

Human Development and Gender

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Introduction

Concept of Human Development indicates that the real aim of development is to improve the quality of human life. It is a process that enables human beings to realize their potential, build self-confidence and lead lives of dignity and fulfilment. Economic growth is an important component of development, but it cannot be a goal in itself, nor can it go on indefinitely. Although people differ in the goals that they would set for development, some are virtually universal. These include a long and healthy life, education, access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living, political freedom, guaranteed human rights, and freedom from violence. Development is real only if it makes our lives better in all these respects.

Genesis of Human Development Approach:

Immediately after India's independence from British regime, the focus was on rapid economic growth as it was believed that larger size of national income would allow benefits of development to trickle down to each and every stratum of society. By late sixties, limitations of Trickle-down Theory were exposed as increase in economic growth did not enhance the quality of life of all sections of society. Development economists and social scientists demanded growth with social justice and distributive justice. The Approach Paper on the Eleventh Five Year Plan "Towards faster and more inclusive growth" reflects the need to make growth "more inclusive" in terms of benefits flowing through more employment and income to those sections of society which have been bypassed by higher rates of economic growth witnessed in recent years.

Esther Boserup (1970)'s seminal work revealed that though women made crucial contribution in the subsistence economy, the course of development had marginalised them in all spheres of life. As a result, the UN system was motivated to give a mandate to all the member countries to prepare Status of Women's Report with focus on Equality, Development and Peace.

Gunner Myrdal (1971) in his voluminous contribution *Asian Drama-Volume I, II, III* put forward a strong case in favour of investment in health and education to enhance productivity of the workforce. It snowballed into Human Resource Development Approach that advocated use of human resource as an instrument of enhancing income and wealth of the nation and right-based human development approach.

Women and Development Debates:

Women's Studies have challenged the conventional indicators of development that focus on urbanisation, higher education, mobility of labour, technological development, modernisation, infra-structural development, industrialisation, mechanisation in agricultural, white revolution, green revolution, blue revolution so on and so forth. Development dialogue of the last 32 years (1975 to the present) resulted into intellectual scrutiny with gender lens of :

- The critique of trickle down theory
- Marginalisation thesis popularised by the UN as WID (Women in Development)
- ‘Integration of Women’ Approach known as Women and Development (WAD)
- Development Alternatives with Women (DAWN) at Nairobi Conference, 1985
- Gender and Development (GAD)- Women in Decision Making Process, 1990
- Adoption of CEDAW-Convention on all forms of Discrimination against Women
- Human Development Index, Gender Empowerment Measure, 1995
- Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 2000
- Women Empowerment Policy, GoI, 2001
- Gender Mainstreaming in planning, policy making and programme Implementation

With the official recognition of subordinate status of women in economic, social, educational political and cultural spheres by all nation states, two approaches became popular with regard to women in development process. First one was an instrumentalist approach influenced by Human Resource Development philosophy that supported investment in women so that their efficiency and productivity would increase which would increase their economic and social status. As against this, the 2nd approach was guided by Human Development concept that emphasised the quality of life or wellbeing aspect of investment in women. In this approach attainment of education, health, nutrition and better quality of life is considered to be an end in itself. Both approaches are interlinked (Sen, 1999).

Definition of Gender Equality and Empowerment

Like race and ethnicity, gender is a social construct. It defines and differentiates the roles, rights, responsibilities and obligations of women and men. The innate biological differences between females and males are interpreted by society to create a set of social expectations that define the behaviors that are appropriate for women and men and that determine women’s and men’s differential access to rights, resources, and power in society. Although the specific nature and degree of these differences vary from one society to the next, they typically favor men, creating an imbalance in power and a gender inequality that exists in most societies worldwide.

Definition of Gender Equality

According to the UN (2002), “equality is the cornerstone of every democratic society that aspires to social justice and human rights.” The term gender equality has been defined in multiple ways in the development literature and has been the subject of great debate in the U.N. It often means women having the same opportunities in life as men, for instance equality of access to education and employment, which does not necessarily lead to equality of outcomes. Several experts have proposed conceptual frameworks for understanding gender equality. The United Nations Human Development Report (1995) refers to gender equality in terms of capabilities (education, health, and nutrition) and opportunities (economic and decision-making). Similarly, the World Bank defines gender equality in terms of equality under the law, equality of opportunity (including equality of rewards for work and equality in access to human capital and other productive resources that enable opportunity), and equality of voice (the ability to influence and contribute to the development process).

Three primary domains of equality between men and women emerge from both of these frameworks:

1. capabilities, access to resources and opportunities,
2. agency or the ability to influence
3. contribute to outcomes.

The capabilities domain refers to basic human abilities as measured through education, health and nutrition. It is the most fundamental of all the three domains and is necessary for achieving equality in the other two domains.

Access to resources and opportunities, the second domain, refers primarily to equality in the opportunity to use or apply basic capabilities through access to economic assets (such as land and property) and resources (such as income and employment).

The third domain, agency, is the defining element of the concept of empowerment and refers to the ability to make choices and decisions that can alter outcomes. Gender equality in this domain can only result from an equalizing in the balance of power between women and men in the household and societal institutions.

These three domains of equality are inter-related. Progress in any one domain to the exclusion of the others is insufficient to meet the goal of gender equality. While they are inter-related, the three domains are not necessarily dependent on each other. So, for instance, illiterate women may organize, thereby building their agency to influence outcomes for themselves and their households. Not surprisingly, women then use that agency to demand capability (better health or education) and opportunity (access to decent work). Similarly, women with capabilities (as measured by education) may have no economic opportunity, as is evidenced in many Middle Eastern countries.

Gender inequalities exist because of discrimination in the family and societal institutions and social, cultural, and religious norms that perpetuate stereotypes, practices and beliefs that are detrimental to women. Amartya Sen (2001) narrates seven forms of gender inequalities—mortality, natality, basic facility, special opportunity, profession, ownership and household.

Human rights conventions provide redress for discrimination. Among these, the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1979, is the most universally accepted instrument for realizing gender equality and influencing cultural and traditional definitions of gender roles and family relations. The treaty has been ratified by 170 countries, including every nation in the Western Hemisphere except the United States, but its impact is dependent on political will and resources.

Economic institutions and policy can exacerbate existing gender inequalities instead of mitigating them. There is a strong tendency to see the market as a liberating force for women. While modern markets can and do undermine some of the pre-existing forms of culturally-determined gender inequality, they also incorporate and transform pre-existing inequalities into new ones (Elson and Pearson 1997). Commercialised new reproductive technologies are posing major threat to women's survival chances in India and China by encouraging existing patriarchal biases of son preference and sex selective abortions of female fetuses (Patel & Karne, 2006).

Laws and policies play a significant role in determining the extent of gender inequality that exists in a society. They can serve to protect women's rights or to reduce them. For example, in many countries, women still lack the legal right to inherit or own property and, in many others, violence against women is not considered a criminal offense. Without transformations in economic relations or the implementation and enforcement of legal rights and protection, gender equality and the empowerment of women can remain an elusive goal.

Definition of Empowerment

The concept of empowerment is related to gender equality but distinct from it. Empowerment is a process that marks change over a period of time and requires that the individual being empowered is involved as a significant agent in that change process. Several experts agree that an empowered woman is one who has the agency to formulate strategic choices and to control resources and decisions that affect important life outcomes (Kabeer 1999). The core of the concept of empowerment lies in the ability of the woman to control her own destiny. For e.g., only empowered woman can oppose pressure to undergo sex selective abortion of female foetus (Patel, 2007). This implies that to be empowered women must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment), they must also have the agency to use those rights, capabilities, resources, and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions (such as is provided through leadership opportunities and participation in political institutions).

Gender and the Process of Economic Development

The incorporation of subsistence economies into 'modern' market economies has brought into question the traditional gender-based division of labour as an organizing principle in the rural and urban sector because of the basic injustice it perpetuates. Women end up doing the least skilled work and are underpaid or are expected to contribute to survival needs of the family without any corresponding benefits. Esther Boserup (1971) in her pioneering work brought to fore African women's crucial contribution towards food security and explained the political economy of polygamy in Africa that allowed men to concentrate and centralize economic resources thro' unpaid and backbreaking labour of women and children in the subsistence economy that did not have much animal resources or mechanisation for cultivation of land.

Economic Basis and Functioning of Patriarchy and Matrilineal societies, structures and systems

Patriarchy thrives on control of women's sexuality, fertility and labour for male hegemony over economic resources. Analytical tools provided by Gender Economics (GE) are extremely useful to deal with the socio-economic and legal issues concerning marriage, divorce, custody of children, guardianship rights, alimony, maintenance, property rights of mother, sister, daughter, legally wedded wives and her child/ children, co-wives and their children, keeps and their children and the issues concerning adoption. GE has a special significance in the subsistence economy, which uses the kinship networks, institutions of polygamy and polyandry for concentration and centralisation of wealth and capital by either the patriarchs or the matriarchs. Domestic animals, women and children are the main assets in the subsistence sector where collection of fuel, fodder, water are important components of daily life over and above agrarian chores, live-stock rearing and kitchen gardening.

GE has drawn heavily from all mainstream disciplines and innumerable social movements of the last three decades. GE provides insights to examine budgets of Government Organisations (GOs) and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) from the point of view of gender justice. Priority areas encompass all aspects of human development- women's education, health and nutrition, skill development, accounts, financial and commercial viability, legal standing, asset and corpus building. GE contextualises day to day survival struggles of women in the family, in the households, in the community and in the micro, meso and macro economy with the perspective of power relations which control women and girl children's sexuality, fertility and labour.

To explain this concept, I would like to give some examples from women's lives:

Control of women's sexuality

- A) Dress code which, restricts mobility of women and girls, does not allow her to do those chores which require flexible body movements, reduces her efficiency and employability in non-conventional occupations.
- B) "Tool" as a phallic symbol, not being allowed to be used by women as menstruation is supposed to have a contaminating influence. Hence, hostility towards women who ride bicycles, drive cars and scooters, operate machines and use ploughs for farming, wheels for pottery, saw for carpentry.
- C) Women being treated as repository of custom and tradition and cultural practices, dedicated as *devdasis*, *jogtis* and forced to undergo series of masochistic fasting, scarification and self infliction of pain which make them unemployable and perpetually dependant on the patriarchs. They enjoy only subversive power of men's comfort women that too, is mediated by men, as women don't have any legal rights. In the commercial context, the same happens to women beneficiary of *Maitri-Karar* (friendship contract) and *Seva-karar* (*Service contract*) with economically, politically and socially powerful men.
- D) Need for male escorts, bodyguards for dainty, sickly and weak women who see their identity as anorexic women. Billion-dollar beauty business thrives by controlling young women so that they are incapable of using their body for manual chores. Here, women's insecurity about their looks is used by the cosmetic industry.
- E) Women eating last, the least and the left over. Nourishing and balanced diet as a male prerogative. Daughters and brides kept on starvation diet. Food secure middle-aged women as honorary men.

Inference of A, B, C, D and E is subordinate social status of women reflected in declining sex ratio. As per 2001 census there were 933 women per 1000 men in India. NFHS III, published in 2007 has reported very high mortality and morbidity rates for women in India.

Control of women's fertility:

- A) Women being treated as male-child producing machine. Customary practices of female infanticide and neglect and abandonment of girl child, scientific techniques of sex determination tests are used for female foeticide, pre-conception elimination of female embryo with the help of sex-preselection techniques.
- B) Population policies targeting women for unsafe contraceptives and harmful hormone based contraceptive researches, which violate bodily integrity and dignity of married and unmarried girls and women.

- C) Laws on prostitution penalising and persecuting women victims of sexploitation that is running a parallel economy of as much as 200 billion rupees.
- D) Social boycott of unwed mothers. 'Illegitimate' children being stigmatised by society and deprived of economic, social and educational opportunities. They are further marginalised in the economy, which is undergoing massive structural adjustments and instability. Facilities like identity card, ration card and other legal documents which are a must for citizenship rights are not provided to them.

Inference of A, B, C and D, can be named as **brothel model of economic development which** thrives on unpaid and invisibilised labour of women. It perpetuates the vicious circle of Child marriage, child prostitution and child labour (CP, CM and CL). Super-exploitation of female headed household and domestic workers get sanctity in this model. Women have to shoulder an added burden of 'double standard of sexual morality' along with the burden of the vicious circle of poverty, prostitution and unemployment.

Control of women's labour:

- A) Use of women in the economy for the occupations that are extensions of housework, i.e. 3 Cs (cooking, cleaning and caring). Only 8 % of women are in the organised sector which guarantees protection of labour legislation and ERA (Equal Remuneration Act). Ninety two percent of women are in the informal sector that does not guarantee job-security, regular income and personal safety.
- B) Demonisation of highly qualified, efficiency plus and career women. Witch hunting of intellectually independent and verbally articulate women workers, employees, technicians and decision-makers.
- C) Sexual harassment as a major occupational hazard to crush the confidence of women and to keep them in the state of perpetual terrorisation, humiliation and intimidation.

Inference of A, B and C, can be limited opportunities for women and ghettoisation of women in non-challenging, routinised and low-status jobs known as "women prone industries" in the official discourse. Most of the economic activities done by majority of women are non-marketed and non-monetised and reward for labour does not reflect the value of their labour. In such a situation to gauge economic worth of their work Time Use studies are the most effective tools to identify their opportunity costs.

Market, Mobility and Women

Globalisation induced mobility of women has posed new problems for women in the labour market. Hence, efforts at empowerment of women by 550 feminist economists who are functioning in 31 countries under the banner of International Association of Feminist Economics to provide DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women) gain tremendous importance in the contemporary context of discourse on Human Development. According to them, the most pressing issues are as follows:

- a. **Economic Profile of special needs population-** women in poverty groups and Female headed households (Divorced, deserted, widowed, separated women), home based workers, women workers in the family enterprise, self-employed women and women entrepreneurs demand affirmative action from the state.
- b. **Analysis of nature of occupational diversification** among women, industrial classification- Implications of office automation, computerisation, flexi-time, job-sharing, tele working, and part time work.

- c. **Effects of structural adjustment on Market segmentation-** segmented factor market affects self-employed women directly when they want to buy raw material and other services. Segmented labour-market has direct bearing on the daily grind of women workers in the informal sector. Segmented product market makes unorganised women workers and women's collectives without networking insecure and vulnerable as sellers (Kabeer, 2000).
- d. **Economic basis of customary laws and the family laws:** When the customary laws get codified, we must be vigilant about the fact that women's interests are not sacrificed. Women's land rights and property rights need special mention at the time of codification of personal laws.
- e. **In mega development projects,** which displace the native population, care must be taken to see to it that women get equal share in monetary compensation, land-rights and right to shelter. The same applies to the social and natural disaster management programmes.
- f. **Political Economy of GET RICH QUICK formula** in the name of dowry, sati (widow burning), Bhootali (witch hunting) for land grab, house-grab or to deprive women of their legitimate property rights demands serious attention. Violence against women in the private and public domain must be recognised as serious threat to human development.
- g. **Women's Empowerment by Men Decision Makers-**In a situation where women's agency is virtually non-existent, the benevolent patriarchs wedded to the cause of Women's empowerment become project coordinators who must be gender sensitised.

Gender Bias in Theories of Value, Distribution and Population has been a major bone of contention. Neoclassical analysis based on law of marginal utility in consumer analysis, marginal cost in the product pricing and marginal productivity have come under severe scrutiny. In the area of home economics, Nobel Laureate Gary Becker's model of 'competing interests' in distribution of resources in the households and higher 'opportunity cost' of men as 'bread-earner' and women as 'home-maker' is criticized by women's studies scholars as sexist and statusquo-ist. Amartya Kumar Sen and Martha Nassbaum have put forward a concept of 'cooperative conflict' in the theory of distribution and have advocated proactive measure to enhance women's capabilities.

Feminist Criticism of Development Indices and WID- WAD- GAD

Conventional indicators of development such as modernization, technological development, Mechanization, automation, urbanization, industrialization are critiqued by women's studies as they have bypassed and marginalized women. They have provided three approaches to understand women's role in the micro-meso and macro economy. (Patel, 2002)

There has been a coexistence of three approaches for women's development. WID- Women in Development model explains the reasons for women being treated as beneficiaries of the crumbs thrown at them, in the margin of the economy, consumer and an auxiliary labour force to be utilised in the crisis period and eased out the moment men are ready for take over. The discourse revolved around the economic growth paradigm. WAD-Women and Development model integrates women in the development work as active change agents. Affirmative action by the state and pro-active approach by the civil society through NGOs and women's groups are advocated by these models for empowerment of women against the forces of patriarchal class society. NGOs-voluntary organisations implementing this approach have become powerful force during 1990s. GAD - Gender and Development model is based on an understanding of gender relations and empowers the weak (he or she). Gender is

socially constructed and gender relations are power relations. Here power is an important analytical category. Explicit measures of gender inequalities are sex-ratio, literacy rates, health and nutrition indicators, wage differentials, ownership of land and property. "The implicit relations are those embedded in relations of power and in hierarchies and are more difficult to measure. Located in the household, in custom, religion, and culture, these intra-household inequalities result in unequal distribution of power, control over resources and decision-making, dependence rather than self-reliance and unfair, unequal distribution of work, drudgery and even food."(Kapur-Mehta, 1996).

Visibility of women in statistics and data system- For effective execution of macro policies such as National Perspective Plan for Women, Women Empowerment Policy, State Women's Policy, etc. we need an accurate data-base, area studies and time allocation studies, studies on energy expenditure and food consumption patterns among women of different communities, public utility services such as safe transport, public urinals, women's room in the office. Gender economists have done pioneering work to understand demographic profile of women and sex-ratio. Formulation of gender aware data system on literacy, education level, employment and earnings, health and well-being, sources of livelihood helps proper planning and policy making for empowerment of women. Inter -district, Inter-state and cross country comparisons of women's empowerment are obtained from Gender related Development Index (GDI). GDI owes its origin to its precursor, the HDI (Human Development Index), three main components of which are per capita income, educational attainment and life-expectancy which is a proxy for health attainment. Gender disparities are measured keeping these three indicators into consideration. "An additional measure, gender empowerment measure (GEM) has been formulated to take into account aspects relating to economic participation and decision-making by women. The indicators used in GEM are share in income, share in parliamentary seats and an index that includes share in administrative and managerial jobs and share in professional and technical posts." (K. Seeta Prabhu, P.C. Sarkar and A. Radha, 1996). This exercise is done with a philosophical understanding that without engendering, human development is endangered. (UNDP, 1995)

National Human Development Report (HDR), 2001

The first HDR prepared by the Planning Commission of India revealed that gender disparity across the states had declined in 2002. The report has given Gender Equity Index (GEI) in which Bihar has the most abysmal record of 0.49. GEI of U.P. and Assam is between 0.5-0.59. Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, West Bengal figure in the GEI bracket 0.6- 0.74. The group in the topmost bracket i.e. 0.75 + is composed of the North Eastern states except Assam, Southern states and Himachal Pradesh. The HDR has not seriously taken into account, the declining sex ratio, especially the juvenile sex ratio (0-9 years) while estimating various development indices. The report has used 8 indicators to map the human development of states. It has provided diagrammatic representation of human development in the form of development radars comprising of 8 indicators namely-incidence of poverty, per capita consumption expenditure, life expectancy at age one, infant mortality rates, intensity of formal education, literacy rates, access to safe drinking water, proportion of households with *pucca* houses. The central thesis of HDR has been **economic prosperity in terms of high per capita income does not necessarily lead to overall human development.** Declining sex ratio in the prosperous states like Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and Maharashtra prove the point.

State and City Human Development Reports

Several states in India have prepared HDRs. For E.g. Maharashtra, Tamilnadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Karnataka, Delhi, Gujarat, so on and so forth. HDR for Mumbai is in pipeline. In all these, reports, there is a need to focus more on the impact of budgetary allocations on women's well-being and women's development. Gender budgeting as a tool for ensuring gender sensitive human development has been accepted as a mandate by nearly 60 countries.

Gender Equality and Development

Gender equality has three aspects: equal opportunities, equal treatment and equal entitlements for both, men and women. It is directly linked with human development.

The WID discourse deconstructs the economic growth paradigm and focuses on women specific statistics & indicators, policies and schemes, plan allocation and programmes on health, education and employment.

WAD- Women and Development model integrates women in the development work as active change agents. Affirmative action by the state and pro-active approach by the civil society through NGOs and women's groups are advocated by this model for empowerment of women against the forces of patriarchal class society. NGOs-voluntary organisations implementing this approach have become powerful force during 1990s.

GAD - Gender and Development model is based on an understanding of gender relations that empowers the weak (he or she). Gender is socially constructed and gender relations are power relations based on caste, class, ethnicity, race and religion. Here power is an important analytical category.

Conclusion

Explicit measures of gender inequalities are sex ratio, literacy rates, health and nutrition indicators, wage differentials, ownership of land and property. The implicit measures of gender inequalities are those embedded in relations of power and in hierarchies and are more difficult to measure. Located in the household, in custom, religion, and culture, these intra-household inequalities result in unequal distribution of power, control over resources and decision-making, dependence rather than self-reliance, control rather than autonomy and unfair, unequal distribution of work, drudgery and even food. Current development debate has resulted into generation of Meaningful Indicators of Women and Development. In 2004, India ranked 127 in Human development while in Gender Development Index India's rank was 78. Comparative data of 130 countries regarding gender-related development index (GDI) reveals that gender-equality does not depend entirely on the income level of society. The human development approach which focuses on demographic, health, education, employment and human rights issues of women provides realistic insights to address women's concerns. Thus gender sensitive human development ensures an inclusive growth.

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