



ENDANGERED RIGHTS AND ENGENDERED DEVELOPMENT - GENDERED CRITIQUE OF THE DISCOURSE OR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT

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Advent of 21st century is marked by the greater voice of women in their private and public lives. Although illiteracy, hunger, illness and violence continue to plague a significant number of women irrespective of whether they belong to developing, underdeveloped or developed countries; in the twentieth century women earned the rights to vote and to hold elected position in most of the countries (even if only in principle), they have increased their access to health services and education they have organized effectively both locally and internationally to frame women rights as human rights and have raised gender issues in development policy making.

The development process affects women and men in different ways. Over the past decades women's issues and more recently gender (the socially acquired notion of masculinity and femininity by which women and men are identified) issues have gained prominence on the development platform. Attention goes not only to the plight of poor and disenfranchised women in developing countries but also to the unfinished gender agenda in more developed countries. Many issues elicit intense reaction and receive much public attention - female genital mutilation and the AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa, exploitation and of women sex workers in East Asia, trafficking of women in Asia and Eastern Europe, downy deaths and

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"honour killings" in South Asia, unnecessary deaths due to unsafe abortion in Latin America and the industrial countries. Many other gender issues are more mundane but profoundly important to the well being of million of women and girls around the world. (Engendering Development, A World Bank Policy Research Report 2002, pp. 32, 33)

- In no developing region do women enjoy equal rights with men. In many countries women still lack independent rights to own land, manage property, or conduct business. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, women obtain land rights chiefly through their husband, losing these rights when they are divorced or widowed. In some south Asian and Middle Eastern countries women cannot travel without their husbands' consent. (Engendering Development, A World Bank Policy Research Report. 2002, pp. 32, 33)
- Gender discrimination has raised female mortality rates in some region, depriving the world of 60-100 million women (Sen Amartya K. 1989, PP. 1429). This reflects gender bias in the provision of food and health care as well as violence against females, especially in early childhood. In China selective abortion of female Fetuses and other son selection methods have further skewed the male to female birth ratios from 1.07 in 1980 to 1.14 in 1993. In India the sex ratio at birth is as high as 1.18 in Punjab.
- Despite increase in women's educational attainment relative to men's, large gender wage gaps remain. On average, female employees earn about three quarters of what men earn but gender differences in education, work experience, and job characteristics explains only about a fifty of the gap. Moreover, women remain greatly underrepresented in higher paying jobs including administrative and managerial jobs.
- Women are vastly underrepresented at all levels of government limiting their power to influence governance and public policy. They hold less than 10 percent of seats in parliament in all regions except East Asia. And in no developing region do women hold more than 8 percent of ministerial positions. (Engendering Development, A World Bank Policy Research Report 2002, pp 32, 33)
- Thus despite recent progress, gender inequalities are all pervasive, persisting across many' dimensions of life, turning up in households, social institutions and the economy. The story of gender iequality is in many ways a story of asymmetrical rights and privilege for men and women. Asymmetries in rights are pervasive in legal statutes, in custom any laws and in practices in communities' families and households.

"The concept of human rights, like all vibrant vision is not stativ or the property of any one group rather, its meaning expands as people preconceive of their needs and hopes in relation to it. In this spirit, feminists redefine human rights abuses to include the degradation and violation of women. The specific experiences of women must be added to traditional approaches to human rights in order to make women more visible and to transform the concept and practice of human rights in our culture so, that it takes better account of women's lives." (Charlotte Bunch, 1990, pp. 486-498).

An analysis of rights from a gender perspective could well detract attention from issues which affect the whole community especially when non-realization of basic needs have not yet been possible. But what cannot be overlooked is that as long as men and women play gendered roles, the culturally constructed notions of entitlements which are embedded within them deny women even their claims to humanity and consequently they are seen as carriers of lesser rights. Women are not only discriminated and denied against their fundamental rights to survival, access to resources and control over their produce but through the process of gendered socialization losing their autonomy, becomes weak, pliant and subservient. (Desai & Krishnaraj, 1987)

An awareness of the existing tensions between what is deemed as universal Human Rights and Women's rights would perhaps help to resolve some of the gray areas, leading to a more harmonious integration of gender issues. The feminist response to the rights "Talk" has to be placed again within the broad framework of their critique of liberal philosophy and legal theories in achieving parity between men and women in society.

Since the drafting of the universal declaration in 1948, women have had to fight vigorously to be included in the human right vision. Tomasevski (Tomasevski, Katarina... 1993) recounts, an early draft of the declaration opened with "All men are brothers." This reflected the gender chauvinism within the Commission on Human Rights, which was drafting the declaration, even though it was chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, and despite the efforts of its female members. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) effectively opposed this exclusionary language. The final text of the Universal Declaration reaffirms the United Nation Charters postulate of the equal rights of women, stating that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" (Art. 1) and that "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political and other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status." (Art. 2)

"The concept of human rights, like all vibrant vision, is not static or the property of anyone group, rather its meaning written in a language that male centric, women can never be sure of their inclusion. Though the use of male genderized terms in the document was clearly generic, however, the use of "Man," "Mankind" and "He" in the document has unfortunate consequences for women, for the language reveals sexist practices expands as people reconceived of their needs and hopes in relation to it." p. 4)

Let us for a moment put on the traditional lenses that have been worn to shape and develop human rights policy since the late 1940's. What do we see? First, we see male, second we see a male being arbitrarily arrested and tortured. And third, we see a male being arbitrarily arrested and tortured somewhere in a developing country. Wearing a different pair of lenses; "gender lenses" Women's human rights activists have launched a critique of this dominant perspective. It is a perspective that not only violates the "Universality" and "Indivisibility" concepts embedded in the human right vision but also has contributed to slowing down the promotion and protection of women's human rights.

Traditionally, Human Rights thought and practice have accepted the male as the norm and the point of departure, legitimate concerns of women that lacked a male norm or experience have been considered irrelevant to the human rights framework. The result has been an absence of guarantees for fundamentals rights and freedoms when women are the actors most affected (Butewga, 1995, pp 27-39).

A particularly clear example is gender based violence against women in all of its manifestations. As the Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights highlighted in the 1993 World Conference in Vienna, more women die each day from various forms of gender based violence than from any other type of human rights abuse. This ranges from female infanticide and disproportionate malnutrition of girl children, to the multiple forms of coercion, battering, mutilation, sexual assault and murder that many women face in every region of the world, throughout their lives, simply because they are female." (Bunch and Noah Reilly, 1994)

Yet, only recently has violence against women been recognized as a human rights violation and attracted attention from the international Human Rights community.

This issue has been exacerbated by the insistence in traditional Human Rights theory on a division between public and private responsibility. These documents, however, define the relationship between the individual and the State within the public arena. Women's lives remain circumscribed within the private area of family and are therefore, considered outside the purview of State protection. Activists for Women's Human Rights have challenged this public/private split as a politically

constructed barrier that has been used to justify inaction by the State and continued subordination of Women Dichotomies such as nature /culture, mind/body also help to define the nature and capabilities of the two sexes. Men are seen as rational, self-interested individuals who participate in the public, political world (Culture). Women due to their roles and reproductive functions are considered closely associated with nature and body (V.Poonacha pp. 90-91). All human rights instruments be it national or international, reject the principles of non-intervention when violation of rights occur. Yet systematic violence against women is treated as "customary" or a private matter and thus immunes to public condemnation. If a person is murdered because of his or her politics, the world injustifiably outraged. But if a person is beaten or allowed to die because she is female, the world dismissed it as cultural tradition (Peterson V. Spike 1990, pp 303-344).

Despite the rhetoric, in practice the international Human Rights community has privileged civil and political rights, which are often regarded as "the" human rights. At the same time, it has neglected the promotion and protection of social, economic and cultural rights, thereby ignoring some of women's most pressing concerns.

The hierarchical importance given to civil and political rights has slowed progress in the recognition and protection of women's human rights because' "much of the abuse that women experience is part of a larger socio-economic web that entraps women, making them vulnerable to abuses that are not solely political or caused by States" (Bunch 1991, pp 4). Some of the most urgent concerns of women's day to day existence involve the denial of economic, social, and cultural rights, including, access to employment and credit, to adequate food and housing and to education and health care.

These concerns include the impact of structural adjustment policies imposed by multilateral agencies, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), that have affected women most harshly. Advocates of women's human rights are wrestling with this issue. They are also increasing aware of the need to challenge the false belief that women's human rights are not an issue in developed countries. Omnipresent violence against women and other gender specific violence fortifies this.

Thus, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is critiqued as a biological statement. While it indicates how human have risen above their biological animalness until they have become creature who ascribe. Rights to each other, it also makes evident that women continue to be defined and limited by their biology.

Following points will show the gender insensitive and discriminatory character of Universal Declaration.

- 1) The phrasing of Part 3 of Article 16 risks legally enforcing confinement of women and children in situations that may deprive them of liberty or subject them to slavery or degraded treatment.
- 2) Part 1 of Article 16 prescribes morality implies that the states have an obligation to facilitate procreation and reinforces the notion that procreation validates women's worth.
- 3) An explicit have been included. Statement of the rights to one's own body should
- 4) Marceline nouns and pronoums used to refer to both the sexes may contribute to the perpetuation of sexist distinction in rights.

Like other movements for women's rights, the women's human rights movements has evolved from women organizing on local, National, regional and international levels around issues that affect their daily lives. One special component of this movement is women's entry into the political "space" opened by the United Nations, women have taken advantage of the opportunities presented by International meetings such as the World Conference on Human Rights and those that took place during the UN Decade on women to organize among themselves, while transforming the official agenda.

Women's rights traditionally have been treated as separate and not taken seriously by human rights organizations and governments. This attitude is reflected in the fact that when the United Nations resolved to hold its second world conference on Human Rights, its proposed agenda did not mention women or any" gender specific aspects of human rights. Yet by the time the world conference ended in June 1993 at Vienna, gender based violence and women's human rights emerged as one of the most talked about subjects, and women were recognized as a well organized human rights constituency.

The movement for women's human rights can be traced back to the United Nations decade for women (1976-1985) which facilitated the proliferation of women's Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Third World Countries as well as the further establishment of U.N. programme with respect to advancement of women. The decade ended with the Third United Nations world conference on women (Nairobi 1985), which brought greater awareness about the obstacles to women's advancement and generated a new momentum for collective action at the International and regional level. The "Forward-Looking strategies" the conference

document, placed greater emphasis on the deeper structural and institutional changes required in societies everywhere for women to achieve full equality. The Third World Forum on Women, Law and Development, held as part of the parallel NGO activities, identified two key strategies for action. Using the law as a resource for women's empowerment and creating regional women's rights networks (Schuler Margaret A (ed), 1986).

The adoption in 1979 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) constituted a landmark in the history of women's human rights. Until then there was no convention that comprehensively addressed women's rights within political, economic, cultural, social and family life.

CEDAW moves beyond the sex neutral norm that requires equal treatment of men and women, usually measured by how men are treated, to recognize the fact that the nature of discrimination against women and their distinctive gender characteristics are worthy of a legal response: The convention draws a distinction between defuse and defacto rights. Unlike other human rights treaties, CEDAW recognizes women are subject to pervasive and subtle forms of discrimination. It binds State parties to seek to modify cultural patterns of behaviour and attitudes regarding the sexes and attempts to impose standards of equality and non discrimination in private as well as public life.

CEDAW also makes a strong case for the indivisibility of human rights. It entitles women to equal enjoyment with men not only of civil and political rights but also of economic, social and cultural rights, and it mandates both legal and development policy measures to guarantee the rights of women in all areas of life.

The specific problems with CEDAW are 1) CEDAW has neither the necessary resources "nor the authority to investigate individual or group claims of violations. 2) There is no complaints procedure by which individual women or group could seek international remedies for violations of the convention. 3) The reporting is the States' responsibility, and women are excluded from the process. 4) Governments often do not submit reports, and when they do they are rarely self critical. 5) The interpretation of the articles tends to be left to the Governments, which often results in narrow definitions of rights and limited analyses of problems and remedies (Tomasevski Katarina, 1993).

The greatest obstacle to advancement of this work has been persuading human rights group to take gender as an important variable, as important as class and race. Gender-specific concerns have been treated as marginal by the male leaders of human rights organizations, although the situation has improved somewhat,

thanks to the growth of the women's movement and the increasing presence of women in human rights organization.

First world based activities for women's human rights face the additional challenge of bringing human rights language in practice home to their own backyard. In the U.S.A, for example, activists must work to expose the hypocrisy of a government that presents itself as a champion of human rights in the world while it has failed to ratify major human rights based covenant including CEDAW.

Organizing globally is important because global actions are key to generating the necessary pressure for making changes in the international human rights system. At the same time gains at the international level are powerful tools for women to use at the local level, to create local pressure and as a recourse to seek redress of women's human rights violations.

In Beijing in 1995, the simple statement that "women's rights are human rights" was incorporated in the declaration that ended the fourth world conference on women, the largest meeting of women ever held, and the largest conference ever convened by the United Nations. At Beijing conference delegates agreed to maintain the separate UN bodies devoted to women that have played a catalytic and expert role in developing standards but they also sought to engage all other programmes of the UN in examining gender related aspects of their ongoing work. This solution, commonly called "gender mainstreaming" involves a process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action including legislation, policies, or programmes in all areas and at all levels (Agosin M. (ed) 2001, pp 98-99). The greatest struggle has been simply to make the human rights of women visible. In field of human rights, gender mainstreaming primarily involves realizing that there is a gender dimension to every occurrence of a human rights violation. Maintaining also requires increasing women's actual participation in the human rights much assume and to ensure that mainstreaming has an enduring effect on the way human rights work is carried out (Agosin, M, 2001, pp 99)

Women's sojourn for rights, justice and equality has made their discriminative status in other areas also visible. By the mid 1970's foreign aid donor nations had responded to the new international women's movement and UN development initiatives by establishing women-in-development (WID) offices. A close look at the chronology of gender and development approach will help us to understand how acknowledgement of 'women's rights as human rights' and its violation as human rights violation made development initiatives of the international community more gender sensitive.

Prior to 1970 when Esther Boserup published her landmark book on women and development, it was thought that the development process affected men and women in the same way. Productivity was equated with cash economy and so most of women's work was ignored. When it became apparent that economic development did not automatically eradicate proverty through trickle down effect, the problems of distribution and equality of benefits to the various segments of population became of major importance in development theory. (J.H. Momsen, 2004, PP 11).

20th century had witnessed three development decades of the United Nations, while the decade for women (1976-1985) culminated in a conference in Nairobi in 1985. At the conclusion of the first two Development decades it was found that the extent of poverty, disease, illiteracy and unemployment in the south had increased. During the 1980, we witnessed unprecedented growth of developing country debt and acute famine in Africaa. Similarly the decade for women show only very limited changes in patriarchal attitudes i.e., institutionalized male dominance and few areas where modernization was associated with a reversal of the overwhelming subordination of women. Yet despite the apparent lack of change, the United Nations decade for women achieved a new awareness of the need to consider women when planning for development. (Momsen, 2004, 11)

The following approaches to integrate gender and development will help us to understand how assertion of women rights influence the women's role as an agent and recipient of development process.

1. The Welfare Approach

The eary 1970 approach of integration, based on the belief that women could be brought into existing modes of benevolent development without a major restructuring of the process of development. It was assumed that the benefits of macroeconomic strategies for growth would automatically trickle down to the poor and that poor women would benefit as the economic position of their husbands or male guardian improved.

Boserup (Boserup, 1970) challenged these assumptions showing that women did not always benefit as the household heads' income increased and that women were increasingly being associated with the backward and traditional and were losing status.

2. The WID Approach

The rise of the women's movement in Western Europe and North America, the 1975 UN International Year for women and the International women's decade (1976–85) led to the establishment of women's ministries in many countries and the institutionalization of Women in Development (WID) policies in governments,

donor agencies and NODS. The aim of WID was to integrate women into economic development by focusing on income generation projects for women.

This approach failed as it left women out of the mainstream of development and treated women identically. It also ghettoized the WID group within development agencies. By the 1980s WID advocates shifted from exposing the negative effects of development on women to showing that development efforts were losing out by ignoring women's actual or potential contribution (G.H. Momsen, 2004).

3. Gender of development (GDA)

This approach was originated in mid 1970 U.K., based on the concept of gender (the socially acquired ideas of masculinity and feminity) and gender relation (the socially constructed pattern of relations between men and women). They analysed how development reshapes these power relations (Young K 2002, London). Drawing on feminist political activism, Gender analysts explicitly see women as agent of change. They also criticize the WID approach for treating women as a homogeneous category and they emphasize the important 'influence of differences of class, age, marital status, religion and ethnicity or race on development outcomes. Proponents distinguished between practical gender needs, that is items that would improve women's lives within their existing roles and "strategic" Gender needs that seek to increase women's ability to take new roles and to empower them. (Molyneux M 1985, pp 227-54.)

4. Women and Development (WAD)

At the 1975 UN Women's world conference in Mexico city the feminist approaches of predominantly white women from the north aimed at gender equality, were rejected by many women in the south who argued that the development model itself lacked the perspective of developing countries. They saw overcoming poverty and the effects of colonialism as more important than equality. Out of this grew the DAWN network to forward that views of developing countries (Sen G. & Grown 1987). By 1990, WID, GAD and WAD views are largely converged but different approaches to gender and development continue to evolve. (Momsen, 2004, 14).

5. The Efficiency Approach

The strategy under their approach was to argue that, in the context of structural adjustment programmes (SAPS), Gender analysis made good economic sense. It was recognized that understanding men's and women's roles and responsibilities as part of the planning of development intervention and improved project effectiveness. The efficiency approach was criticized for focusing on what women could do for development rather than on what development could do for women, (Momsen, 2004, 14).

6. The Improvement Approach

In the 1980's, empowerment was regarded as a weapon for the weak, best wielded through grassroots and participatory activities (Papart Jane, 2002). However, empowerment has many meanings and by the mid] 990's it was seen as means for enhancing efficiency and productivity without changing the status quo (Momsen 2004, 14). The alternative development literature considers empowerment as a method of social transformation and achieving gender equality. Rowlands seen empowerment as a broad development process that enables people to gain self confidence and self esteem, so allowing both men and women to actively participate in development decision making (Rowland, J.).

The empowerment approach was also linked to the rise of participatory approaches to development and often-meant working with women at the community level building organizational skills (Momsen 2004, 15).

7. Mainstreaming Gender Equality:

The term Gender mainstreaming came in to widespread use with the adoption of the platform for action at the 1995 UN fourth world conference on women held in Beijing. The 89 governments represented in Beijing unanimously affirmed that the advancement of women and the achievement of equality with, men are matters of fundamental human rights and, therefore, a prerequisite for social justice. Gender mainstreaming attempts to combine the strength of the efficiency and empowerment approaches with the contacts of mainstream development. It tries to ensure that women as well as men's concerns and experiences are integral to the design, implementation, monitoring and evolution of all projects so that Gender inequalities is not perpetuated (Momesen, 2004, 15).

The millennium Declaration signed at the United Nations Millennium summit in 2000 sets out the United Nations goals for the next decade. Reaching these goals will not be easy but they do set standards which can be monitored (UNDP, 2003).

- (1) Halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty between 1990 and 2015.
- (2) Enrol all children in primary school by 2015.
- (3) Empower women by eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005. Reduce infant and child mortality rate by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015.
- (4) Reduce maternal mortality rates by three quarters between 1990 and 2015.
- (5) Provide access to all who need reproductive health services by 2015.

- (6) Implement national strategy for sustainable development by 2005 so as to reverse the loss of environmental resources by 2015.
- (7) Develop a global partnership for development.

These assertions of women movements and acknowledgement of women rights as human rights reinforces the visibility of women as beneficiary as well as an active agent in the discourses of development. But we are far from achieving our desired goals.

World Bank in its one of the reports (2002, 231) argued for a three-part strategy to promote Gender equality by blending discourses of rights and development.

- Reform institutions to establish equal rights and opportunities for men and women.
- Foster economic development to strengthen incentives for more equal resources and participation.
- Take active measures to redress persistence disparities in commandover resources and political voice.

The gender bias in development has often interpreted as a failure to include women. Recognition of the importance of the gender gap led to the 1995 establishment of the Gender related Development Index (GDI). This combines gender related measures of life expectancy, adult literacy, enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education, and estimates of earned income to arrive at a country by country evaluation of the gender gap in achievement. The GDI adjusts the Human Development Index downward, based on the belief that gender inequality reduces the overall level of well being in a country (Bradan K & S. Kalsen, 1999, pp 985-1010).

Many of the resolutions passed at the international women's conference in Nairobi and Beijing are paradoxical as they reflect the expectations that national government are responsible for implementing to improve the lot of women but they miserably fail to address the ways in which market liberalization and privatization may undermine the ability of government to discharge these responsibilities. The hegemony of neoliberal structural adjustment shifts the burden of welfare from the state to individual families and women are the worse victims.

Thus after three decades of women in development and Gender and Development policies, the work of redressing inequalities has just only began. The Vienna conference on human right and subsequent conference in Cairo, Copenhagen

and Beijing in 1993 urged that government and the United Nations should ensure the full and equal enjoyment by women of all human rights "and emphasized the fuller participation of women in development as development aims at both economic betterment and gender equity. According to Momsen, consideration of human rights in development usually incorporates rights to an equal voice, information, political participation and public accountability, as well as the equal right to access material benefits such as clean water, land, and education, food, housing, health, credit and employment (Momsen, 2002, 241). The Millennium goals are attempting to deliver some of these rights but are already recording spatial differences in achievement due to class race, religion, citizenship and individual belief in any particular state.

Thus for true success a complete change in attitudes is required and women themselves have to work towards it through continuous struggle and assertion.

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