



Institute of Development Studies Kolkata
&
University of Calcutta

PhD in Development Studies (2023)

Entrance Test

November 12, 2022

Maximum marks: 100

Time allowed: 2 hours (12-2) pm

1. Please read the following excerpt and *based on your understanding* answer all the questions given below. [5x6=30 marks]

Mary Wollstonecraft's classic book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, published in 1792, had various distinct claims within the general program of "vindication" that she outlined. The rights she spoke about included not only some that particularly related to the well-being of women (and the entitlements that were directly geared to promote that well-being), but also rights that were aimed mainly at the free agency of women.

Both these features figure in the agenda of women's movements today, but it is, I think, fair to say that the agency aspects are beginning to receive some attention at last, in contrast to the earlier exclusive concentration on well-being aspects. Not long ago, the tasks these movements faced primarily involved working to achieve better treatment for women -- a squarer deal. The concentration was mainly on women's well-being and it was a much needed corrective. The objectives have, however, gradually evolved and broadened from this "welfarist" focus to incorporate--and emphasize--the active role of women's *agency*. No longer the passive recipients of welfare-enhancing help, women are increasingly seen, by men as well as women, as active agents of change: the dynamic promoters of social transformations that can alter the lives of *both* women and men.

The nature of this shift in concentration and emphasis is sometimes missed because of the *overlap* between the two approaches. The active agency of women cannot, in any serious way, ignore the urgency of rectifying many inequalities that blight the well-being of women and subject them to unequal treatment; thus the agency role must be much concerned with women's well-being also. Similarly, coming from the other end, any practical attempt at enhancing the well-being of women cannot but draw on the agency of women themselves in bringing about such a change. So the *well-being aspect* and the *agency aspect* of women's movements inevitably have a substantial intersection. And yet they cannot but be different at a foundational level, since the role of a person as an "agent" is fundamentally distinct from (though not independent of) the role of the same person as a "patient". The fact that the agent may have to see herself as a patient as well does not alter the additional modalities and responsibilities that are inescapably associated with the agency of a person.

To see individuals as entities that experience and have well-being is an important recognition, but to stop there would amount to a very restricted view of the personhood of women. Understanding the agency role is thus central to recognizing people as responsible persons: not only are we well or ill, but also we act or refuse to act, and can choose to act one way rather than another. And thus we--women *and* men--must take responsibility for doing things or not doing them. It makes a difference, and we have to take note of that difference. This elementary acknowledgment, though simple enough in principle) can be exacting in its implications, both for social analysis and for practical reason and action.

The changing focus of women's movements is, thus, a crucial addition to previous concerns; it is not a rejection of those concerns; The old concentration on the well-being of women, or, to be more exact, on the "ill-being" of women, was not, of course, pointless. The relative deprivations in the well-being of women were--and are--certainly present in the world in which we live, and are clearly important for social justice, including justice for women. For example, there is plenty of evidence that identifies the biologically "contrary" (socially generated) "excess mortality" of women in Asia and North Africa, with gigantic numbers of "missing women"--"missing" in the sense of being dead as a result of gender bias in the distribution of health care and other necessities. That problem is unquestionably important for the well-being of women, and in understanding the treatment of women as "less than equal." There are also pervasive indications of culturally neglected needs of women across the world. There are excellent reasons for bringing these deprivations to light and keeping the removal of these iniquities very firmly on the agenda.

But it is also the case that the limited role of women's active agency seriously afflicts the lives of all people--men as well as women, children as well as adults. While there is every reason not to slacken the concern about women's well-being and ill-being, and to continue to pay attention to the sufferings and deprivations of women, there is also an urgent and basic necessity, particularly at this time, to take an agent-oriented approach to the women's agenda.

Perhaps the most immediate argument for focusing on women's *agency* may be precisely the role that such an agency can play in removing the iniquities that depress the *well-being* of women. Empirical work in recent years has brought out very clearly how the relative respect and regard for women's well-being is strongly influenced by such variables as women's ability to earn an independent income, to find employment outside the home, to have ownership rights and to have literacy and be educated participants in decisions within and outside the family. Indeed, even the survival disadvantage of women compared with men in developing countries seems to go down sharply--and may even get eliminated--as progress is made in these agency aspects.

- i) What is free agency of women?
- ii) Will the survival disadvantage of women necessarily go down over time?
- iii) Why cannot the changing focus of women's movement reject the previous concerns?
- iv) Increasing employment of woman will increase women's earnings. What else?
- v) What will providing cash transfer to women affect -- women's agency or welfare?

2. Write on **any one** of the following topics (in 500 words approximately) [30 marks]

- a) Can gender discrimination be captured by male-female differences in life expectancy at birth?
- b) India is a hungry nation -- do you agree?
- c) Development-oriented inducement to mitigate climate change
- d) Hindi and the idea of India
- e) Reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)

3. The following table shows average daily earnings (in Rs) of some male and female informal workers by their educational status.

Educational Status	Average daily earning of male workers in rupees	Average daily earning of female workers in rupees
Illiterate	160	83
Primary level	161	85
Secondary level	225	145
Secondary and above	342	182
All categories combined	183	102

Based on the table above, examine if the following statements are true, false, partially true, or cannot be ascertained based entirely on information given the table. Provide short argument (say, calculation or hand-drawn graph/figure) in support of your answer.

- a) There is a gender gap in average daily earnings irrespective of the educational level of the workers
- b) The female workers seem to be earning less compared to the male workers because the former have lower educational qualification.
- c) The gender gap in daily earnings declines with increase in educational level.
- d) Better educational qualification seems to help the female workers earn more than it helps male workers.

4. The following table shows percentage of children under 5 years who were found under-weight (weight-for-age) in four Indian states during two waves of National Family Health Survey (2015-16 and 2019-21)

	Gujarat	Kerala	Tamil Nadu	West Bengal
<i>National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-16)</i>				
Rural	44.2	16.7	25.7	33.6
Urban	32	15.5	21.5	26.2
Total (Rural + Urban)	39.5	16.1	23.8	31.6
<i>National Family Health Survey 5 (2019-20)</i>				
Rural	43.5	19.9	23.5	33.5
Urban	33.3	19.4	20	28.7
Total (Rural + Urban)	39.7	19.7	22	32.2

Based on the table above, examine if the following statements are true, false, partially true, or cannot be ascertained based entirely on information given the table. Provide short argument (say, calculation or hand-drawn graph/figure) in support of your answer.

- Among the four states, Gujarat shows the highest percentage of under-weight children, no matter whether we look at rural or urban areas, 2015-16 or 2019-21 data.
- The rural-urban gap in the percentage of under-weight children is not the highest in Gujarat among the four states.
- Between 2015-16 and 2019-21, reduction in the percentage of under-weight children is higher in rural areas compared to urban areas.
- Between 2015-16 and 2019-21, change in the rural-urban gap (in percentage of under-weight children) has been the highest in Kerala among the four states.