



BUILDING GLOBAL BRIDGES AND CROSSING EGALITARIAN MACROCOSMS-THE ENGENDERING SINE QUA NON

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Abstract

Gender equality and sustainable development are interspersed tropes of cultural praxis since time immemorial (since the time Lady Macbeth's name has not been probed into or Nation being equated with mother). The dichotomy of naturalizing women and feminizing nature with identical yet silenced forces of control, reproduction and nurture puts to the multifaceted question of whether the male's control really masquerades as protection for the female (a territory to be conquered, dominated or shielded against inequalities) and the country (against anthropocentrism, globalization and biomedical apocalypse). On one hand, it cements the metonymic male and the metaphorical female and on the other hand, poses whether technology, as a social context, mired in contemporary social relations and ambits, can come to the rescue. Through a diagnostic and qualitative approach of content analysis, it explores the productive role of gender in the building of sustainable cultures, reboots the fundamental interconnectedness of gender equality and sustainable development. Additionally, it interrogates the workable spaces of the dehumanizing gender discrimination as rightly perceived by United Nations unpacking the irony of gender inequality. This is also critical in elucidating the causality through the stances of capitalism and Structural-functionalism.

Keywords: *gender equality, inequalities, sustainable development.*



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Introduction

CIDA Report states, “Gender Equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development and benefit equally from the results...Attaining gender equality demands recognition that current social, economic, cultural, and political systems are gendered: that women's equal status is systematic and that it is necessary to incorporate women's specificity priorities and values into all major social institutions” (CIDA)

Women play a crucial role and adjudicates the warrantors of development and management on equal footing as the men. Hence, mobilization and participation are prerequisites for achieving the gender shared goal, namely sustainable development. 2030 agenda for sustainable development adopted by UN member states formulated a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals to combat poverty and inequality which are multifariously perforated targets that would help realize gender equality. Every woman's benefaction in the arenas of educating and constructive socializing



of the youth as well as caregiving by their male counterparts should be acknowledged. Since gender equality ensures fairness to both men and women, it is a goal in its own right in the social development index. So, it is only when both the genders have a stake building where interests are taken into account and are also valued. Educating and empowering girls is like a cottage industry with ample potential to impact the global households economically. Hence a gender mainstreaming stance is adopted to explicitly recognize the underpinned differences in their resources, constraints, interests and power charting the formulae to reduce gender inequalities.

Unearthing the “Gender” and “Sustainable Development” Concepts-

Initially, gender equality was officially recognized as a global goal by the Charter of the UN in 1945 and then assured by treaties like the ‘Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women’ and the ‘Beijing Platform for Action’ which was again followed by UN member states at the 4th World Conference on Women conducted in 1995. Keeping with this, the podium recognized gender equality as a human right and a core development parameter. Even World Bank (2001) observed and confirmed that states which are unsuccessful in promoting gender equality experience slower pace of economic growth and higher pace of persistent impoverishment in the demography than those that promote equality. Sustainable development is defined as the development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” by the report of ‘Our Common Future by the World Commission on Environment and Development’ (late 1980s). Initially MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), the 17 SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) and 169 targets are particularly designed to be achieved within a stipulated time, 2030 towards curating an all- inclusive and equitable society. While SDGs are applicable to all the countries, MDGs are meant for developing countries only.

On the other hand, “Gender is not something we are born with and not something we have, but something we do (West and Zimmerman) but something we perform” (Butler 1990). Gender is a socio-cultural construct (Oakley 1972), social creation and also encapsulates social differences and socially ascribed roles between men and women whereas sex is a biological categorization and not the social elaboration of it with its basis in reproductive potential. What strikes the keynote of gender equality is that gender roles are learned behaviors only and it is the culture that shapes it and that gender equality is not about establishing matriarchy or patriarchy.

Zapping the Roots of Gender Inequality-

Gender bias is not only discrimination but latent disparities among individuals with the performance of gender at its sub-structure. This is not a unidirectional issue but a coagulated whole or a tangled manifestation of other sociological issues resonating in the stratified society at large. This lays bare to the academia that earlier, since homes were production sites, all members participated in the activities, whether it be handicrafts or tilling of land. Women have had a hand in and considerable impact on the economic process both indoors and outdoors, albeit being excluded from exclusively male domains of warfare and politics. “The society in which we live has been shaped historically by materialist quest for survival” (Giddens 2004).

It is only in the wake of industrialization that home was transformed into a consumption site rather than a production site. The emergence of industrialization dismantled the economic structure within the family initiating a breach of labor, laying a groundwork for labor division and discrimination within the industrial sphere. “The movement of production into mechanized factories was probably the single largest factor. Work was done at machine’s pace by individual hired specifically for the task in question, so employers gradually began to contract workers as individual



rather than families. With time and progress of industrialization, an increasing division was established between home and workplace. The idea of ‘separate sphere’-public and private-became entrenched in popular attitudes (Giddens 2004). Women got relegated to invisible, domestic work not earning a wage while men ‘provided’ for the family by doing visible work earning a wage. Conferring wealth in the hands of few and gender inequalities were interspersed offshoots henceforth.

Materialist and Marxist theories illustrate gender inequalities an aforementioned offshoot of how men and women are hegemonized to the economic framework of society thereby emphasizing control and distribution of valued resources as vital in producing strata. Conflict theory propounds that social issues take place when the dominant mistreats subordinates and also when profit maximization whether at the expense of the people becomes the chief driving force thus advocating a balance of powers between genders. The nature of capitalism is the need to extract maximum wealth in the form of capital through production. If seen through the lens of Heilbroner (1985), Capitalism is the main architect of gender inequality as in a subsistence society, every individual has equal accessibility to the means of survival because in such a society what drives is prestige and not wealth. Therefore, gender equality can only be promoted according to the capitalist model to provide more opportunities to offer their labor, get exploited, prompting them to be consumers and owners of their own wealth to get the vicious cycle going in continuum.

The functionalists view society as a complex organic system whose parts and subparts (traditions, institutions, norms, habits) like organs of the human body work together to ensure effective functioning, solidarity and stability. A structural functionalist view of gender inequality puts forth labor division to determine predefined gender roles as complementary: women as caregiver of the domestic realm while men made provision for the family. Consequently, gender like other sociological institutions lends its contribution to the societal stability at large.

Why the Integration?

According to Janet (2010), gender is an umbrella term where discrimination and victimization is meant for only females through denial of rights, opportunities and suppression. In Eitzen’s view (2000), the gender structure approach underscores external parameters like the social organization of institutions, power concentration, legal barriers and so on. The earning gaps also persist due to educational and physical lacunae of women, women’s tendency to enter labor force at lower pay and occupations. Todaro (1982) views development as “multi-dimensional process involving the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social system”. He believes the improvement to have the trickle down effect by raising living bars of people, creating growth conducive conditions of human dignity and democratization of people’s agency and choice. Women’s empowerment being a multifaceted procedure in itself is an indispensable precondition to achieve sustainable economy, social development and environmental sustainability. UNDP coordinates national and global attempts to integrate gender issues and sustainable development. Full participation and equality for women lays the ground for peace and sustainability (The 4th World Conference, Beijing,1995). In September 2015, the General Assembly adopted the agenda of 2030 Sustainable Development by enlisting 17 goals (out of which the 5th is to achieve gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls) and 169 targets. In order to achieve gender equality and women empowerment, UNDP enumerates the following targets:

1. End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
2. Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking, sexual and other types of exploitation.



3. Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
4. Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.
5. Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.
6. Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the 'Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development'.
7. Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources in accordance with national laws.
8. Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.
9. Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

Greater gender equality not only amplifies economic efficiency but also improvises other developmental outcomes: According to Sen, (2009):

1. With women now representing 40% global labor force and more than half the world's university students, overall productivity will increase if their skills and talents are used more fully (FAO, 2011).
2. Greater control over household resources by women through their earnings can enhance countries' growth prospects by changing spending in ways that benefit children. Evidence from countries as varied as Brazil, China, UK, India shows that when women control more household income children benefit as a result of more spending on food and education (World Bank, 2011)
3. Empowering women as economic, political and social factors can change policy choices and make institutions more representative of a range of voices. In India, giving power to women at the local level led to greater provision of public goods, such as water and sanitation which mattered more to women (Beaman et al, 2011)

Therefore, bolstering women's involvement economically is crucial in improving family and societal standards, accelerating development and elimination of poverty as well as proper allocation of incomes for their child's holistic development as harbingers of humanity only ensure sustainability.

Conclusion-

Women empowerment needs to be fructified to narrow gender gaps and create unbiased platforms to maintain gender equality. Gender equality would further the cause of ensuring the all-inclusive and comprehensive agenda of sustainable development. The academic query examined various concepts of gender and sustainable development unleashing the percolation of such cross-cutting core areas right from the pre industrial eras to the present age of capitalism. Achievement of only SDG-5 will not suffice to ensure a gender equal globe. So, political and institutional frameworks embedded in complicated procedures are pertinent in perceiving the structuring of gendered relationships of the society. Every global citizen should be jarred out of their false consciousness of Eurocentric approaches and internalize the top-down approach engendering goals of development.


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