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EMPOWERMENT, GENDER, AND DEVELOPMENT: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT **DOI No: 10.36713/epra27996** **Article DOI: https://doi.org/10.36713/epra27996**

Empowerment, gender and development are three interconnected concepts in the area of human development. Empowerment is not only dynamitic, and complicated; but also varied in dimension and forms from different perspectives. Development, based on capability approach developed by Amartya Sen, is an extension of human freedoms rather than merely economic development in terms of physical quantities. Empowerment plays an important role both as end and as a means of sustainable development paradigm through participation of women in social and economic processes and by changing the power relations. This paper explores theories of and the interrelations among the three distinct schools of thought on gender and development, namely, Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD). It also examines policy approaches to Women in Development, and Gender and Development in addition to the WID to GAD Policy approaches during 1970-90. These three approaches for development of women are found to exist in India. It can be concluded that sustainable development with equality and equity needs empowerment, equality in gender, and participatory approaches to reduce all types of inequalities.

KEYWORDS: ***Empowerment, Gender Equality, Development, Women in Development,***

INTRODUCTION

Independence, freedom of choice, own decision making, self-reliance, self-strength, self-control, dignity of life with rights, awakening, capability, and many more terms are used to signify empowerment in various periods, locations, and circumstances based on one's own value judgments, objectives, and beliefs. In the definitions of empowerment, there is both variation and commonality.

Empowerment dynamics are complicated and varied. Empowerment takes many forms, including sociological, psychological, economic, political, and other factors. Personal or individual empowerment, interpersonal empowerment, organisational empowerment, community empowerment, and collective empowerment are all examples of empowerment. Personal and collective elements were stressed by Boehm and Staples (2004), whereas personal, interpersonal, and institutional or political dimensions were emphasised by Dodd and Gutierrez (1990), Lee (1994), and Gutierrez (1990). Because the term interpersonal implies collectiveness, the interpersonal dimension is included in the collective dimension. The institutional and political dimensions, likewise, can be portrayed as part of the communal dimension. As a result, the components of empowerment can be evaluated from both a personal and a societal perspective (Hur, 2006:530).

In his book Progress as Freedom (2008:3), Amartya Sen argues that development is the process of enhancing people's real liberties. GNP growth is only one way to increase freedom. For four separate reasons, freedom is essential to the development process: i) The evaluative reason: development must be measured largely in terms of whether people's freedoms have been increased. ii) The real reason: human progress is entirely contingent on people's ability to act freely (Sen 2008:4). Sen (2008:36) saw freedom expansion as both a core goal and a primary means of development. Amartya Sen's capacity approach to human wellbeing considers the impact of social institutions on human capacities as an alternative to traditional welfare theory. However, as an evaluative framework, it ignores the role of institutionalised authority in producing or perpetuating inequities in individual achievement opportunities. In Development as Empowerment, Marianne T Hill (2003:117) proposes a vision of social power and its exercise that is consistent with the capacity approach. This investigation of power builds on Sen's advocacy for the study of intergroup connections.

In Growth and Empowerment, Stern, Dethier, and Rogers (2005) suggest a development plan that requires a dual approach: creating an environment that encourages investment and growth while also empowering impoverished people to participate in that growth. Empowerment is seen as a goal in and of itself, as well as a motivator of growth (Alpos, M F Bertelsen and J Holland 2006:2).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The literatures that link empowerment and development assume that attempts to transform power relations, allowing people to make effective choices on an equal footing, have both inherent and instrumental value. The literature on

democratisation and decentralisation (Dollar and Kraay 2002; Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2004; Moore and Putzel 1999); nonmonetary aspects of poverty reduction (Bourguignon, Ferreira, and Menendez 2003; Sen 1999); and human rights approaches to development (Alsop 2005; DFID 2000; Eyben 2003; Moser and Norton 2001) all contain arguments for the intrinsic value of empowerment (Alpos, M F Bertelsen and J Holland 2006:2).

There are differing perspectives on the relationship between women's position and growth. The first group contends that increased economic development or affluence will eliminate gender discrimination. In the long run, rising competition will eliminate these biases (Becker 1985; O'Neill and Polachek 1993). The modernisation-neoclassical approach is what it's called (Forsythe et al. 2000). Others, on the other hand, feel that long-standing patriarchal institutions will prohibit women from progressing economically (Marchand and Parpart 1995; Parpart 1993). Gender inequality is solidified and will not easily be modified in the course of development by restricting women's involvement in the labour force and/or access to resources (Morrisson and Jütting 2005).

Development and empowerment are linked in the UN Human Development Report. The UN Human Growth Report of 1995 emphasises the importance of fostering human development. If development is supposed to broaden chances for everyone, then women's continued exclusion from numerous life opportunities completely skews the development process (UNDP 1995: iii).

Three schools of thought on gender and development

Eva Rathgeber (1990: 489-502) identifies three distinct schools of thought on gender and development, namely, Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD).

Women in Development (WID)

The term "Women in Development"(WID) came into existence in the early 1970s, after the publication of *Women's Role in Economic Development* authored by Ester Boserup (1970) who for the first time systematically articulated the sexual division of labour existed in agrarian economies on a global level. The term "WID" was initially used by the Women's Committee of the Washington, DC, Chapter of the Society for International Development, to bring the works of Boserup and others to the attention of American policymakers on Third World development (Maguire 1984). The WID began to be articulated by American liberal feminists who advocated legal and administrative changes to ensure that women would be better integrated into economic systems (Jaquette 1982). The term was subsequently adopted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) based on rationale that women can provide an economic contribution to development though they remain as an untapped resource (Pillai, 2009:10). The objective of this approach is to design actions and policies to integrate women into development programmes to ensure their access to resources and the participation in development.

The WID approach suffered from many limitations. The approach didn't not call for changes in the overall structure of economic system where women were to be included. It ignored triple role played by women: reproductive, productive, and communitarian agents. The approach also ignored the social, cultural, legal and economic factors that give rise to inequalities of men and women.

Women and Development (WAD)

The Women and Development (WAD) approach was emerged in the second half of the 1970s in opposition to WID. It was based on neo-Marxist feminism drawing some of its theoretical base from dependency theory. The WAD approach highlights the relationship between women and development rather than integration of women into development. The objective of this approach is to remove disparities in social, economic and political equality between women and men as a precondition for achieving people-centred development.

This approach had also demerits. It was based on the assumption that the position of women would improve if and only if international structures became more equitable. It did not have full scale analysis of process of patriarchy, female subordination and production. The approach did not consider other social variables (race, ethnicity, etc.).

Gender and Development (GAD)

The GAD approach has itstheoretical roots in socialist feminism and bridged the gapleft by the modernization theorists, linking the relations of production to the relations of reproduction and taking into account all aspects of women's lives (Jaquette 1982). The concern over the point that WID policies were less effective in improving women's social and economic power compared to men in development contexts, led to reform the WID with gender analysis of social relations and resulted to Gender Analysis in Development or Gender andDevelopment (GAD) in the 1980s. The approach is easy to theorize than to apply.

It is worth mentioning that there is neither linear progression WID,WAD, GAD; nor their homogenous application.

In addition, a new approach has been developed, i.e., the **Gender, Law and Development (GLAD)** approach that brings law and development together to ensure more equal access to resources and equal rights. Because, in most of the countries, it is evident that the law of the socio-economic, political and legal system favours only men increasing discrimination against women's rights.

The Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) are sometimes used interchangeably, but they differ in some cases. Both approaches are still applicable in different situations.

Policy approaches to Women in Development, and Gender and Development

Description	Women in Development (WID)	Gender and Development (GAD)
Approach	An approach that views women as the problem	An approach to development
Focus	Women	Relations between men and women
Problem	The exclusion of women (half the productive resources) from the development process	Unequal relations of power (rich and poor, women and men) that prevent equitable development and participation
Goal	More efficient, effective development	Equitable, sustainable development with both women and men as decision makers
Solution	Integrate women into the development process	Empower the disadvantaged and women; transform unequal relations
Strategies	Women's Project; Women's components; Integrated Project; Increase Women productivity; Increase women's income; Increase women's ability to look after the household	Identify/address practical needs determined by women and men to improve their conditions; At the same time, address women's strategic interests; Address strategic interests of the poor through people-centered development

Source*:* Dayal et al (1993)

The approaches to women and development evolved over time. These approaches are the result of international debate of gender discrimination in poverty, unemployment, social security, dignity, legal rights etc. While, earlier approaches stressed on women's reproductive and domestic role; the recent approaches focused on women's productive role to the nation generating resources and establishing social equality. Thus, there is a paradigm shift in the understanding of policy makers regarding women. Those who initially considered women as a beneficiary of Government schemes not focused women a catalytic agent in transforming social, economic, and political system. The Welfare approaches that were dominant during the 1950s and 1970s, focused women as mothers and caretaker taking policies on their nutrition, education and family planning. But, in the United Nations Women's Decade (1975–1985), the approach changed and emphasized on the Women in Development (WID) framework.

WID to GAD Policy Approaches during 1970-90

Approach	Description
Welfare	Earliest approach, 1950-70. Its original purpose was to bring women into development as better mothers. Women are seen as passive beneficiaries of development. It recognizes the reproductive role of women and seeks to meet practical gender needs/priorities in that role through top-down provision of food aid, measures against malnutrition, and family Planning.
Equity	The original WID approach, used in the 1975-85 U.N. Women's Decade. Its purpose is to gain equity for women, who are seen as active participants in development. It recognizes women's triple role, and seeks to meet strategic gender needs/priorities through direct state intervention, by giving political and economic autonomy and reducing inequality with men. It challenges women's subordinate position.
Antipoverty	The second WID approach, a toned down version of equity, adopted from the 1970s onwards. Its purpose is to enhance the productivity of low income women. Women's poverty is seen as a problem of underdevelopment, not subordination. It recognizes the productive role of women and seeks to meet their practical gender needs/priorities to earn an income, particularly in small-scale, income-generating projects.
Efficiency	The third WID approach, adopted particularly since the 1980s debt crisis. Its purpose is to ensure that development is more efficient and effective through women's economic contribution, with participation often equated with equity. It seeks to meet practical gender needs/priorities while relying on all three roles and an elastic concept of women's time.
Empowerment	The first post-WID approach, articulated by women in developing countries. Its purpose is to empower women through greater self-reliance. It recognizes the triple role, and seeks to meet strategic gender needs/priorities indirectly, through bottom-up mobilization of practical gender needs.
Equality	The most recent GAD approach, emerging from the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), and widely adopted by governments and aid agencies. It introduces equality as a human right, and emphasizes that power-sharing and more equitable partnerships between women and men are political, social, and economic prerequisites for sustainable, people-centered development

Sources*:* Moser, 1989, 1993; UNDP,1995.

There has been a coexistence of these three approaches for development of women, namely Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD) in India.

CONCLUSION

Empowerment, gender, and development are three different concepts with different dimensions and parameters. In spite of these factors, they are interconnected and work together in inclusive and all around development of the nation state. Equality of gender is not only a necessary condition for social equality, but also a sufficient condition for sustainable development. Empowerment of marginalized section of the society, especially women, reinforces the democracy through equal participation in decision making system.

Women are empowered in all spheres---education, health, communication, legal rights, political participation, social justice, and economic security. But, gender disparities still continues throughout the world in midst of advancement. We cannot realize sustainable and human development, in true sense, if we cannot eliminate the socio-economic shocks, such as, discrimination, domination, patriarchy, limited right to access resources and decision making. So we need to formulate and implement gender sensitive policies under egalitarian institutional framework. In view of these sensitive matters, in India, empowerment of down-trodden section and gender-sensitive socio-economic development gets priority in all development plans

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