



Women Empowerment Challenges and Sustainable Development

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Abstract

The cosmos has created its all the species with full of potentials, objectives and their roles in this ecosystem to proceed in their life with strength, opportunities, perfection and achievements. Belonging to the human life in terms of: the social concerns, cultural practices and fragmented outlook towards the women, has created the absentia of both the empowered women and the pace of processes of empowering women to attain the objectives of sustainable development. In this communication, an attempt has been made to understand the philosophical aspect of gender-gap and disparity appeared, challenges in women empowerment, conceptual framework of women empowerment and sustainable development.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Sustainable Development, Synergistic-Effect.

1. Introduction:

A country is made up its: land, climate, natural resources, ethos and the people belonging. Its existence, identity, progress and prosperity in terms of: economic growth, social fabric and togetherness, political stability, good governance, environment-friendliness and conservation of biodiversity, flora and fauna are sustainable only when, the people and their interaction with ecosystem is in resonance with the pace of quasi-static dynamic equilibrium. Since, it is the *change* which is the permanent in this physical world where the change signifies the next stage of quasi-static dynamic equilibrium of the interacting interface under the process of quasi-static means where cause and effect both complement each other in such a fashion that both exist together, control each other but attains the higher state of being. Philosophically, this can be defined as "*Natural Development* where the agents of action (gravitational force, water flow, wind, human vibes, cosmic energy, solar energy, human activities, etc.) and the interfaces of interactions (agricultural, construction,

industrial, mining activities, etc.), both, poses various challenges to each other and demand the sustainable pathways for dynamic equilibrium from each other". This interplay continuously takes place in nature and it progresses forward in spite the involvement of human activities. Now, when human activities come into picture, it starts with self-existence and identity along with to win over the nature, and here comes the need of **know-how**? The whole process of know-how is put under the head of science and technology where science is discovered while technology is fabricated to serve the need of the hour. Since the process of know-how in social terms involves many steps and aspects where, it has constructed the concept of togetherness, fundamental unit as family and community. Now, to proceed in a guided way and the optimum use of capital, time and energy and know-how, the concept of **labour-division** germinated which has now taken the shape of specialization. In every country, along with machines, there are two pillars of work-force categorised as male and female decided by the nature and biological features but identified in terms of gender as men and women based on their roles prescribed in the early stages of social fabric evolution. Because of the soft physical nature and naturally responsible to give and nurture the new life on this planet, women were assigned the house-hold soft tasks and men were assigned the outdoor rough and tough activities because of their hard physical built-up by nature. Along with this, the security also come under the responsibility of men of the family due to lack of evolved statecraft security system to safeguard every individual.

At the early stages of human settlement approaches in terms of: family structure, community fabric and their norms and ethos along with the labour-division among the work-force in each family and community, the paramount question came that of "*existence and identity challenged by both other families and nature*". Here comes the concept of *Human Development* as human efforts to accept the challenges posed by the nature due to the processes of its dynamic character. For this, work-force need: skills, qualifications and expertise. With the passage of time, by default, a deep-rooted perception was developed in men's mind that a women can give only birth to life, care the newly born life and can better do only the indoor house-hold activities. Because of this unilateral perception along with many other factors such as fear psychosis, not being confident about women ability, the women were kept away from the interfaces of learning of know-how and exposure to the interfaces of real challenges. So, under this unilateral perception of men without any scientific justification surfaces in form of "**gender-gap and disparity**" to address the challenges of life during its progress. This created a biased, unilateral and unscientific approach in assessment towards the need for providing interfaces of attaining: *qualification, education, training, decision-making participation to women, to groom them with the logical aspects of life too*. Further, the it was argued that if women have to perform only the indoor activities life time, what is the need of these aspects to know-how and participate to interact with the interfaces of grooming the logical aspects of life. In our opinion this assessment and approach causes the permanent phase-lag in women's persona in comparison to their men counter parts, while they are the two sides of the same coin.

2. Women Empowerment and Challenges:

The question of paramount importance is that why we talk about women empowerment separately? Why it demands the special movement? The answer lies in the evolution of social norms, cultural practices and based on these the development of unscientific perception among men towards the belonging women. With the passage of time and the teachings of men about women' incapability became so deep-rooted that even women accepted it permanently that they can not move even parallel to men, the question to go ahead is a far dream.

To understand this deep-rooted problem, in this communication irrespective of caste, creed, culture, region and religion we have categorized women under three groups as:

- Women belonging to Elite class,
- Women belonging to middle class and
- Women belonging to marginalized class

in terms of wealth, education, decision making freedom and power to say in their family matters, community role and social fabric to put their view point. In the elite class, there is no gender-gap and disparity in terms to access the opportunities and freedom to says and take their own decisions. In this class to proceed there is only one issue: *"the issue of becoming first among the equals"*. So, the concept of women empowerment does not arise for the women belonging to the elite class. Now, the question is what about the marginalized class work-force, in general. Throughout the human settlements and distribution of opportunities, resources and their right to access, this class is deprived of altogether in terms of Wealth, health, education, self- identity, social-identity and good governance for both the genders men and women. From the beginning of social fabric this class is ruled and only ruled and never thought of connecting them to them under mainstream. Still, a long path has to be travelled with this class to empower both men and women and make them realize that it is their duty to be qualified, trained and educated to participate under their equity role in the mainstream under the goal of development of individual, family, community and society as a whole. At the same time, it is the duty of the section of the society empowered and government as well to provide the opportunities, infrastructure and awareness so that the work-force of the class can contribute for the development of self, their families, communities and their nation. Fortunately, in this class there is no any social or culture barriers in women empowerment. They are available for education, training, jobs, etc., provided the good governance offers their security and cost-effective empowerment processes.

The ultimate is the middle class because a progressed family in marginalized class enters in the middle class and becomes culprit of the deep-rooted social and cultural norms as barriers for women empowerment. Actually, in the developing countries like India, the ethos and pride int middle class, attached with the women is in form of: *"Deity and Family Honour"* which is true philosophically. Deity, the philosophical concept was forgotten and mechanical format was retained as: *"since a Deity is worshiped so how she can go outdoors to work and earn livelihood or anything else. She can go only out (for sake of visiting and showing her presence. She has to be within the premises of indoor. But, at the same time she has do all the activities of house-hold and house management"*. Further, since she is a Deity, the perception of man does nt permit to recognize as her indoor activities and labour as work to be paid because it becomes against the family Honour as: how men

can pay to Deity? because men during worship begs everything from the Deity. These two unfortunate perceptions as: Deity and Family Honour, along with the soft nature of women prohibited them in the family to access the basic aspects of logical aspect of life on this planet in form of know-how as: qualification, training, education, jobs, self-employment and so on and surfaces in form of gender-gap and disparity in the middle class towards the women. Further, along with the unfortunate interpretation of the philosophical concept about women as *“Women as a Deity”* and fixing the unscientific too much emphasis to women as *“Family Honour”*, inherently created *“Fear Psychosis”* in the minds of the men to whom the women belong. Hence, in the social aspect, these three factors are the culprit for progress among the women of the middle which constitute the backbone of the social fabric altogether.

3. The Conceptual Framework of Women Empowerment:

The Nature has produced the human mind, irrespective of the gender with 4 percent automatically opened to function and access the physical world around it to perform the daily routine tasks while the remaining 96 percent of the human mind is still closed and it this closed part of the human mind which has to be opened by various means to perform the special and desired tasks visualised which demands: logic, analysis, reasoning, experimentations, intuitions, convictions, beliefs and formulations of the understood to materialize the goals and objectives of life. Broadly, it is in form of: qualifications for skill development; training to use the skill to perform a given task with perfection and optimum productivity; education to develop the ability to take the relevant and wise decisions for self and others and wisdom to test the holistic and logical decisions taken along with the future anticipations and assessment in totality. All these together and many more such qualities, virtues and values gaining skills are collectively termed as *“Empowerment”*. In the words of Page and Czuba: *“the empowerment is defined as a multi-dimensional social process that helps people to gain control over their own lives in totality. It is a process that fosters power in people for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important”* [1,2]. In the same way the *“Women Empowerment”* refers to *“women’s ability and protection to make strategic life choices where that ability had been previously denied them”* [1,2]. Hence, to evolve and open the 96 percent of the closed mind of women along with deep rooted barriers of: *“Women as a Deity”*, women as *“Family Honour”* and *“Fear Psychosis”* among the men, the women empowerment is the epicentre to all the processes to achieve the objectives of life on this planet. It involves the commitment, policies and practices along with the schemes and projects to boost the status of women through literacy, education, training and raising awareness to know-how and protected by good governance and human rights [1,4] Hence, women empowerment is all about allowing and equipping women in all respect as par to the men, without any fear and hesitation, as their counter parts to make the life-determining choices across different issues in the family, social fabric and the country as a whole to participate in the fields of: economic growth, social development, good governance, environmental protection and availing the provisions of human rights for the protection of their own rights.

4. Conceptual Framework of Sustainable Development:

Question is: what is meaning of *Development*? The given block diagram in Fig. 1, represents the complete outlook about the meaning of development. The Natural Development is always there in the whole universe as the law of nature but conditioned as to always move in the forward direction with time with crystal clear objectives of its own for attaining higher and higher dimensions of most stable equilibrium. During Natural Development in nature, the ecosystem conditions in form of environment of a topography change and it is these changes emerge in form of challenges proposed by nature to mankind to address them for their survival. Becoming the smartest product of nature, human being is gifted by the nature an intrinsic characteristic of not to surrender. This natural empowerment of human being gives strength and logic to fix the challenges imposed under Natural Development and attempt to find the Sustainable solution not the Lopsided Solution. Why not Lopsided Development? It is because under this humanity is benefited but at the cost of the environment of the topography. In this communication we are defining as *Human Development*. The Human Development is a dynamic word and its meaning has to be understood in relation to the dynamics of the challenges ahead imposed by the dynamics of Natural Development. The deep and broader analysis of the cause-effect relations in broader perspective and complete outlook emerges today as *Sustainable Development*.

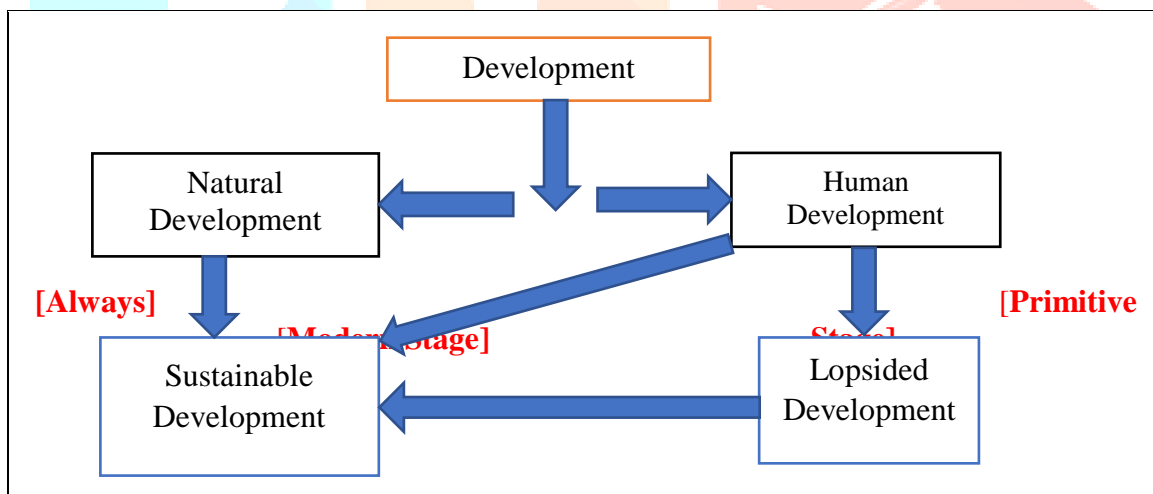


Figure 1: Block diagram of Sustainable Development

Till the first half of the 20th century human effort was directed and dedicated towards development without any specific direction and any particular focus except the research in science and its applications to become first among equals at any cost. Progress in arms and ammunitions was observed to be in the frontline. But, the bitter experiences of this invoked to be safe and altogether. This materializes during the period of 1950s to 1960s, in form of the focus on the *economic growth* and *productive capacity* of a country [1, 2, 3]. The impact of human efforts due this focus yielded tremendous growth but at the same time the assessment of economic growth and productivity observed the unexpected fact that there is a creation of gap between have and not-have and termed as the rich and poor. This disparity in capital distribution in 1970s, incorporated the focus to equity matters too in form of *Social Development* and *Income Distribution* along with the economic

growth and productive capacity [1,6,7]. In the same period, it was also noticed that the development consisting of: economic growth, productive capacity and by distribution of income to fill the gap under social development are not in isolation from the environment in which the developed society is living and will live. So, within the development strategies and policies the *Environmental Protection* came into picture as the most important component of development because of adverse impact of economic growth and industrialization on the environment [1,6,7]. This invited to redefine the meaning of Human Development under human effort to attain the better life standards and ease of life but not at the cost of environment and the equilibrium of the ecosystem. As shown in Fig. 1, the Human Development shifted the path of progress from *Lopsided Development* to *Sustainable Development* under which the use of science and technology is assumed to be directed attain the quasi-static dynamic equilibrium among: *economic growth, productivity, income distribution, social development* and *environmental protection*. Since life is a continuous process and it is the full right of coming generations to live and lead their life without any question mark to forefathers regarding the resources on this planet in all respect as life giving forces, life supporting elements and life leading ingredients. Incorporating this broader view of life and its continuity and converging past and future to present state of actions, the most frequently cited definition of sustainable development is: ***“the development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs”*** [1,7]. So, by the end of second half of the 20th century, the concept of Homan Development was replaced by the more sophisticated concept in form of Sustainable Development in which the paramount importance is given to Environment Protection and Future as proudful at least as present. So, by the end of 20th century, the concept and importance of sustainable development was understood, accepted and applied in making the policies and their use in formulation of new projects under the guidelines of sustainable development. At this stage, the basic pillars of sustainable development were identified as:

- Economic Development
- Social Development
- Environmental Protection

By Warth and Kopasnova in 2012, ***“the above facts were compiled inform of the goal, and indeed the ultimate test, of sustainable development as the convergence among the three trajectories of economic growth social development and environmental protection”*** [4].

In continuation, during the first decade of 21st century, it was realized that the basic three pillars of sustainable development as: economic growth, social development and environmental protection can not be realized into practice at the same time unless and until a *Political Development* in terms of security, good-governance and commitment and *Human Rights Protection* are realized in practice. So, the journey of the 21st century, the moto of sustainable development demands the integrated approach, in every project, among its all the five components as: ***“economic development, social development, environmental protection, political development and the human rights protection all together as one complete unit like the human body which is made of five elements: earth, water, air, fire and sky in their due equity. Any kind of unbalance creates the sickness of the unit as a whole.”***

Now, the question is: can we walk on this integrated path to achieve the sustainable development objectives by empowering men alone? The answer is definitely no. The view and outlook, about any event, of either gender is always in complete but at the same time together not only it becomes complete but yields the *Synergistic-Effect* which says that “*an added success, energy or power gained by two people or organizations together is better and more than the sum of results achieved by them independently.*” Since men and women are complementary to each other, when in the work-force, both are empowered with their due equity, the synergistic-effect is optimum and always positive. Since, as a law of nature, cosmos under its Natural Development, is always sustainable because of balanced empowerment with due equity to each of its constituents, there must be an unbiased empowerment to men and women towards human efforts with their due equity to achieve the sustainable development along with the advantage of synergistic-effect.

5. Concluding Remarks:

- The deep-rooted barriers regarding women empowerment as: Women as a Deity, Women as a Family Honour and Men’s Fear psychosis must be eradicated through education of men and their nonrelevant perception towards women.
- The men and women both are the two sides of the same coin. Hence there should not be any gender-gap and disparity towards assessment of infrastructure and opportunities to participate and contribute in any walk of life.
- Dynamics of ecosystem and the environment of each topography must be understood comprehensively to formulate the dynamics of social norms and cultural practices to avoid any gender-gap and disparity.
- Development in form of Natural Development is always there. The Human Development must begin form of Sustainable Development to conceive the notions of past, present and future as everything is present: Present of yesterday and Present of tomorrow as present of today towards any effort to progress.
- At any stage of: law-making, policy-formulations, project initiatives, socio-economic issues, good governance systems, the participation of women must be assured and safeguarded to achieve the goals and objectives of sustainable development.
- The women empowerment is must so that the unnecessary load of men will be reduced and by walking together men and women will give the synergistic-effect in every activity towards the sustainable development.

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