

Gender and Development: In South Asian Context

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Abstract

In the wake of contemporary epoch, the basic purpose of the research is to explore the possibility reforms in Pakistan for gender stability in terms of population as it has been an idiosyncratic of human society. Cultural constraints and role of social norms to involve in any development of society. The current study is conducted in South Asian perspective and it attempts to probe the phenomenon of sex differences. Being an exploratory study, grounded theory was applied under the feminist theoretical frame work in the contexts of gender development. The paper is specially focused on understanding the existing discrimination of gender in South Asian perspective particularly in Pakistan and brings recommendations for policy-makers; so there are a number of apparatus being implemented and amendments are being occurred in gender development.

Introduction

Over the last decade or so, there has been lot of discussion whether women can contribute to the development plan of the country. The various conferences and seminars have not highlighted the role of women in this regard as they have either ignored or underestimated the potential of females.

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End of the 1960s and early 1970s (mainly) women researchers have regretted the neglect of women, their lack of participation in the development plan of their countries. It was misconceived by the planners that the development of the country would automatically benefit all its members regardless of sex. But this assumption has been belied. It was generally believed that the process of industrialization and modernization of agriculture world bring about development and progress in the country, benefitting all the people living there. But the fact is otherwise. The poor, especially the female, became poorer. No attention has been paid to the people of low income group. The contribution of women to the household and to the economy has hardly been recognized and valued. Diminutive concentration is being paid to the UN concept of "good governance" or justice.

In much the same way, it was discovered that even when a household benefits from development programmes, it does not follow that women in the household will benefit equally or benefit at all. i.e. one which is guided by women's interests and concerns and aims to transform hierarchical gender relations and make them equal in different parts of the world; provided data and evidence to show that gender-blind development plans had generally ignored women, their perspectives, needs and interests. This neglect meant that accessible difference among female and male were not addressed, and second, female's action and potential contribution to and participation in the development process was ignored. Consequently, women were further marginalized and disempowered.

It was there for all to see that women were not given access to educational and training opportunities, technology did not liberate them from drudgery, and prejudice and misconceptions persisted. Almost everywhere in the world women have been farmers and producers of food. Despite this, our planners, decision-makers and communicators have persistently refused to recognize their contribution. The very language of these gentlemen (and ladies) betrays their

discriminatory perceptions. Thus while referring to farmers they invariably use masculine pronouns like "men" and "he".

As far as the biological aspect is concerned, gender can be taken in societal aspects on bases of biological grounds.¹ The division between the sexes is not a matter of accident. It is rather rooted in the social and cultural milieu. Even with identical education and access to all progressions, man enjoys a dominant position in public service and perhaps in every sphere of life. This is all due to gender bias.²

Development programmes leading to marginalization of women: The result of these blinkers vis-à-vis women was, and still is, that in planning for agriculture and rural development; women have been neglected and further marginalized. Most training, information and credit for agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry have been given to male farmers, in spite of major contribution of women to these activities. Extension programmes have been run almost exclusively by men, for men. In contrast to men, women have always been offered conventional jobs such as sewing, embroidery, pickles-making; the jobs which are less paying.

Agricultural development has normally and almost entirely been "manned" by men, right from decision-making to implementation. For example, the massive and expensive Training and Visit Projects for agriculture extension in India, planned and funded by the World Bank in the 1980s, totally ignored or bypassed women. Similarly, a report on media support for big reforestation programmes in Nepal did not mention women even once. Women have not even been involved in projects related to reforestation, water supply, grain storage or other activities which are managed primarily by, and are of critical concern to them.

1 Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories about Women and Men* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 27.

2 E. O. Wilson, *On Human Nature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 132; *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 49-50.

What is more, we find that most technology has been given to and is controlled by men, while women continue to do the more tedious, repetitive and back-breaking tasks. Commercialization of agriculture has led to greater control of cash and family resources by men, even when, often, women do the work. In the 1980s, a review of eleven major rural development projects in Nepal showed that the productive roles of women were completely ignored because of distorted concepts of "housewife".

Head of Household and Economic Activity

In most of these projects, new farming technologies and machinery were made available only to men and applied only to male tasks, such as ploughing. When mechanization was introduced for a female task such as husking or milling, it was transformed into men's work. This happened with the introduction of mechanized milling for high yielding rice varieties in Indonesia and Bangladesh. As a result, in one stroke large numbers of women were deprived of whatever little they were earning earlier.

Women have also been excluded from owning or controlling land, the most crucial productive resource in agricultural economies. Various studies have pointed out that traditional systems of land tenure often allowed women to grow food for themselves, their children and extended families, without recourse to formal land ownership. Some land reform programmes, however, have given titles to land to individual men with the result that women may no longer have access to or control over it. At the same time the new owner may decide to sell rather than cultivate the land, taking it out of use for producing food for local consumption.

Many researchers who are working on feminine issues having socialistic learning hold that profitable manufacture have reduced the women and the poor; the poorer capital accumulation makes it possible for some people to accumulate more and more even as others lose control over land and other resources. The only thing they control is their labour power, but the value of their labour is not determined by them, In fact, Engels has said quite categorically that it

was private property that led to the creation of class and gender hierarchies. According to him the need to control women came along with the emergence of private property.

Male control over women's reproduction and sexuality made for the world historic defeat of the mother right. Further, the position of bourgeois women is much worse than that of working class women because bourgeois women themselves are property; they are merely the carriers and producers of heirs.

The German feminist scholar, Veronika beunholdt Thomsen maintains that the women in the third world countries are the victim of poverty and neglect of the modern economic system. She believes that it is wrong to assume that they are backward or poor because of the old patriarchal system. Their miserable plight is due to commercialization. Because of the rise of materials, they are relegated to the unpaid household work.

In particular, women cease to be able to live autonomously with their children in a world which runs on the money to which they have such restricted access. Growing property forces them to submit their dependence to men, and relations between men and women stop being cooperative. Based on these objective circumstances, they necessarily become hierarchical. She says since money and social esteem in modern society are closely related, those whose access to money is severely limited are also denied esteem.³ According to researcher, the rural women in India are the worst victim of atrocious aggression and sex harassment, especially in those areas where agriculture has speedily developed and which have become recently.⁴

Accomplish superior sexual category disparity engross a process of vigorous community transformation which may have no obvious link with economic growth. Various

3 "Why Do Housewives Continue to be Created in the Third World Too?" in *Women, The Last Colony* ed., M. Mies, and *et al.* (London: Zed Books, 1988), 160-61.

4 "Why Do Housewives Continue to be Created in the Third World Too?"

researches have exposed that the extent of anti-female bias is substantially reduced by different factors that give women more voice and agency within the family. These are primarily education and the ability to earn an independent income through paid employment. The latter makes for women getting greater exposure, more respect, more bargaining power and better chances of survival.⁵

It is not easy to give a clear-cut answer to this question. The issue is complex and cannot be generalised for all societies or countries. In some ways women have definitely gained. Today they have more rights (right to vote or to inherit, for example); more opportunities (for education, training, jobs, travel); and more participation in political decision-making. There is also much greater awareness about women's oppression and the need to tackle it systematically. Women themselves are much more articulate and organised for change. But there are other ways in which women seem to be worse off.

In most of South Asia, while women are being provided with more opportunities, and there is more awareness and articulation of gender issues, we find a resurgence of patriarchies. Religious fanaticism of all kinds has meant more restrictions for women. In Pakistan, for example, progressive family laws have been replaced by the anti-women Hudood Ordinance; in Bangladesh, fundamentalists have been attacking emerging women's groups and NGOs working for empowerment of women. Right-wing Hindu groups in India are busy reviving patriarchal role-models.

Examining the changes in the patriarchal system in Britain, Sylvia Walby makes observations which seem to be applicable to South Asia as well. She says there are two types of patriarchal control: private and public. In Great Britain, there prevails public patriarchy which implies that women are harassed and exploited in the public service as well, especially in respect of employment. Their exploitation

5 J. Dreze, *et al.*, *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1955), 140-75.

is now in the hands of the public. On the question of whether there has been progress or regress in women's position, she says, "Patriarchy is not a historical constant. Modifications in gender relations over the last century or so have been interpreted variously as progress, regress and involving no overall change. Liberals typically define them as progress; Marxists as regress followed by stasis, and radical feminists as embracing no significant change."⁶

Some governments, UN organizations and NGOs have made special efforts to recruit women and train them for senior positions and organize their policy rules and make culture more women friendly. Special gender indicators have been developed to measure the success of programmes aimed at women's empowerment and gender equality. To make the progress free from gender bias, it is important to formulate government policies laying emphasis on qualitative input developing their self-confidence and awareness of their rights and train them in such skills which are in demand in the labour market. Women's organization will play an important role in promoting their authority and power.

Female play a vital role in economic production

Women are engaged in various productive activities in industry and agriculture, formal and informal sectors of the economy. Their work is going unrecognized and considered as unvalued work. Generally, economic status of women in Pakistan is largely determined by the status of other male relatives, particularly father and after marriage, husband. Participation of labour force, availability of jobs in labour market, employment status, access to and ownership of resources, and social norms regarding the women work are main variable to assess women's economic empowerment.

In Pakistan, females labour force participation rate is low due to social and cultural factors, and secondly, women participation in market production is underestimated. Considering the rapid changes in global economic scenario the females as productive agents is becoming critical. All the

6 Sylvia Wably, *Theorising Patriarchy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 63.

same, to make the females more active and market oriented they should be urged to shake off their shyness in order to improve their quality of work in all spheres of life.⁷

In Pakistan, the participation of women in economic activities is gradually decreasing. This may be attributed to many factors: narrow access to productive inputs, low investment in human capital, gender discrimination in job market, underestimation of female contribution and other social factors. The institutional support is required of institutional support without any gender bias, notwithstanding the softer sex are playing an important role in the economic development of the country.

The urban women work in larger number in the informal than the formal sector both in and outside of their homes. They generally carryout home-based payment works on piece rate basis or they work as self-employed in small enterprises. Women who take up piece rate work at home generally do so because they cannot work full time away from their homes either due to heavy family duties or social restrictions. They normally get work orders through middlemen and do not contact customers directly.⁸ Conditions and incentives of jobs aside, women's own social behaviour also perpetuates occupational segregation, while many factors compel them to turn to specific jobs. Occupations continue to occur where women choose old female skills and occupations and opt to do those jobs which are time consuming and repetitive in nature even when other jobs are also accessible.

These women tendencies have persisted even on modernization of old economies. Besides reacting differently from men to expansion or retrenchment of jobs, it leads to occupational over-crowding generating various barriers for

7 Rehana Siddiqui, *Gender and Empowerment: Evidence from Pakistan*, (Islamabad: Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, 2006), 7.

8 Muhammad Ali Chaudhary Parvez Azam, *Diversification of Women's Training and Employment in Pakistan*, Manpower and Employment in Pakistan, Man Power and Overseas Pakistan Division, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, 1993), 32.

entry into the formal job market. Women under conditions of occupational overcrowding tend to avoid competition in male dominated jobs instead, they crowd into female jobs and thus find depressed wages there.

Its observance discourages those women who are more religious and thus hesitate to take jobs in need as they are shy to contact with male strangers. Many women from rich families get education only to maintain their social status. This is particularly so with women doctors who either do not practice or withdraw from practice of their profession after marriage. Of course, some restart it when their family responsibilities diminish. Females of big land owners are also averse to wage work. Although urban women have more free time and greater access to work facilities, yet they are forcibly confined to their homes.⁹

It is true that there are no legal or policy barriers against employment and promotion of women, socio-economic factors are more diverse to them. Gender plays very important role in determining the entry of women in the job market. The socially defined gender roles assigned men to earn for family and women are restricted in the homes to do the household chores including rearing and caring the family members. Not only have the culture but also economic and social structures worked against the entry of women in the job market

Therefore the whole network of social and production relations put women at the receiving end. They are considered as consumers, not producers. Women are regarded as economic liability by the family. Hence, the rate of investment on their education or training is very low because family views them *paraya dhan* (wealth of others). Their movement in the public sphere is viewed with disdain. Their teaching in coeducational facilities or working in the enterprises that have no sex segregation also discouraged.

9 Women's Division, Government of Pakistan, Proceedings of the National Conference on Critical Issues concerning women in Education, 1980, 78-85

The negative perception of women's work in a male dominated society is important factor which influences the entry of women in the labour market. The root cause of this perception can be found in cultural value system that clearly defines segregation of sexes and prefers women's stay at home as mother and wife, and discourages going outside for them. A few professions are considered as respectable, such as teacher and to a lesser extent health worker. The preference for those professions is because they provide the opportunity for all-female environment. Unless a change in this value system takes place it will be difficult for women to avail paid work opportunities.

The modern sector of the economy has the low labour absorptive capacity, as a result women are, particularly in the urban areas, are forced to get employment as contract labourers where earnings are significantly lesser than within the planned zone of financial system or even in the direction of the lowest ranks of the service sector. Women comprise a very important component of the system of contract labour. Sewing garments, food processing are some of the most common income-earning activities that women undertake at home either on a contract or self-employed basis.

The remuneration is usually below what they could earn for comparable work outside the home. Home based work or contract labour system is highly exploitative in nature. The middleman and contractor do not pay the woman worker according to the work's quantity and quality. To earn subsistence, women's other option is service sector. Women workers are usually employed in the lowest tiers of the service sector in poorly paid, menial jobs mainly as domestic servants.

Joan Kelly a feminist historian wrote regarding women's work relations. He argues, that we should look at property relations and women's relationship to work as the basic determinant of the sexual division of labour and sexual order. The more the domestic and public domains are differentiated, the more work and hence, property is of two clearly distinguishable kinds. There is production for

subsistence and production for exchange, and this is what influences the sexual division of labour.¹⁰

As for concern labour laws in Pakistan for women, according to the charter, the responsibility to deal with labour issues is of the federal as well as the provincial governments. Labour legislation is passed by the federal government. but its implementation ties with the provinces. The public sector services have the prescribed rules for recruitment without any discriminating between male and female. Legally, the females are not debarred from entering into the employment of her choice except the most hazardous ones. Usually, the women prefer teaching or health profession.

Labour laws are operative only in an organization where there is certain number of employees. The different acts and ordinances passed from time to time lay embargo on their application where there are less than 10 or 20 workers. This being so, their utility is limited.

Conclusion

The labour laws in Pakistan do not held good for small businessmen such as shopkeepers, agriculture workers and those working in workshops. Nevertheless the Ministry of Labour and Manpower signed a MOU in 2003, making it obligatory for every employer to issue an appointment letter mentioning the terms and conditions, such as duration of working hours, overtime payment, compensation in case of accident while working etc. It is also mandatory for every employer to refrain from gender bias in respect of employment.

The climate for women entrepreneurship in Pakistan is not favourable. There are, in the first place, social, traditional and religious factors. Because of the patriarchal system, the women are not free to move and work. This being so, they always suffer from gender discrimination. In the present social and cultural setup you cannot conceive of a society

10 M. Irfan, "Female Labour Force Participation in Pakistan Evidence from a Cross-Section Data," *Pakistan Manpower Review* 12, no. 2 (1986): 1-19.

free from sex bias. Although they are integral part to the country economy, yet men are preferred to women in different jobs. Like women in many other third world countries, the economic activities of Pakistani women are hidden, go unnoticed or are disregarded.

This invisibility is primarily because the society in which they live perceives their work more as performance of social duties than as economic contribution. Rural women are also physically hidden from view, as well as psychologically isolated, because of implications of female speculation, institutionalized in the practice of *purdah*. However, despite such invisibility of women, the result of their work is readily apparent.

Women, it is generally believed, are born for reproductive purpose. This has limited their role to their homes, bearing children, looking after the family and playing only a secondary role in economic activity. Confined to their domestic responsibilities, their mobility is restricted for fear of being molested and violation of chastity. Because of the social taboos imposed upon women, they cannot play their role in the labour market and improve their economic lot. Taking advantage of the disadvantage of women, men get better opportunities in public affairs and economic activity. The government at the helm pay lip service to the theme of equality between the sexes in providing jobs, and this discrimination continues and patriarchal hold remains as strong on the women as it was earlier.

Human freedom is relating with the movement of the women freedom in this era. This movement had established in 1940's. The important reason was Second World War while the imbalance of the society. In this contest the social norms have been changed into the women rights.

Religious scholar and expounder of the law of Quran needs to make reconciliation between Islamic law and contemporary issues of Muslim world. European thinkers make no secret of the claim that the only possible origin of these human rights can only be the olden times of the western world with its Greek and Roman legacy followed by

European times gone by with its theoretical and social accepted wisdom and its consolidation of the state of law. In fact, women right is the soul of Islam. Islam owes too much thanks to flourish it's thought to the international world.

Recommendations

On the bases of medical difference, men and women both or any one had exclusive temporary or permanent exception; example is that on some bio-chemical differences the women had exemption on evidence. The Islamic *shariah* had given special exceptions to women after a real analytical review of her psychological, medical, thinking and practical ability. On these different bases, there is special exemption to women on family affairs.

The polygamy is also a strong an exemption in the favour of women. On injustice of the women's privileges the law is made very simple. The women had privileges to demand divorce, its require amendments in family law in the Muslim countries because if a women had not enjoyed family privileges, she has right to ask to court for implementation. In Muslim countries the analytical review showing that this ratio is not common. The reality has proven that polygamy is exception of sexuality and morally protection of the women. It's conditionally (*mashroot*) not essential for every men.

The independency in marriage is a true right of Muslim women. Muslim women had right to decide for marriage with consultation of *wilayat*. In every year at least three hundred enforce marriages cases are registered in United Kingdom. The *wali* (guardian) cannot enforcement decided without consultation of women. This principal had terminated in many Muslim countries. On this decision women had enforced sexually in all life and this shape of decision had captured women ability, psychologically, morally and mental and her health and happiness ruptured negatively.

It is essential to promote the awareness, knowledge and wisdom regarding polygamy, as it is not a sacred thing, and it can be implemented at any cast, while it's nor restricted in Holy Quran but its exceptional thing. It should be avoided,

because in Tunas and many other countries polygamy is unlawful practice. Maximum economic benefits should be given to women in the case of dissolution of marriage on medical grounds

The particular courts should launch on the women privileges and legacy matters to make certain that no women remain underprivileged from their heritage civil liberties Every girl should register her name at the time of birth. That she will get all legal rights and nobody can deprive her from benefits, if any person commit such kind of crimes the court must punish him by Panel Law.

The constitution of Pakistan assures equal rights for all citizens regardless of gender, caste, colour and language. But even the legitimate assurance has not been able to eliminate sex discrimination in economic sector. Women's empowerment thus still remains a dream yet to be realized.