feminism spread rapidly through the internet communication, and more precisely through blogs and chat rooms. It focused on gender-based violence as well as objectification of women in the media. The fifth wave of feminism started in 2015 and once again, the social media proved to be an effective tool. It was expressed effectively through the # Me Too Movement, and tackled sexual abuse, and misogyny [3].

Thus, we can argue that gender is one of the most important denominator in the study of IR. Even though feminist scholarship is quite varied and large, there is certainly a broad agreement that we need to talk and debate about 'gendered security', 'gendered IR', so that women's voices are heard and women gets the special focus in all arenas of IR. Sexual exploitation, violence against women, unpaid domestic work, as well as disparity in income and wealth constitutes some of the most daunting challenges women face in an essentially patriarchal society like India. This brings us to the next pertinent question: how can we reduce the private/public distinction of women's role within the mainstream understanding of IR. The mainstream IR theorists regard that women need to confine themselves within the four walls of their home and carry on child-care and other works related to domestic household chores. In other words, women should be confined strictly to the private domain and leave the public domain for the men folk. Similarly, we need to dispel this myth that women needs protection and therefore should be kept away from war and conflict issues, and men should be seen as protectors for their family as well as the state [4]. These perspectives need to be radically altered and we must talk about women's empowerment and gender equality as central to analyzing IR. In the past, IR focused on the state and national security. Nowadays, the attention has shifted to human development. Women and men are at the heart of the human development. This does not mean that services and resources are equally distributed within and across societies, since many are still largely unavailable to women [5]. It is because of this reason, that we can find women's empowerment and gender equality listed as a major goal (SDG- 5) [6].

3 Human security paradigm: concept and genesis

The first major initiative aimed at introducing a normative understanding of war, peace and security was the effort of a group of scholars from different continents, who started a major transnational research enterprise, referred to as the World Order Models Project (WOMP) in 1968. The WOMP theorists laid down the basis of an alternative world order, i.e., *Preferred World's for the 1990s* [7–10]. This Preferred World was based on the four world order values, which were central to WOMP thinking—i.e., peace, economic well-being, social and political justice and ecological balance. The WOMP theorists quickly posed the liberal notion of human security as opposed to the realist notion of state security [11].

During more than the last three decades, International Relations (IR) had undergone some major metamorphosis and so it can be said with regard to the security discourses. Ever since the inception of modern IR, which has been in vogue since the Westphalian Peace Treaty in 1648, the notion of state sovereignty and territorial integrity had dodged the minds of IR scholars. It got a fillip with the realist notion of security, which was enunciated in the 1930s as a counter-point to the dominant liberal idealist notion of security in the 1920s. Liberal idealism was conceptualized in the aftermath of the First World War (1914–1918) and the consequent Treaty of Versailles (1919). The two most ardent protagonists of liberal idealism were Woodrow Wilson and Norman Angell. The then US President, Woodrow Wilson made a serious attempt at spreading the ideas of liberal idealism throughout Europe. Wilson emphasized on peace, self-determination, democracy and collective security through his articulation of 'Fourteen Point Programme' in 1918. Wilsonian idealism led to the formation of the first major international organization, i.e., the League of Nations. In other words, liberal idealism emphasized on the need of constructing an international order to be managed by an international organization, i.e., the League of Nations. The wider international community hailed the formation of League of Nations in 1920 as an embodiment of peace and security, and vowed not to repeat the horrors of the First World War. This, they believed will lead to strengthening of international law and international organization and also lead to more enhanced interdependence, cooperation and peace among sovereign and independent states. Norman Angell had elucidated that 'modernization and interdependence involve a process of change and progress which renders war and the use of force increasingly obsolete' [12]. However, the differences and acrimonies among the major powers led to the diminishing importance of the liberal-idealist theory and paved the way for the formation of 'Realist Theory' in the 1930s. Hans J. Morgenthau and E.H. Carr were the two prime exponents of Realism. The Realist theory emphasized the primacy of state over the individual. Simultaneously, it also emphasized on power politics, security, aggression, conflict, war, state security and national survival. Realism also had a complete aversion to all kinds of values, unlike normative idealist theory. Realism became the dominant approach to understand IR till the end of Cold War. As the Cold War ended, we can witness that there have been a gradual shift from state security to human security [13]. Behind this larger shift was the larger normative question that to whom we should accord primacy—the state or the individual? While, the realist theory accorded primacy to the state, the individual is the prime referral point in liberalism. In other words, there is a shift in the security discourse—from state security to human security, and a corresponding transition of triumph of liberalism over realism. Instead of economic growth as the basic indicator of development, human security emphasizes on human development, seeks to reduce internal conflicts, seeks to study the implications of globalization, as well as also prioritizes human rights and humanitarian intervention [14].

However, it was Mahbub ul Haq, a Pakistani development economist, who had for the first time elaborated the notion of human security, as well as the associated notion of Human Development Index (HDI) in the *Human Development Report (HDR) 1994*. Human Security is based on two foundational principles—'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want'. The notion of human security is being understood with reference to four fundamental questions: 'security for whom?', security of which values?, security from what threats?, and security by what means?' [15, 16]. Let us now try to analyze the notion of human security with reference to these four vital parameters.

Human security essentially advocates a people-centric or an individual-centric approach to security. Firstly, the HDR 1994 states that human security is primarily for the individual safety, well-being and their dignity. Secondly, human security has seven core dimensions. These are economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security [12, pp. 3–4 & 24–25]. Rumki Basu provides a summary of these seven dimensions of human security. Economic security seeks to reduce poverty and assure some employment to every individual. Food security primarily seeks to reduce hunger and famine. Health security seeks to provide healthcare facilities to every individual. Environmental security seeks to reduce environmental degradation, tackle the menace of greenhouse gases emissions, ozone depletion and climate change and thereby maintain ecological balance of the entire world. Personal security seeks to protect every individual from various forms of threats and violence—whether it

from individual, state, ethnic and religious conflicts and violence against women. Community security seeks to celebrate cultural diversity. Political security seeks to reduce political repression and protect human rights of every individual [17].

Thirdly, it is being contended that the absence of economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security constitutes the localized threat to human security. On the other hand, unchecked population growth, increasing disparities in economic opportunities, growing international migration, environmental degradation, drug trafficking and international terrorism constitutes the more wider global threats to human security [15, pp. 34–37]. Fourthly, the UNDP 'Report recommends endorsement of the concept of human security itself, changes in national and international policy focused on basic needs, productive and remunerative employment and human rights, preventive diplomacy and 'preventive' development, and the reform of global institutions' [15, pp. 38–40].

Thus, we can argue that the human security paradigm inter-weaves the notion of security, development, human rights and development of human capabilities strongly into a coherent whole [17, p. 416]. Rumki Basu had contended that human security can be achieved 'through sustainable development'; equity-based development, 'grass-roots participation', 'a peace dividend', 'North–South partnership', 'economic restructuring' through reforming 'international institutions' and finally, a strengthened 'global civil society' [17, p. 414].

Further, the threat of a possible nuclear holocaust looming large over much of South Asia has necessitated the need for human security in the South Asian subcontinent. The rise of the Far Right, the destruction caused by wars and political repression unleashed by authoritarian and democratic governments, shallow democracy, uneven and lopsided economic development, growing practices of religious orthodoxy and fundamentalism, the problems of illiteracy, poverty and unemployment, as well as the widening disparities and economic inequalities—have all collectively underlined the need for human security. And, it goes without saying, that human security will lay the foundations of human development.

4 Gender-human security interface: the Indian perspective

This section analyzes the interfaces between gender and human security, and especially from an Indian perspective. It raises some pertinent questions. How can we ensure gender security in India? How can we ensure human security in India? What are the challenges before us to remove hindrances to ensure gender and human security in contemporary India? Where we can locate and place women regarding the different dimensions of human security in India? Amitav Acharya had enumerated five dimensions of the gender-human security interface. These five aspects are: '(1) violence against women and girls; (2) gender inequalities in control over resources; (3) gender inequalities in power and decision-making; (4) women's human rights; (5) women (and men) as actors, not victims' [14, p. 488]. Thus, gender is the central variable 'to discussions of violence and human security', and we need to focus on 'the benefits of an intersectional, non-binary gendered approach' to human security [18].

Gender security is therefore the most obvious need in contemporary India. We need to emphasize on the safety, security and economic independence of women, so that they can lead their life with dignity, well-being and self-respect. We need to bring women from the periphery to the national mainstream in all spheres—social, economic and political. We need to do gender auditing, so that we can ensure both gender security and women's empowerment. And, this needs to start first with the various dimensions of Human Development Index, as outlined in HDR 1994. And, Gender Development Index seems to be the most obvious tool to ensure women's emancipation. Feminists of all hues call for the reduction of all forms of economic, physical and ecological violence committed against women.

Gender development is thus inextricably inter-linked with economic security, one of the prime manifestations of human security. Women cutting across all societies constitute the disadvantaged sections, despite the differences in race, nationality, region, religion, ethnicity, caste and class. While, in the developed countries, women are given much more rights, dignity, justice and are treated at par with men economically; on the other hand, in the developing countries, like India, the gendered space or what J. Ann Tickner in 2011 [19] refers to as the 'gendered division of labour' is a highly contested notion, where women and men are treated unequally. This notion of 'gendered division of labour' can be located in the differentiating roles for women and men, as stipulated by the capitalist system. While, men are supposed to be the breadwinner, women are allocated the role of housewives and caregivers. While, men's work is treated as the main source of income for any family, women's income is regarded as 'supplemental wage earners' [19, p. 270]. This, in essence, seems to be inherently discriminatory. In other words, the capitalist system protects and supports male chauvinism while totally ignoring feminine values, sensibilities and their domestic work. Further, women and men are paid unequally for the same hard-work carried out by them. While, women are paid less, men are comparatively speaking paid much more. This

goes well in line with the articulation of the socialist and radical feminists. Socialist feminists drew their inspiration from Marxism and argued that women's subordination had precipitated from their confinement to the family and domestic household chores. Patriarchy and capitalism are similar, as both are oppressive. A major advocate of socialist feminism, Simone de Beauvoir had argued that while the masculinity is regarded 'as the positive or the norm', the feminine on the other hand is depicted as the 'other', which in turn leads to women's subjugation. 'Beauvoir placed her faith in rationality and critical analysis as the means of exposing this process and giving women responsible for their own lives' [1, p. 63].

In India, while, in the formal sector, which constitutes about 7 percent of the economic workforce, women and men are treated equally and with due respect to each other's identity and individuality. On the other hand, in developing countries like India, women are treated unequally and the principle of 'equal pay for equal work' is not followed within the realm of informal sector of the economy, which constitutes about 93 percent of India's economy. Thus, we can argue that the 'gendered division of labour' is highly unequal and discriminatory in the informal sector of the Indian economy.

Gender is also an important variable with regard to food security. And, food security is inevitably linked with the issue of hunger. With regard to hunger, Caroline Thomas argued that there are two broad schools of thought. These are: 'the orthodox, nature-focused approach which identifies the problem largely as one of overpopulation, and the entitlement, society-focused approach, which sees the problem more in terms of distribution' [20]. The society-focused entitlement approach as articulated by Amartya Sen states that people starve not because of the amount of food which is available to them, but because there is lack of access or entitlement to that food. This thesis was further supported by the thesis articulated by J. Bennett and Susan George, who identify 'six factors which are important in determining who goes hungry'. These are: (1) the North–South divide between developed and developing countries; (2) national policies on how wealth is shared; (3) the rural–urban bias; (4) social class; (5) gender; and (6) age, along with two other factors—race and disability [21].

In India, at many times, women often go hungry, even though she provides food for her husband and children. The reason why women go hungry is that they don't have the purchasing capacity to have access to food. This aspect gets amply reflected in Global Hunger Index (GHI). India has been ranked 107 among 121 nations in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2022. This essentially reflects the poor and really horrible state of affairs in India, where the state has failed miserably in ensuring that people don't go hungry and suffer from malnutrition. What have further added insult to injury is that India's rank in GHI is behind all the major South Asian states—Pakistan (ranked 99), Bangladesh (ranked 84), Nepal (ranked 81) and Sri Lanka (ranked 64) [22]. The Indian state's food security programmes 'focused on providing an energy-sufficient diet rather than a nutritious diet or healthy diet', which is responsible for India's low rank in GHI [23]. And, according to a 2021 United Nations Report, over 74% Indians and about one 'billion people cannot afford a healthy diet', which contradicts 'the government's claim that only 813 million people require food assistance', that is 16.6% of the population in 2020–2022 [24].

The gender dimension is quite closely related to health security. Women have to bear the reproductive responsibilities as well as care-givers for the entire family. Often, women die during their pregnancy or suffer from serious ailments, as they cannot afford to have access to a safe and secure healthy life. Therefore, the Modi government should put greater emphasis on the healthcare sector. The Covid-19 pandemic and its second wave has exposed the hollowness of our poor public healthcare system in India. All over India, we have seen that patients are just struggling for oxygen, medicines, hospital beds and ventilators. Even in Delhi, the capital city of India, the situation was really horrible. The situation is pretty dismal in the rural countryside, with very poor infrastructural facilities to deal with the health security amid the Covid-19 pandemic. Let me remind all of us of the fact that the healthcare industry was thrown open to the private corporate sector in 2001, during Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's tenure, thereby bringing in private multinational hospitals, like Apollo, Max, Fortis, etc. The Indian state should try to build up the healthcare infrastructure and increase the health care spending as percentage of its GDP in India [25].

Similarly, the gender dimension is also related to environmental security. It was only in the 1970s that theorists took into cognizance the increasing menace of environmental degradation. 'The eco-development school of ecologists', Rajni Kothari pointed out, 'are concerned with making development both environmentally viable and socially equitable' [26]. Tamar Shirinian had pointed out that, 'Women who align themselves with various forms of ideology and praxis that they call "feminism," however, are on the front lines of other political, social, and economic movements, including struggles for the environment' [27]. Environmental protection is now an intrinsic part of our worldly concerns. In the various environmental summits, the developed countries led by the US regard the issue of global warming and climate change as a common problem with regard to both the 'North' and the 'South'. On the other hand, the developing countries emphasize that this problem is more acute in the developed countries and they should bear much of the responsibility for environmental sustainability, as outlined in the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities', as outlined first in the

UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It is on this question that the North and the South are yet to arrive at a common solution [28]. The battle for reducing ozone layer depletion, increase of dangerous and volatile gases, climate change concerns and devastations caused by floods and cyclones, the most prominent being Tauktae and Yaas—all these shows that we need to give primacy to environmental security in India.

The gender perspective is also intertwined with personal security, one of the manifestations of human security paradigm. Personal security eschews that people need to be protected from all forms of physical violence; violence carried out by the state or what may be referred to as state or political repression, repression carried out by authoritarian governments in contravention to democratic principles and values; as well as violence and crimes against women perpetuated by individuals and the state. Often, women have to surrender their rights to men in lieu of security in a highly oppressive patriarchal society like India [29]. In India, the social hierarchy is such that men are the main decision-makers regarding women's choices and their lives in the family as well as outside, i.e., both in the public and private domain. In other words, there is always a constant duality and binary before women to choose between the 'self' and the 'other' (i.e., men). This stems primarily from the masculinist dominance in our society, polity and economy. As a staunch feminist Anuradha Mitra Chenoy has observed 'Gender differentiation is evident in the presence of the disproportionate number of men in the coercive structures of the state like the army or police, while women are most visible in the service sectors, i.e., teachers, health workers and clerical support' [29, p. 86].

In India, crimes against women and gender-based discrimination have only increased in the contemporary times. Some of the common crimes committed against women in India are sexual assault, rape, murder, crimes committed against women for dowry, suicide and drug abuse. All of these crimes committed against women reflect that the society in India is still semi-feudal and there is also a fundamental problem in the way boys and girls are raised and brought up within a family. While, boys are told to be masculine and display their muscular strength and are groomed to be the decision-makers within a family; on the other hand, girls are told to be subdued and listen to their husbands wishes. Many conservative families in India still have aversion to women seeking a decent job and standing on their own feet and that they should be economically independent. These regressive and orthodox mentality need to be shunned out and women need to be treated with respect and dignity.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, 4,05,861 crimes have been committed against women in India in 2019 as compared to 3,78,236 cases in 2018, thus registering an increase of 7.3 per cent. Among these, the cruelty by husband or his relatives stand at 30.9 per cent, assault on women with intent to outrage her modesty stands at 21.8 per cent, kidnapping and abduction of women stands at 17.9 per cent, and rape incidences stands at 7.9 per cent. The 'crime rate registered per lakh women population' in 2019 stands at 62.4 per cent as compared to 58.8 per cent in 2018' [30]. These crimes primarily reflect the rising incidences of gender-based violence in India, which have got further exacerbated by the Covid-19 Pandemic. We will discuss two fundamental reasons behind these rising incidences of violence against women. Firstly, the social structure in India is still semi-feudal and patriarchal and women still remains largely marginalized in the rural hinterland in India. The rising cases of female foeticide, and social ostracization toward girls and women further lends credibility to our argument. Secondly, the rising graph of unemployment and job losses, mostly of women in the unorganized sector, which constitutes about 93 per cent of the Indian economy is also one of the most important factors. The decline in Indian economy became much more pronounced because of the Covid-19 Pandemic. It turned the health crisis into a social and economic crisis, argued renowned scholar Rajendra Baikady [31].

The gender dimension is also inexorably linked with community security. The community can be a gender-based community, caste, class, race, ethnicity, religious and region-specific. Sometimes, the threat can also be against the pluralist and multi-culturalist ethos of our liberal socio-political fabric. In contemporary India, often these threats against cultural diversity stems from the dominant Hindu majoritarian group's religious intolerance against religious minorities, and especially the Muslims [32, 33].

The gender dimension is also inextricably inter-linked with issues of 'Political Security', like, political or state repression, human rights protection issues, to stop the abuse of military dictatorships, defence 'from the practices of torture, ill-treatment or disappearance, and from political detention and imprisonment' [13, p. 418]. While, in India, the issue of military dictatorships does not hold any ground, as India is by and large a democratic country, notwithstanding some aberrations in contemporary India. However, there have been massive human rights violations, and especially with regard to the dignity of women. The detention of mainstream political leaders in Jammu and Kashmir—Mehbooba Mufti of People's Democratic Party as well as others after the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status on August 05, 2019, is a case in point. However, she had been released subsequently. And, all these are reflected in the downslide in India's ranking (current rank 108) in Electoral Democracy Index 2023 [34].

We therefore argue that the need for human security and especially of women's and more broadly, gender concerns is paramount now. Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Inequality Index (GII) are the two prime manifestations of measuring gender equality, as part of the Human Security discourse. What we propose now is that we will look at some of the major gender security concerns and human security, as is reflected in the Human Development Report 2022.

Tables 1 and 2 reflect the state of Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Inequality Index (GII) as articulated in the Human Development Report 2020. In Table 1—Gender Development Index (GDI), the Mean Years of Schooling—Female stands at 6.3, whereas the Mean Years of Schooling—Male stands at 7.2. Moreover, whereas the Estimated Gross National Income per Capita—Male is quite high at \$10,633, the corresponding figure for Female stands at a mere \$ 2277. The Gender Development Index assumes that if the gender inequality is more, the state's development quality gets affected adversely. Further, we can argue that gender inequality will be low if the state has a high HDI [15, p. 274]. Table 2 shows that India's Gender Inequality Index rank stands at 132. Further, whereas Female Labour Force Participation Rate is 19.2, the corresponding Male Labour Force Participation Rate stands at 70.1. This amply reflects the acute gender inequality between women and men.

Table 3 highlights the poor state of affairs of India with regard to the different Human Development Index (HDI) indicators, namely, life expectancy at birth, expected years of schooling, mean years of schooling, gross national income (GNI) per capita. A cursory look at some of the available data shows that India stands at rank 132—in HDI (Human Development Index). Further, India is placed in the category of medium human development, as compared to Sri Lanka and Maldives, whose position are in the category of high human development and are therefore better placed as compared to India. Moreover, India had slipped by two ranks in its HDI 2021–2022 Rank of 132, as compared to its HDI Rank of 130 in 2020.

4.1 Medium human

Looking at the figures of India's Criteria Wise Ranking in the Global Gender Gap Report 2022—Table 4, we can very well understand the pitiable condition of women's dignity and equality on four vital parameters. While, on the two indicators, 'Economic Participation and Opportunity' and 'Health Survival', India's rank stands at 143 and 146 out of 156 countries respectively. It essentially reflects the fact that India's record on both these indicators is very poor. Women are practically on the periphery as far as economic security and health security are concerned. And, the situation is horrific in the rural areas, where the developmental policies initiated by the Indian state have not reached the people. The grassroots activists and civil society activists are raising a massive awareness program to highlight the plight of the vulnerable poor and deprived women. On the 'Educational Attainment' indicator, India's rank stands at 107, which essentially reflects our observation that India's record is pretty dismal, if not poor. On the other hand, only on the indicator of women's 'Political Empowerment', India's rank stands at 48, which relatively speaking, is slightly better than the three other indicators.

5 Conclusion

Anuradha Chenoy has rightly pointed out the interfaces between gender and human security by her exposition, 'For women, peace is an absence of domestic, social and political violence. Security for women is security in public and private spaces' [29, p. 93]. The GDI, GII, HDI and India's track record in the Global Gender Gap Report 2022 amply reflects the fact that there exists a state of apathy with regard to both the notions of gender security and the wider notion of human security in India. The dominant patriarchal structure of the relationship within a family as well as outside, both in the public and private domain and the retrograde mentality of the majority of men is the main obstacle to gender equality and women's empowerment. Further, the societal approach vis-à-vis women also need to be radically altered. There is a need to re-look at the notion of human security through a gendered lens and through the prisms of gender security. Since human security prioritizes on human rights and human development, this should be broadly defined to include women's rights and security along with the masculinized concept of human security. Along with all these measures, there is a need for gender mainstreaming. 'Gender mainstreaming', Tickner argued, 'prescribes the review and revision of policy processes in all sectors of government, with an eye towards eliminating gender-based disparities in policy formulation and implementation' [19, p. 274]. In other words, gender mainstreaming evaluates whether a particular policy is conducive and favourable for gender equality and empowerment or not.

Thus, our research quite convincingly has argued that gender security is essentially entwined with the seven aspects of human security—i.e., economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. While, the men folk have much better access to all these seven

Table 1 Gender Development Index -2021–2022

HDI Rank	Gender Development Index-Value 2021	Gender Development Index—Group 2021	HDI Value Female 2021	HDI Value Male 2021	SDG-3 Life Expec-tancy at Birth (years) Female 2021	SDG-3 Life Expec-tancy at Birth (years) Male 2021	SDG 4.3 Expected Years of Schooling (years) Female 2021	SDG 4.3 Expected Years of Schooling (years) Male 2021	SDG 4.4 Mean Years of Schooling Female 2021	SDG 4.4 Mean Years of Schooling Male 2021	SDG 8.5 Estimated Gross National Income per capita (2017PPP\$) Female 2021	SDG 8.5 Estimated Gross National Income per capita (2017PPP\$) Male 2021	
132.	India	0.849	5	0.567	0.668	68.9	65.8	119	118	6.3	7.2	2,277	10,633

Source: United Nations 2023

Table 2 Gender Inequality Index 2021–2022

HDI Rank	Country	Gender Inequality Index Value	Gender Inequality Index Rank	Maternal Mortality Ratio (Deaths per 100,000 live births)	Adolloscent Birth Rate (Deaths per 1000 women ages 15–19)	Share of Seats in Parliament (% Held by women)	Population with at least some Secondary Education (% Ages 25 and older)	Population with at least some Secondary Education (% Ages 25 and older)	Labour Force Participation Rate (% Ages 15 and other)	Labour Force Participation Rate (% Ages 15 and other)
132	India	0.490	122	2017 133	2021 17.2	2021 13.4	Female 2021 41.8	Male 2021 53.8	Female 2021 19.2	Male 2021 70.1

Source: United Nations 2023

Table 3 Human Development Index—2021–2022

HDI Rank	Human Development Index (HDI) Value—2021	SDG 3 Life Expectancy at Birth (years) 2021	SDG 4.3 Expected Years of Schooling (years) -2021	SDG 4.4 Mean Years of Schooling (years) 2021	SDG 8.5 Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (2017PPP\$) 2021	GNI per capita rank minus HDI Rank 2021	HDI Rank 2020	
132.	India	0.633	67.2	11.9	6.7	6,590	-6	130

Source: United Nations 2023

Table 4 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2022- India's Rank

Overall Rank of India	Economic Participation and Opportunity	Educational Attainment	Health Survival	Political Empowerment
135	143	107	146	48

Source: Global Gender Gap Report 2022. March 24, 2023. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/digest>

types of human security, women are the most vulnerable and marginalized sections of the society and their access to human security is not being given its due importance in India.

It can be forcefully argued that only social engineering and politico-economic empowerment of women can lead to gender security and lay down the basis of an egalitarian social order in India. However, this should be done through a bottom-up process and not a top-down process. In other words, women from the grass-roots movement should be empowered first followed by women in the higher echelons of power. All these will invariably ensure the success of feminism as a justice movement. The current literature on gender is examining the point of going beyond empowerment, towards recognition and redistribution. We need to develop, as Nancy Fraser had so eloquently elucidated, 'a *critical* theory of recognition, one which identifies and defends only those versions of the cultural politics of difference that can be coherently combined with the social politics of equality' [35].

Thus, we can argue that gender equality and women's empowerment go a long way in increasing gender development and also human development. And, the best way to do so is to encourage and ensure girls education. The education of a boy/man can help his personal and professional life as well as bring gratification for the family, but the education of a girl/woman can lead to an educated family. Moreover, women should be encouraged to have their own financial and economic independence. This can be ensured through paid employment in a country which ensures equal pay for work of equal value. Awareness raising campaigns are needed to promote self-esteem among women and girls, while men and boys need to learn to respect them. It is only when both women and men respect each other's rights, identity and dignity, can we ensure gender equality, gender security, and gender development in India. This will lay down the basis of a gender-centric human security discourse in India.

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Data availability All data used in this Research are drawn from secondary sources, like UNDP's Human Development Report 2021–2022, Global Hunger Index 2022, Global Gender Gap Report 2022, Electoral Democracy Index 2023 and they are out in the public domain.

Declarations

Competing interests The authors declare no competing interests.

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