

DEVELOPMENT WITH WOMAN-INDIA

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Introduction

It has long been argued by various UN agencies that the critical determinants of women's socioeconomic status is education, and that 'education, education, and more education' (as UK former Prime Minister Tony Blair put it) are the key to achieving social development by improving the well being of girls and women and thus promoting gender equity.

When history counts the votes as to which of the 'isms' has had the most impact on twentieth century lives, feminisms will be judged as the most important human movement. By feminism, mean that women's movement which speaks to the most profound yet basic of changes in the roles, the rights, and the relations which govern connections, commerce, and intimacy between men and women. This movement offers a vision of equality in society, equity in partnership, and freedom from gender stereotyping- freeing each person to pursue the roles best suited their needs and talents. The movement has been dynamic because the struggle for change takes place not on the world's battlefields but at home and in the most intimate space, the human heart. Feminism has had the potential to touch every man, woman, and child because its basic tenets remain relevant whatever the conditions under which people live, regardless of the dictates of totalitarianism, globalism, communism, or capitalism, or whether they suffer racism, ageism, or sexism.

There are fewer funds available for gender issues and development with women; the preparations for the Fourth World Conference showed up a struggle to achieve consensus on aspects of the Beijing Platform for action on language which had already been agreed in Nairobi in 1985, and a pulling back on issues such as reproductive rights and the language agreed in Cairo in 1994. The backlash is in part responsible for what UNICEF calls the gender 'fade-away', where policy statements and objectives include gender empowerment statements, but project activities contain little to challenge male dominance and facilitate women's empowerment. Women, despite making personal commitments to trust individual men, are distrustful of males in general, and are particularly concerned that partnership should not mean taking over.

In development practice, the most fertile area for building bridges of understanding between men and women is also the most difficult. Poor women and men share common, but distinct, problems as they attempt to claim their entitlements. Women, for example, have difficulty claiming even direct entitlements such as control over their own body or gaining prestige and respect. Nonetheless, patriarchy severely disenfranchises poor men. It is only the illusion that male hegemony endows all males with power which successfully prevents many men from acknowledging the truth of their powerlessness.

The majority of the world's citizens are trapped in the morass of poverty. But the morass provides fertile ground of change. Robert Chambers (1983) identifies the resistance to change

displayed by elites which destroys projects fighting poverty and programmes aiming at empowerment. Replace 'elites' with 'patriarchy' and the analysis fits the reality of both women and poor men. Despite the fact that the poor have so little, they are often unable to take chances or change strategies and/ or invest in opportunities which might change their condition. Development interventions should focus more on fostering an understanding of common oppression and, informed by this awareness, shaping mutually beneficial approaches, activities, and interventions. These will continue to break down gendered prejudices and will eventually form the basis of healthier relationships between women and men.

The concept of development has always been a part of human life. Development always comes change, and this change come from the people of the country. It is based on development of the people of that country. Only men contribution is not necessary for the development but women contribution is most important for this, because women play a very important role from starting to till end. Therefore, the proposed study will deal with the contributions of women's in the men's life, need of education among them, and the legal rights whatever decided for them from religion, because of illiteracy they are innocent from them and helpless to tolerate in every circumstances, women who those are living in darkness.

Status of Women in India: A Background

The origin of the Indian idea of appropriate female behaviour can be traced to Manu in 200 BC: *"by a young girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independent, even in her own house"*.

India is a multifaceted society where no generalization could apply to the nation's various regional, religious, social and economic groups. Nevertheless certain broad circumstances in which Indian women live affect the way they participate in the economy. A common denominator in their lives is that they are generally confined to home, with restricted mobility, and in seclusion. Other, unwritten, hierarchical practices place further constraints on women. Throughout history, women have generally been restricted to the role of a home-maker; that of a mother and wife.

Despite major changes that have occurred in the status of women in some parts of the world in recent decades, norms that restrict women to the home are still powerful in India, defining activities that are deemed appropriate for women. They are, by and large, excluded from political life, which by its very nature takes place in a public forum.

In spite of India's reputation for respecting women, including treating her as a Goddess, history tells us that women were also ill-treated. There was no equality between men and women. This is true of ancient, medieval and early modern times barring some revolutionary movements such as that of Basaweshwara, the 12th century philosopher in Karnataka, who advocated equality, casteless society, status for women, and betterment of the downtrodden. Reform movements in the 19th and 20th centuries led by great social reformers provided boost to women's legal status in India.

The Changing Role of Women in India

Independence of India heralded the introduction of laws relating to women. The

Constitution provided equality to men and women and also gave special protection to women to realise their interests effectively. Special laws were enacted to prevent indecent representation of women in the media and sexual harassment in workplaces. The law also gives women equal rights in the matter of adoption, maternity benefits, equal pay, good working conditions etc. At the international level, the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) sought to guarantee better legal status to women. However, certain contentious issues like the Jammu and Kashmir Permanent Resident (Disqualification) Bill 2004 (which deprived a woman of the status of permanent residency of the State if she married an outsider) and the Supreme Court judgment in Christian Community Welfare Council of India (in an appeal over the Judgment of the High Court, Mumbai). The latter has permitted, under certain circumstances, the arrest of a woman even in the absence of lady police and at any time in the day or night. These instances have once again brought to the forefront the traditional male domination.

From Women to Gender

The theoretical foundations of development discourse have experienced many changes over the decades. The role of men and women in the development process has received much attention in the last few decades. Although the principle of equality of men and women was recognized as early as in 1945 in the UN Charter and the UN Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, researchers have pointed out that development planners worked on the assumption that what would benefit one section of society (especially men) would trickle down to the other (women). The new theory argues that a person's role was specified under a patriarchal framework where the scope of gender-masculine or feminine-was limited within the biological understanding of sex (male/female).

Gender, Development, Women's Movement

The above situation is especially visible in the world of development, and finds its clearest expression in proliferating references to "gender" in local, national and international forums, and activists. One repeatedly hears of gender bias, gender sensitization, gender planning and gender training, to mention just some of the more common examples of its contemporary use. To begin with, discussions were limited to only "women", rather than about systemic relations of inequality, involving the relations between both men and women.

The task in India then, as everyone seeks to take account of 60 years of independence from two centuries of British colonial rule, is to try and face up to this recent slice of history; a history we would like to claim as our very own. What would an assessment of half a century of development thinking and planning look like from the perspective of women? In the 1991 World Bank Report on Gender and Poverty in India, Lynn

Bennett announces: "Now, researchers, women's activities, and government departments are reaching a new consensus: women must be seen as economic actors with a particularly important role to play in efforts to reduce poverty". But the *Shramshakti* report on self-employed women and women in the informal sector published in 1988 deplored women's extremely vulnerable

working conditions across diverse occupations under high levels of discrimination, as well as the range of health hazards women are exposed to on an everyday basis.

If the World Bank report concluded that poor women are clearly more efficient economic actors, with greater managerial and entrepreneurial skills than men, the

Shramshakti report recommended that women require greater access to resources, especially credit and social services. Wider disparities exist among various women's groups culturally and socially. As a result one can perceive as difference in the cognitive, connotative, and consumption patterns of women residing in various spheres of social and economic layers. The victims of exploitation and oppression have been largely women of the third world countries in general and lower sections among them in particular.

Culturally:

- Gender specific specialization (work)
- Cultural definition of appropriate sex roles
- Expectation of role within relationship
- Belief in the inherent superiority of males
- Customs of marriage (Bride price/Dowry)
- Notion of the family as the private sphere and under male control
- Value that give proprietary right over women and girls

Economically:

- Limited access to cash and credit
- Limited access to employment in formal and informal sector.
- Limited access to education.

As a result of the cultural and economic factors, women face discrimination right from the childhood. It is held that both in childhood and adulthood males are fed first and better.

According to one estimate, even as adults women consume approximately 1000 calories less per day than men. The sex ratio in India stood at

933 females per 1000males at the 2001 census and out of the total population,

120million women lived in abject poverty. Lack of healthcare facilities and poverty has been resulting in India accounting for 27%of all maternal deaths worldwide.

Death of young girls in India exceeds that of young boys by over 300,000 each year and every 6th infant death is especially due to gender discrimination.

India's Female Population

At the 2001 census, India had a female population of 496million. India accounts 15% of World's women characterized by vast regional differences and a variety of cultures.

But, social discrimination and economic deprivation on the basis of gender is common to all, irrespective of religion, cast, community, and State.

Empowerment of women, gender discrimination, and violence against women, which have become serious subjects of sociological research in contemporary times, was hitherto neglected.

While contemporary social changes have exposed women to unprotected socio-economic,

cultural and political environment, there are no corresponding protective social systems and institutions of social justice to safeguard their interests. There are many who are skeptical about women's ability to exercise equal rights with men and about their capacity to play equal role with men. But such apprehensions are ill-founded in the context of the broader opportunities available for women following mechanization of industry and agriculture, enabling women to compete with men successfully.

Innovations in science and technology have removed the disparity between men and women attributed to physical strength alone. Women are able to handle modern appliances which require intelligence and training and not merely physical strength.

Thus, India has now several women working as pilots, driving locomotives, buses, tractors and machinery in workshops. Sex as maternal factor in the area of legal rights has practically disappeared. It is not therefore fair to relegate women as a group to an inferior position in society. The Constitution does not regard sex as a permitted classification and prohibits sex as a basis of differential treatment in all areas of legal rights.

Modernity has resulted in a growing flexibility and changes in the gender roles of men and women. The earlier conception that man was the provider of basic necessities for family and women the child bearer and care taker of home, is no longer valid in the changing social structure and economic compulsions.

In spite of the progress made, rural women and those belonging to the Dalit, Tribal, and nomadic communities remain unaffected. So is the case with Muslim women among the minorities. The latter are far from realizing their basic rights. For instance, the low level of political participation of Muslim women in India is not only a consequence of the lack of resources but also the result of the status of Muslim women in the community. Since women in India have little place in the public arena they also express less faith in the political process.

In spite of the UN Charter of Human Rights and the provisions of the Indian Constitution, women continue to be victims of exploitation. The view that the future generation of a family is carried on and preserved by boys-only has degraded the position of women in society. Similarly, it is noticed that majority of the women are lacking in the spirit of rebellion. If careful attention is not paid and major steps are not taken, the situation will become extremely critical.

Therefore, any attempt to assess the status and problem of women in a society should start from the social framework. Social structure, cultural norms, and value systems are crucial determinants of women's role and their position in society. In respect of the status there is a gap between the theoretical possibilities and their actual realization.

Women and Political Participation

Indians wanted a nation state after independence in which women had a right to vote. Unlike the British and American women, Indian women did not face great difficulty in securing franchise. Gandhi ji stressed on the need for active participation of masses during the freedom movement, including women. He encouraged total participation of women resulting in the emergence of a large number of women freedom fighters. The *Swadeshi* movement, the non-Cooperation (1920-

22) movement, the Civil Disobedience movement (1930-34) and the Quit India (1942) movement drew large number of women. Such participation helped women to voice the need for women's participation in the legislation process. Annie Besant, Madame Cama and Sarojini Naidu formed the Women's Indian Association.

But, women still constitute a mere 10% of the legislators in the Parliament and State Assemblies. "According to the 1955 International Parliamentary Union Survey, women hold just 11.7% of all seats in Parliament around the world." Success at the Panchayat level based on reservations for women convinced women's organizations that it is the correct time to extend these reservations to the higher levels. It is a different matter that even at the Panchayat level women members face lot of opposition in as much as the male members of the Panchayat do not consider them as equals. Women face opposition from the family members, often resulting in their resigning their membership. Karnataka and West Bengal are good examples where women have exceeded the reserved 33% with 42% and 39% respectively.

The Changing Role of Women in India

Science and Technology has been a very important factor contributing to human welfare and development. Today India is one of the countries encouraging science and technology at the grass root level to improve the socio-economic development and the importance of the role of women scientists and engineers is increasing for the success of this developmental process. It is an acknowledged fact that Indian women have contributed significantly at the various levels of development, but their representation and contribution in science and technological fields are still below the expected level. So it is necessary to discuss the specific role of women scientists, technologists and engineers for their larger participation and contribution to the socio-economic development of our nation and at the same time to understand the constraints within and outside their systems which might be a factor hindering their growth and development.

Women in India are beginning to follow the direction that the women of the Western world took more than eighty years ago; demanding treatment as human equals. However, it has become more and more evident as the revolution ages that Indian women may have to adapt the Western feminist method to their very traditional and religious culture. India has different complications that put the development of women in a completely altered context than their Western counterparts. Although the key targets remain similar: improvement of health care, education and job opportunities in order to gain equality between men and women in the various settings of public society, the workplace, the school yard and – possibly the most fundamental setting of all – the home. Women are striving to be independent on the equal level of men. The additional complexities that the women of India must also challenge are the caste system, the heavy religious customs, older and more traditional roles of the sexes, as well as the even stronger power that men hold in India. The status was at one time accepted, but with the Western women's revolution and perception, the role is slowly succeeding in its development through both independent groups of women and national and worldwide organizations based on the goal of gaining equality. These examples show that given a chance women can excel in any field. Women just need the necessary support and encouragement.

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