Women Empowerment and Welfare: Paradigm Shift in the ideas of Governance*

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ABSTRACT

In post-Cold War scenario, we can see a paradigm shift in the ideas of governance. Due to shift of threat from ‘external’ to ‘internal’, ‘protecting border’ now replaced with the motto ‘protecting human’. Human security is started getting similar importance along with national security where not only human growth is important, but also their empowerment and welfare is equally important. But, with composite human development, we cannot secure development of women as they have their own specific problems for survival and development.

Therefore, along with Human Development Index, international organizations have introduced separate indices for highlighting gender disparity and started to give grants to different states that are lagging behind according to different reports of gender disparity indices. Countries are also slowly raising their budgets for women welfare and empowerment as this is now important component for gaining and/or retaining status in world order. Often indices made by First World countries get criticized by Third World countries for not considering holistic disparity in all spheres between ‘rich’ and ‘poor’ countries. Moreover, many data of these indices are not properly collected/cannot be collected in many nation-states. Therefore, many countries alter some of the indices and make it friendly according to the data available as well as relevant for identifying gender inequality.

The present paper will illustrate the evolution of the process of evaluation about condition of women in post-Cold War scenario in general and will highlight the Indian Social Values in specific. As society is the main pressure group of Government and their policies, therefore mere reports are not enough to increase awareness about the necessity for more women-oriented budgetary allocations and women-friendly policies. But also, we need to change our mindset of society towards women both at the individual level as well as collective level. Not only men, in fact women also sometimes act biased towards women and criticize many path-breaking attempts of women itself. In India, the latest example of it is the Sabarimala temple case where one woman got beaten by her female family member for entering in a temple, where women of ‘menstruating age’ were not permitted to enter. Thus, this paper will throw some light about the mentality of society about women empowerment and disparity in conclusion.

However, for the convenience of analysis, this paper is divided into three parts: first part deals with the Introduction; second part deals with the evolution of the process of the evaluation of the condition of women in the post-cold war era etc. indices by the international organizations and also by India; the third part emphasize women’s role in social change; and, finally, sum up has been presented as part of conclusion.

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I

From time immemorial, women constitute almost half of the world population. But as workforce they first started to be recognized after industrial revolution. As in industries, they need ‘skilled’ human resource irrespective of gender. But in medieval feudal societies, nobody took initiative for women empowerment. And as they are not empowered, nobody was vocal or took care of their welfare. So, women became ‘weaker’ and ‘backward’ section of all societies. However, from the time of industrial revolution, there was increasing thrust over women empowerment as well as welfare so that bourgeoisie can engage half population of world as ‘positive’ human resource but then too there was no similar growth of women in a same scale worldwide as still in many places, conservative societies, sick mentalities and patriarchal culture persists.

This scenario was changed in the post-cold war period because there was a paradigm shift in the ideas of governance. Basically, it was the shift of threat from ‘external’ to ‘internal’ factors on one side and ‘protecting border’ to ‘protecting human’ on the other. A matter of fact is that the Human security is started getting similar importance along with national security where not only human growth is important, but also their empowerment and welfare is equally important. This perception is the most significant contribution of this period, but one must not take human developments a security of women development as they have their own specific problems for survival and development. Thus it was the responsibility of the international organization to look after the development of the women as a whole. It became the foremost duty of the international organization to create indices different from the early indices. Therefore, to take an instance the International
Organizations has introduced separate indices along with Human Development Index, i.e. the Gender Development Index (1995), Gender Empowerment Measure (1995), Gender Equity Index (2004), Gender Gap Index (2006), Social Institutions and Gender Index (2007), Gender Inequality Index (2010), and Gender Parity Index (2016) to identify the condition of women in different nation-states.

Moreover, many International Organizations are now giving grants to different states that are lagging according to different reports of gender disparity indices. Countries are also slowly raising their budgets for women welfare and empowerment as this is now important component for gaining and/ or retaining status in world order. But, often indices made by First World countries get criticized by Third World countries for not considering holistic disparity in all spheres between the ‘rich’ and the ‘poor’ counties, which in turn in other words can also be termed as the ‘developed’ and the underdeveloped’ nations or countries.

II

The Government allocates money according to the ‘need’ of the hour in every budget for calculating ‘demand’, there are different bodies. To add any amount for any ‘heads of expense’, the government needs to ensure proper ‘need’ or ‘demand’. In post-Cold War scenario, Government slowly started increasing money for ‘internal’ expenses. Worldwide granting agencies and international organizations started pushing about ‘individual’ development. Thus, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) started calculating ‘Human Development’ both Nation-wise and Sub-region-wise. With the passage of time it was realized by the world-wide international organizations that they need to calculate the ‘Gender Disparity’ and there is also the need to evaluate the condition of women separately in different sectors like health, education and income.

The International Organizations have planned and then introduced separate indices for evaluating condition of women. For example, UNDP introduced Gender Development Index (1995), Gender Empowerment Measurement (1995), and Gender Inequality Index (2010). The World Economic Forum introduced Global Gender Gap Index in the year 2006. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Centre (OECD - DC) introduced Social Institutions and Gender Index (2007). Social Watch introduced Gender Equity Index (2009). Global Gender Office of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) introduced Environment and Gender Information (2013). European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) introduced Gender Equality Index’. By these indices, all the above mentioned international organizations are busy in measuring gender disparity in different regions and nation-states and they publish annual/ biannual report on different index. The table below shows a composite picture of a country’s level of Gender Development according to the UNDP GDI.

Table 1: A Composite Picture of a Country’s Level of Gender Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Development Index (GDI)</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DIMENSIONS</strong></td>
<td>Long and healthy life</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Standard of living</td>
<td>Long and healthy life</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Standard of living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDICATORS</strong></td>
<td>Life expectancy</td>
<td>Expected years of schooling</td>
<td>Mean years of schooling</td>
<td>GNI per capita (PPP $)</td>
<td>Life expectancy</td>
<td>Expected years of schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DIMENSION INDEX</strong></td>
<td>Life expectancy index</td>
<td>Education index</td>
<td>GNI index</td>
<td>Life expectancy index</td>
<td>Education index</td>
<td>GNI index</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gender Development Index (GDI), United Nations Development Programme

The UNDP calculates GDI for 166 countries. It divides countries into five groups based on the absolute deviation from gender parity in HDI values. This means that grouping takes equally into consideration gender gaps favoring males, as well as those favoring females. But many countries criticize GDI for being often mistakenly interpreted as an independent measure of gender-gaps when it is not, in fact, intended to be interpreted in that way, because it can only be used in combination with the scores from the HDI, but not on its own.

As Gender Development Index is not covering the issue like women empowerment, the UNDP introduced Gender Empowerment Measurement (GEM) in 1995 to measure the extent of gender inequality across the globe’s countries, based on estimates of women’s relative economic income, participation in high-paying positions with economic power, and access to professional and parliamentary positions. It was formulated by the famous economist, Mahbub ul Haq, who invented several measures including provisions that it had to be simple, had to be represented as a single number, had to be easily calculated, had to yield numbers that were internationally comparable, had to use numbers available on a yearly basis and had to use numbers that were easily interpretable. Thus GEM was designed to measure “whether women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life and take part in decision-making”. The GEM tends to be more agency focused (what people are actually able to do) than well-being focused (how people feel or fare in the grand scheme of things). In fact for calculating GEM, there are three basic indicators i.e. the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments, percentage of women in economic decision making positions (incl. administrative, managerial, professional and technical occupations) and female share of income (earned incomes of males vs. females). Table 2 below shows a composite picture of a country’s level of Gender Empowerment.
Table 2: A Composite Picture of a Country’s Level of Gender Empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Political participation</th>
<th>Economic participation and decision-making</th>
<th>Power over economic resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INDICATORS</td>
<td>Female and male shares of parliamentary seats</td>
<td>Female and male shares of positions as legislators, senior officials and managers</td>
<td>Female and male shares of professional and technical positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal Distribution</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equivalent Percentage (EDEP)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) to End Up Gender Inequality, EconomicsDiscussion.net

The GEM is thought to be a valuable policy instrument because it allows certain dimensions that were previously difficult to compare between countries to come into international comparison. There are other measuring indices like the Gender Equity Index which is for measuring situation of women through some indicators relevant to gender inequity and based on internationally available and comparable information. The three dimensions included in GEI are: economic activity, empowerment and education. The index’s range of values is from 0 to 100, with lower values indicating greater inequity and higher values greater equity.

The next is the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) which is designed to measure gender equality. It was first published in 2006 by the World Economic Forum. The Index is aimed to capture gender-based gaps in access to resources and opportunities in countries rather than the actual levels of the available resources and opportunities in those countries. It calculates gender gap between women and men in four key areas i.e. the economy which is measured through salaries, participation levels and access to high-skilled employment. In fact, it measures women’s disadvantage compared to men, and it is not a measure of equality of the gender gap. Gender imbalances to the advantage of women do not affect the score.

According to these indices, the Indian Institute of Public Administration made a comparative study of GDI and GEM of 35 States/Union Territories of 1996 and 2006. This data helped Ministry of Women and Child Development to identify deep-rooted gender-based inequalities and to make corrective policies, programmes and schemes in order to achieve gender just and equitable development outcomes.

In 2007, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Centre (OECD – DC) introduces the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) to measure gender equality in a society. It is a composite indicator of gender equality, which solely focuses on social institutions that impact the roles of men and women, such as a society's norms, values and attitudes that relate to gender in non-OECD countries. It is based on multifaceted indicators from the Gender, Institutions and Development (GID) Database. It specifically draws on the GID’s social institutions variables that are grouped into five categories or sub-indices, which are- family code, civil liberties, physical integrity, ownership rights etc. Econometric analysis of SIGI has shown the significant impact of social institutions on gender equality outcomes. For example, higher levels of gender inequality in social institutions are strongly correlated to lower participation of women in paid labor. However, higher levels of inequality are not necessarily associated with lower levels of per capita income. On the other hand, education seems to be a strong promoter of women’s rights. The higher the percentage of women who can read and write, the lower the discrimination they suffer in social institutions.

In 2010, UNDP introduced the Gender Inequality Index (GII) to quantify the loss of achievement within a country due to gender inequality. GII is an inequality measure based on harmonic mean of geometric means. It uses three dimensions to measure opportunity cost, which are reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status. The table below shows a composite picture of a country’s level of Gender Inequality of UNDP GII.

Table 3: A Composite Picture of a Country’s Level of Gender Inequality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Empowerment</th>
<th>Labour market</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INDICATORS</td>
<td>Maternal mortality ratio</td>
<td>Adolescent birth rate</td>
<td>Female and male population with at least secondary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIMENSION INDEX</td>
<td>Female and male reproductive health index</td>
<td>Female empowerment index</td>
<td>Female and male force participation rates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Gender Inequality Index, United Nations Development Programme
Thus GII measures the human development costs of gender inequality. The higher the GII value the more disparities between females and males and the more loss to human development. The GII sheds new light on the position of women in 162 countries; it yields insights in gender gaps in major areas of human development. The component indicators highlight areas in need of critical policy intervention and it stimulates proactive thinking and public policy to overcome systematic disadvantages of women. Permanyer notes that the GII is a pioneering index, in that it is the first index to include reproductive health indicators as a measurement for gender inequality. The UNDP expresses that women's health during pregnancy and childbearing is a clear sign of women's status in society.

According to the UNDP data, reproductive health accounts for the largest loss due to gender inequality, among all regions. Access to higher education expands women's freedom by increasing their ability to question and increases their access to information which expands their public involvement. There is much literature that finds women's access to education may reduce the Adolescent Fertility Rate (AFR) and Child Mortality Rates (CMR) within a country. In the absence of reliable earned income data across countries, the UNDP considers labor market participation a suitable substitute for economic aspects of gender inequality.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) introduced the Gender Parity Index (GPI) in 2016 as a socioeconomic index to measure the relative access to education of males and females. It is calculated as the quotient of the number of females by the number of males enrolled in a given stage of education (primary, secondary, etc.). According to the Institute for Statistics of UNESCO any development indicator one can define the GPI relative to this indicator by dividing its value for females by its value for males. Significantly it is equal to one signifies equality between males and females. A GPI less than one is an indication that gender parity favors males while a GPI greater than one indicates gender parity that favors females. The closer a GPI is to one, the closer a country is to achieving equality of access between males and females.

Thus, through GPI, UNESCO tries to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education and emphasizes the plight of girls in unequal access in third world countries. However, the GPI ignores the gender disparity that benefits first-world women in tertiary education. However, it is used by international organizations, particularly in measuring the progress of developing countries. The World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report 2016 allows users to look at and compare country GPI data, calculate your own country's gender parity, and explore global patterns.

It was in 2009, when Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) recast GDI and GEM to realistically capture the gender gaps in development and empowerment for India as well as for the States/Union Territories. Considering both the issue of limitations of data availability as well as relevancy, it reformulated dimensions and indicators identified for HDI, GDI and GEM, which are as follows –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4: Goal Posts for HDI &amp; GDI</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maximun</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) A Long &amp; Healthy Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Infant Mortality Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Life Expectancy at age 1 for HDI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Life Expectancy at age 1 for GDI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Literacy Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mean Years of Education for 15+ age group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) A Decent Standard of Living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Female/ Male Estimated Earned Income Share per capita per annum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Indian Institute of Public Administration (2009), Gendering Human Development Indices: Recasting the Gender Development Index and Gender Empowerment Measure for India, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, New Delhi.

### III

The issue of women's empowerment and gender equality is at the top of agendas across the world, as gender inequality is widespread in all cultures. Considering India, Still majority of the Indian women are facing the problem of gender inequality and discrimination. As per UNDP report, India ranks 132 out of 187 countries on gender inequality index (GII). India ranks low partly because of its skewed ratio, with only 914 females for every 1000 males, according to Indian government data. In developing countries, gender disparity is highly rampant compared to the developed countries. In simple terms Gender Disparity means the differences in women’s and men's access to resources, status and well-being, which usually favor men and are often institutionalized through law, justice and social norms. But this disparity is not only because of government's policy but it mainly has six major causes such as poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, social customs, belief and anti-female attitude. The last three causes i.e. social customs, belief and anti-female attitude is not always is the outcome of the men’s reaction or the responsibility of man but it’s for many times generated by the women.

Many social activists and reformers approved their campaign against all social odds to restore honor and dignity to women, attitudinal disparities which are still followed by the rural masses. Government work on these by making even
implementing women welfare schemes to empower them but despite all other social, economic and technological development, still women are the victims of exploitation, superstition, illiteracy and social violence. But it will not work only by putting all these allegations on society or men, rather women are also enemies of women. Doing housework, a mother teaches her daughter and wants her to perform the same task but the same mother prevents her son from going to the kitchen and sending him to markets or any other place. When a woman is abused, another woman is accused of being abusive and has taken as characterless, which is totally wrong. Thus social values are important and woman has to encourage these values so as to cultivate moral as well ethics in the children who are the coming generation.

Woman is an integral part of the society but her contribution is never realized in true sense i.e. in the family itself, in the work place, at national or international level. A matter of fact is that the central role of women in society has ensured the stability, progress and long term development of nations. The Median female share of the global workforce is 45.4%. Moreover their participation at every part is fruitful. Woman is the first teacher of a child and the backbone of the society as the values she taught her child plays an important role when the child interacts in the society and other institutions. Thus if a woman is properly empowered and educated fully then definitely she can educate her children towards the right direction which can lead towards a value-based life and even civilization. But all this can only be done if the woman is empowered.

IV

Even if one can identify the areas where women are facing disparity and enforce and implement different schemes for women empowerment and development, it cannot be done fully up to the grass root level if we cannot create a neutral and equal society for women where every individual will understand the real meaning of ‘equality’. For example, in India, there is the need for the protection of women from domestic violence Act 2005 to protect women from domestic violence. But, by several studies, it was found that most of the victims of domestic violence are not counting these acts as ‘domestic violence’ and they are happy to live with that. Moreover, Government of India has enacted and implemented many schemes for encouraging families in having girl child. But, many women are still craving for ‘son’ due to many psychological reasons. Hindus worship ‘Lakshmi’ the ‘Godess of Wealth and Fortune’, ‘Saraswati’ as the ‘Godess of Learning’, and Durga as the ‘Godess of Power’. But, in reality women neither get money nor education or power. Thus, they remained ‘backward’ and weaker in many spheres.

Therefore, along with introducing new indices for measuring women disparity and enacting new schemes for women welfare and empowerment, we need to change the mindset of society towards women both at the individual level as well as collective level. Not only men, in fact women also sometimes act biased towards women and criticize many path-breaking attempts of women itself. In India, the latest example of it is the Sabarimala temple case where one woman got beaten by her female family member for entering in a temple, where women of ‘menstruating age’ were not permitted to enter. That is a small case. But we can see many of such cases worldwide still in twenty-first century. Everyone must understand that there is the need to change this stereotype, patriarchal and feudal mentality of both men and women in this post-cold war scenario.

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