**Pakistan patriarchy and power gaps**

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The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for the development agenda 2030, were adopted as the part of national development by our National Assembly in 2016. In 2020, Pakistan was graded as 134th out of 193 member countries of UN on the dashboard of SDG index ( all 17 SDG included) . In the same index Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, India and Srilanka attained 139,109,96,117 and 94 positions, respectively. The top five countries in decreasing order of ranking are Sweden, Denmark, Finland, France and Germany. The UK is placed at number 15, New Zealand 16, Japan 17, Canada 21 , US 31 and China 48, in the list. This data was produced by a team of experts led by the renowned economist and a senior UN advisor Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs who has been ranked in a survey by The Economist in 2011 as amongst the world’s three most influential living economists of the first decade of the 21st century.

This rating of countries gives a probing picture. Should one conclude that democracy, freedom of expression, better image of human rights, enterprising culture, feminist leadership are not necessarily a guarantee or a recipe to achieve progress on all SDG? This, however, should not be construed as disregarding the value, relevance and legitimacy of any of the aforementioned principles of governance, values of a society and a state. In 2017, the United Nation’s High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development reviewed SDG 5 (gender equality and empowerment of women and girls) and identified several persistent areas of concern in its progress Gender disparity in agriculture, violence against women and girls; women’s under-representation in managerial positions; and women’s limited participation in research positions, with women representing less than 30% of the world’s researchers. disproportionate burdens of unpaid care and domestic work; and the gender digital divide were detected some of the primary chokepoints.

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The review underlined a lack of data on violence against women and girls with disabilities, ethnic minorities, migrant workers and women above the age of 49, who are frequently not included in violence against women surveys. Related challenges identified in the very review included: women’s limited access to sexual and reproductive health; child, early and forced marriage; and female genital mutilation and cutting. One of the key findings of the progress report on SDG published in 2020 by UN is that the Women and children are also among those bearing the heaviest brunt of the pandemic’s effects. Disruption to health and vaccination services and limited access to diet and nutrition services have the potential to cause hundreds of thousands of additional under-5 deaths and tens of thousands of additional maternal deaths in 2020. Many countries have seen a surge in reports of domestic violence against women and children.

The determination of those who matter both globally and nationally, towards gender inclusivity in the labour force, support girls’ education, and facilitation of those who are farthest and most in need towards equitable economic opportunities preserves its cosmetic contour. Different policies about gender equality and women in Pakistan are yet to be steered by empathetic leaders who really mean to create a conducive environment for such shifts. The interpretations and experiences of this much loosely used term-the empowerment, for a wider majority of marginalized women, girls and many other identities remain outlandish. A cursory look at the insults traded as “Jokes” about stress given by wives, immoral women in entertainment industry, ageing women derogatorily labelled as aunties, puma, cougar and what not that are still very much tolerated rather celebrated may be enough to substantiate this. Still trans, women and girls who are raped, harassed or face any form of physical assault are receiving judgments about their contributory negligence rather than understanding and required legal, medical including psychosocial support and economic independence opportunities.

The newer obsession with the conviction of reliance on male champions of gender equality initiative if not monitored with caveat may lead to constructing more dependency and shrinking spaces for women in leadership and technical cadres. Perhaps, it is the time to admit the compulsion of patriarchal plus elitist resistance and interference in all disciplines and business. Pakistan is progressing (though too slowly) towards having more and more pro-women and children legislation (mainly through the support of donors’ funds and technical expertise) in its legislatures. Even then, it is tiring to find critical mass of legislators and civil society representatives who are genuinely keen to tackle structural barriers to promote gender equality ,inclusivity and take the stories of subjugation to the power tables. One of the ways to bridge the power gaps is embracing nonconformist thought leadership, valuing the representation of local expertise and allowing creative energies for social justice in the society. This, requires mettle to impact fully challenge the status quo aka elitist supremacy and undying will to insist inclusion of different forms of oppression no matter how atypical or politically incorrect they may be, into mainstream parleys. If this cannot happen, then the dynamics and politics of power to reinforce and nurture gender discrimination remain preponderant, Social, legal, financial and cultural equalities among genders cannot be achieved by disproportionate presence of some women and men on social media, fascination with intricate infographics, hype of holding discussions on tragic issues of inequalities as fireside chats or photoshoots of well paid employees of powerful platforms with poor communities.

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