

Dialectics of Shifting Paradigms in Interpreting the Relational Implications Between Women & Technology

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Abstract— The present paper analyses the shifting paradigm of inter-relationships between man, woman and technology. The analysis is done by using my understanding and study in psycho-analysis, feminism, deconstruction, existentialism and social structuration. The main emphasis of the paper rests on putting forth ideas- which are to some extent radical- which highlight the complexity involved in the inter-relationships of man, woman and technology with relation to the dynamics of signification. The present paper can be treated as an attempt to uncover some of the “mute workings” of the symbolic order in which “logos” is enjoying a privileged position thereby marginalizing the feminine.

Keywords- *Psycho-analysis, Feminism, Deconstruction, Existentialism, Social Structuration, Inter-relationships, Symbolic Order, Logos.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The analysis of the current relational bonding between women and technology requires to be looked from various social, economic, psychological, religious, ethical, cultural and existential viewpoints. The topic itself involves a lot of complexity as the basic “situationality” of woman has to be redefined with relation to conventional modes of ‘knowledge’ of what a woman is.

The whole conceptualization of a woman- speaking from the point of view “logocentric” world-view- is something like sitting at the margins of socio-psycho and cultural squares. The mentioned statement carries more weight and significance when it is understood in terms of Eastern cultural codings, which, in turn, manifest meaning for individuals at a particular point of time.

The basic tenet of analysis relies on the scrutiny of woman in relation to women herself. The religiously oriented chanting words like “Know Thyself” remains a fundamental issue which needs to be properly established with the position of woman in society. The basic psychology of woman revolves around her own unconscious yielding to the utterly complex networks of the patriarchal order of world which is better known as logocentric conception of world in the philosophical circle of analysis. The made statement does contain certain amount of risk with respect to this “unconscious yielding” to the world and its practices as the construction of her whole being also

shapes her reactions, responses, feelings, attitudes etc. But even then, the introspective desire of knowing and individuating is always there in the core of an essential woman. And this makes her share the responsibility for her present position.

II. BACKGROUND

The desire for “actual recognition” of the self with relation to the society occurred in woman of 1960s in the West. The moment which started in the mentioned year is better known as Feminism. The movement originated in France and then spread in the rest of Europe and U.S. etc. The movement had a keen desire for knowing and realizing the self of the woman in the complexity-ridden social structures. Some important books for this new awakening are *A Vindication of Human Rights, The Second Sex, Mad Women in The Attic, The History of Sexuality, Ecris, Phenomenology of Perception* etc. to quote a few. Besides this, the whole of the modern philosophical thought centers on the discussion of the “self” and some important names in this direction are of Michael Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Helen Cixous, Toril Moi, Maurice Marleau-Ponty, Alfred Adler, Karen Horney, Jacques Derrida, Martin Buber etc.

III. DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS

The factor which stimulated this need for equality and authentic existence is basically due to the globalization, which again, is a product of the rapid industrialization and wide-spread technological developments. David Lyon calls this age as:

...the global age, the information society, the communicative era, the media age. [1]

The technology played the basic crucial role in providing a unification of thought across the world though technology is again a product of a desire for advancement, of exerting more power and attaining “God’s Plenty” to use Dryden’s phrase.

The impact of technology is keenly observed in the changing woman of the modern times. In other words, the proportionate change in the current woman has a distinct relationship with the technological advancement in the

globe. The “spatial shrink” has taken place in the world manifesting a unique availability of multi-cored ideas, feelings, views, intellectual ruminations and militantly blatant reaction-formations which are being cherished in the whole world. The biggest tool which has made this shrink possible is internet. Internet has played the most important part in converting this huge world into a (global) village. And with this comes a unique sharing of differentially structured ideological modes of thinking about existence in the present world order.

The latest research reveals that many inequalities are being faced by women in the fields of science, engineering and technology. Though some progress has been made, the inequalities remain and rooted in history. While new technologies have reduced the need for unskilled labor, social barriers prevent woman from receiving education and training needed to take advantage of new economic opportunities. Even in this globalized world, the woman is facing the problem of limited access of exposure and training in the technological sphere.

Another barrier is the belief that men are better suited for highly skilled tasks and have better ability to handle advanced technologies than women. This view persists in spite of visible achievements by women in science and technology. This view certainly reflects an innate desire of the world of men to go on exerting power on women under the garb of placing themselves on a high pedestal of esteem. Figure No. 1 explains the same structure.

The stated view automatizes the process of marginalizing women even on technological front. Figure No.1 represents that woman’s participation is again influenced by the patriarchal world. Marleau Maurice-Ponty explains this psycho-semantic bias in the following quote:

...in so far as the ‘other’ resides in the world, is visible there, and forms a part of ‘my field’, he is never an ego in the sense in which I am for myself. [2]

If women are to receive full benefits of economic development, then this age old criterion of defining a

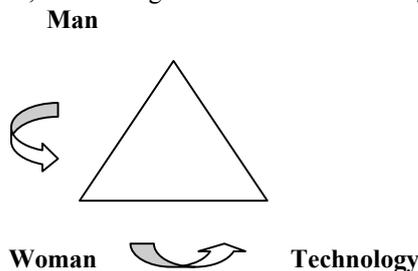


Fig. 1 Explains of the Inter-relational bonding between Man, Woman and Technology.

woman has to be radically changed. This needs to be ensured that women in the twenty-first century take their rightful place in shaping their societies and share in the

benefits of progress equally. The action is to be on two fronts: strengthening the role of women in mainstream science and highlighting the importance of the “knowledge” that women will bring to these fields. The attitudes towards women’s roles in science and technology need to be reshaped from the view of patriarchy and women herself. Historically women have played an important role in the technological revolutions but their marginalized status in society prevented them from gaining fame or benefit from their innovations.

The unique quality of women’s traditional knowledge and innovation is deliberately eclipsed by the logos. This includes the everyday processes of experimentation and adaptation in agriculture, healing, and other areas that have gone on for centuries in every part of the world. Much of this activity and potential is unrecognized by the scientific mainstream. However, the logical and consistent methods of problem solving and experimentation that are used by women, who are the custodians of much of this indigenous knowledge, form frameworks of understanding which can “inform” science and technology.

Individual efforts to strengthen the role of women in mainstream science and technology and to highlight the importance of women’s traditional knowledge will enhance and enrich our world in many ways. Women are likely to gain the most from processes that join these two areas and support them with policies that are sensitive to meeting to women’s needs.

IV. CONCLUSION

The basic argument of the paper is that the progress in technological sphere should also go hand in hand with the socio-cultural and psychological spheres. Starting from Aristotle’s claim that females are mutilated males, together with the biblical account of the sin of Eve; conceptually it has given rise to an authoritative tradition in which the weakness, irrationality and ineducability of women, the inconstancy, inability to control their emotions and lack of moral virtue, were all regularly cited and assumed as grounds for controlling them and excluding them from the ‘mainstream’ public realm. Female inferiority is the dominant note that sounds through the Western philosophical tradition. Long drawn out theological debates about whether woman is a human being, whether she is made in the image of God, whether she is a perfect creation of God or an imperfect version of man, and whether men and women are equal before God, all appeal to classical authorities, to the Bible and to the Church Fathers, and rumble on through the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance.

Each consciousness faces the world alone, and must create itself through its own choices by responding to the things around it, whether these are passive natural objects or other consciousnesses. In the gaze of the Other, a consciousness recognizes a point of view which is different

from its own and unattainable, a mark of its own incompleteness. At the same time, the gaze of the Other threatens to destroy it by turning it into an object. In response, the consciousness can choose to retaliate - to objectify the Other. But in doing so it destroys an external an external view of itself and must resign itself to the incompleteness of its self-understanding. The consciousness is therefore caught: it can dominate the Other, or live with the threat it poses.

If a "being" is able to achieve basic conceptual clarity of things in totality only then significant result-oriented contribution can be achieved in technological sphere. The basic pattern of society needs a new outlook which centers "I-Thou" relationships to use Buber's phrase.

REFERENCES

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- [2] Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. Phenomenology of Perception. London & New York, Routledge Classics: 2002, p.410.
- [3] Buber, Martin. Between Man and Man. London, Routledge Classics: 2002, p.18.

Buber defines the individual who cherishes "I-Thou" relationship as:

...the one who fosters genuine mutual contact and trust, (and) who experiences the other side of the relationship. [3]

The prevalent and existing "I-It" relationship cannot create the opportunities for optimum "individuation" of beings in a society. The qualitative expansion is needed holistically manifesting inner and outer growth in understanding and respecting the identity of the other. If the process starts from this inner illumination then the results will be having the real meaning speaking in overall advancement of society at a given point of time.