
UNIT 9 DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES AND REGIONAL DESPARITIES

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9.1 INTRODUCTION

Development emerged as an overarching and ensemble concept in the twentieth century and it was considered the rationality and legality of the age. But today, there are very few who accept it uncritically and without reservations. It is worth noticing that more often than not development was used to serve vested interest as every dominant group tried to interpret it to justify its ends. Consequently at the end of a long saga of narratives and discourses development emerged as a protean concept meaning different things to different people. For example development that promised freedom and emancipation from all types of tyrannies for all, in its inception had become inimical to human freedom at the end of the last century. In between these two extremes development changed its meanings many times serving different purposes ranging from the reason of the state, legitimiser of the regimes, as component of vision of a good society and above all, as shorthand terms for the needs of the poor and needy (Nandi 2000: 145). In this unit you will study about the developmental issues and regional disparities in India.

9.2 MEANINGS OF DEVELOPMENT

Development means different things to different people. Similarly issues of development have varied according to the meanings of development. In this sub-section you will study about the developmental issues according to different meanings of development.

9.2.1 Western Meaning

During the age of the Empires development meant discovery of new territories in search of market for their finished products and raw materials for their industries and their subsequent colonisation. It also meant spread and imposition of the European culture, civilisation and political power over other communities in other parts of the world. In achieving these goals they used both temptation as well as brute force. But as far as the colonies are concerned this was the beginning of the age of degradation, distortion and dependent development. Hereafter development symbolised the plunder and plight of the people in the colonies. This process continued till the end of World War II when some new meanings and interpenetrations were assigned to the concept 'development'. An important dimension of these new meanings and interpretations was the realisation of the need for the generation of data on the per capita real income as the basis for distinguishing developed countries from the underdeveloped ones. The following factors were identified by a committee for asserting the low level of development in the developing countries.

- Apparent lack of desire within the poor nations for material wealth and entrepreneurship;
- Poor system of governance and law;
- Low levels of literacy; and
- Inhospitable culture for development etc. is responsible for low levels of development in the developing countries.

As opposed to this, the committee also outlined the road map of the development "as the western path of development as the only path for rest of the world" to follow. Though it emphasised on development for peace, yet in reality peace and development meant hegemonisation and proselytisation as far as the poor countries were concerned. Now the development itself became a commodity for trade and export and in the process it inevitably meant war. The experiences of world history show that when development is transported and implanted into an alien culture it alienates the people and degenerates into social engineering, manipulations, manoeuvres and malpractices. When development neglects the internal dynamism and gets regulated through exogenous forces to fulfil the external demands it degenerates into underdevelopment. Hereafter, western modes of development penetrated at all levels and waged a war against the alter modes of existence and survival. It was different from the development undertaken by the Empires primarily because, though development had so far dominated people and also exploited them in many ways, yet it never forced them to snap their organic ties with their immediate socio-cultural milieu and physical environment. But hereafter the only mediating links between human beings and environment was through technology and market. Consequently, development meant Pax Economica which in turn meant Pax Americana or scarcity and war. It was founded on the fundamental assumption of spreading the culture of scarcity among opulence, which was also the hallmark of the development school of thought under Pax Americana.

9.2.2 Development as Underdevelopment

The aggressive approach adopted by the western powers particularly the United States of America and its Brettonwood institutions like the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Funds (IMF) towards the development did not go unchallenged. Though these western powers graduated from strong to stronger positions under the cold war and they also pontificated their success stories of development for peace world over, yet there emerged some theoreticians who championed the cause of the victims of the aggressive Pax Economica/Pax Americana. Unlike the aggressive western development theoreticians these scholars had serious limitations of inadequate and incoherent data and records. They had an undaunting task of assembling the facts and figures that were mostly qualitative, sporadically spread over a vast range of social-cultural and politico-historical spaces. These had a strong over tone of oral traditions, customs, values and cultural interpretations. Moreover, unlike the western development theoreticians who had to concentrate on the growth rates and per capita incomes, these had to focus on the misery, squalor and plight of the people mostly in the colonies. Though their voice of resentment was global in its application, yet most of the scholars that articulated these views most vehemently were from Latin America, Africa and Asia. Therefore, they were also called a Latin American and African School or Dependency School or Underdevelopment School.

As a result of all these the world got divided into two diametrical opposite poles i.e. the developed and the underdeveloped world. Though these are distinct in the characteristics, yet both share common historical experience and emanate from the one and the same processes. Some of the important characteristics of an underdeveloped economy are as follows:

- 1) *Transition to Peripheral Capitalism:* Most of the colonies in the tropical, subtropical and equatorial areas were subjected to specialisation in the export of primary products. Most of the products included in this category were related agriculture and mining activities. Structures of production relations in the colonies revealed that most of the owners were from the mother countries while large part of the blue colour workers were from the colonies. Countries such as Brazil specialised in the production of Coffee and Rubber, Malaysia in the production of Rubber and Tin, India in the production of Jute, Tea and Mining products etc.
- 2) *Extraversionism:* Though the colonies specialised in the production of the primary and semi-processed goods in the secondary sector, these products had limited demands in the domestic market. Large share of these products were produced to meet the external demands. Thus, the colonial economy was always regulated through the forces of world market.
- 3) *Hypertrophism:* It was imperative on the part of the mother country to create institutions in the colonies for the purpose of governance and uninterrupted supply of raw material and distribution of the finished products. Disproportionate growth of tertiary sector was done to achieve this objective. Subsequently service sector constituted the second highest share of employment after agriculture in the colonies. This resulted in the tertiarisation of the colonial economy and society.

The most significant contribution of the dependency school was in identifying the processes of underdevelopment and also the possible remedy for the same. They believed that there is no reprieve for the underdeveloped countries so long as they remain part and parcel of the modern

world system and continue to trade on the basis of unequal exchange. According to them the principal contradiction at the world level is between imperialism and the colonies and the possible remedy is revolutionary anti-imperialist struggles in the colonies. Moreover, they also emphasised that the national liberation movements in the colonies should simultaneously target the comprador bourgeois and world imperialism in order to overcome their underdeveloped status. Though there was a lot of merit in their articulations, yet unfortunately the happenings of the world history in the decades after 1980s gave a major setback to these postulations and they were compelled to look for non-revolutionary alternatives to social change. Subsequently development needed to be defined in new terms.

9.2.3 Development as Freedom

Twentieth century has been one of the most eventful times in human history. Humanity experienced rising hopes and abysmal despairs and dejections at one and the same time. It underwent a series of revolutionary as well as counter-revolutionary changes within a short span of time. Science opened new vistas of possibilities in human endeavour but at the same time some of its inventions placed human destiny in a state of utter helplessness and desperations. We are faced with scientific as well as religious fundamentalism. In a nut shell, our balance sheet of gains and losses become a matter of interpretations and positions. However, there are at least two clear agendas that emerged out of the upheavals of the last century.

Astronomic rise in secular uncertainties is the first and most important outcome. Today the developed as well as the underdeveloped worlds are gripped in the fear of uncertainties and risks. This is possibly one of the reasons that both science and religion have adopted aggressive positions as both accept use of force as legitimate means to assert one's claims.

Secondly, freedom has emerged as the minimum condition for the existence of every one. Freedom is considered one's ontological necessity and a birthright. People are ready to pay any price for their freedom. It is considered a minimum condition for one's social and individual survival. It is the talisman of modern times. People are no more contented with their head count alone they are demanding listing their names as their fundamental right. Fight for identity, democratic participatory governance has become the private rhetoric. It has reconstructed the content and power of legitimacy of every social phenomenon. Development as a policy and strategy has been influenced by these shifts more than anything else.

People everywhere want development to base itself as a minimum guarantee to their democratic rights and freedom they enjoy. A.K. Sen is one of the ardent protagonists of this view. In his book *Development as Freedom* he mentioned, "Expansion of freedom is viewed...as the primary end and principal means of development" (Sen: 2001.XII). He further adds that "...the removal of substantial unfreedom...here constitutes development" (Sen: 2001.XII). According to him development and freedom are inconceivable without each other. In his own words "development can be seen...as a process of expanding the real freedom that people enjoy" (Sen: 2001.3). He also tries to liberate development as a concept from its limited uses, per capita income and growth rate etc., that the social scientists particularly the economists have attributed to it. He prefers to use it in a broader sense by putting an integrated approach involving economic opportunities, political freedom, social justice, transparency in governance and protective security not only against the economic risks but also against illiteracy, diseases social

conflicts (Sen: 2001.XII). Development requires removal of the major sources of unfreedom such as “poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systemic social deprivations, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over activity of repressive states” (Sen: 2001.3). He expressed regrets at the existing global situations where unprecedented opulence of a tiny minority of population and countries is taking place at the cost of even elementary freedom to a vast majority of nations and their population. In another words economic development alone does not guarantee freedom and democracy. On the contrary, removal of poverty and providing adequate public facilities, social care, organisational arrangements for health care particularly epidemiological programmes; education facilities and effective institutions for the maintenance of local peace and order etc. are the other essential requirement for the success of both democracy and development. He also established deep inter-connections between freedom and development for two reasons:

- *Evaluative reasons:* the assessment of development has to be done in terms of whether the freedom people have is increasing; and
- *Effective reason:* whether the freedom people enjoy is reinforced and guaranteed through a sustainable agency.

Thus, development and freedom find new meanings in his formulations.

9.2.4 Development as Sustainable Development

Development, which has been claimed by different scholars as indispensable particularly for world peace, freedom, democracy and modernisation etc. belied all these claims. On the contrary, it symbolised ever increasing social inequalities, regional disparities, displacement of people and spread of disease and hunger globally, apart from putting humanity on the path of a long war against the environment and cultural pluralities. Therefore, a new set of scholars questioned the entire process and concept of development. They criticised the scholars from the underdeveloped school for their lop-sided treatment of development. While acknowledging their contribution they accused them of being circulationist in their arguments in favour of market relations at the expense of the class relations and modes of productions. They were equally critical of the development school for advocating the interests of a tiny minority while remaining myopic to some larges issues concerning development.

Recently there has been inclusion of some more issues in the ongoing process of development which has been criticised from one more angle. The most significant of these issues are related to environmental degradation, ecological crises and socio-ecological disasters. Though critiques of the modernisation and on going processes of development had been in the offing for some time, yet it was primarily the contributions made by M.K. Gandhi in India and Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in the west which were most significant in the first half of the last century. While Gandhi criticised it on the moral and ethical grounds, Horkheimer and Adorno were critical of the entire enlightenment project and the rationality paradigm, which they thought provided the basic impetus to the success of the western path of disaster embedded into development. But the most significant critique of development came from the Club of Rome in 1971. It was a concern from a group of scholars cutting across all disciplines about the on going development. These scholars felt that growth within limit can only insure safe and proper

development and unlimited growth like the present one is neither desirable nor sustainable both from the social and environmental point of view. Moreover, this in turn is also disastrous as far as the future of human well-being is concerned. Some other scholars like Schumacher also joined the issues later on. He reiterated the views expressed by Gandhi and emphasised on the need to build an alternative model and mind-set to the existing megalomaniac mind-set and value system. According to him the answer to the crises situation created by the existing giant industrial empires and global trading cartels lies in accepting and appreciating the Small is Beautiful. To achieve this Economics will have to liberate itself from the narrow considerations of profit maximisation and embrace the moral, aesthetic and other human values as the bases of economic endeavours.

The decade of the 1980s was also significant in the history of development because so far most of the critiques of development were made by the individuals at the local or regional levels but hereafter it came to be realised at the world level that the cost of development is increasingly outweighing its advantages. Ecological disasters like global warming, ozone layer depletion, emission of nuclear radiation and other types of pollutions have crossed the tolerance limits and if unchecked the future of humanity itself is at stake. It was felt imperative that so far development and its critiques have taken into consideration only human well beings and they have turned a blind eye to other partners in the entire development process namely the environment. First major and concerted efforts at the Global level were made after constituting a Commission on Global Environment under the auspices of the United Nations popularly known as Stockholm Conference on Environment. The proceedings of the conference were subsequently published in reports entitled “the Brundtland Commission Report” and also “Our Common Future”. It is from this conference that the concept *Sustainable Development* got its currency and was accepted as the most fundamental contribution to overcome the crises that were created by the ongoing development. The gist of the concept ‘Sustainable development’ in the report was in these words: “*Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the abilities of the future generations to meet their own need, improved living standard for all, better protected and managed ecosystem and a safer, more prosperous future*”.

Hereafter development was seen not only in terms of economic but also environmental costs. It was felt that development must adhere to minimum environmental standards and safety norms. This was one of the serious critiques of development as far as the developed world was concerned primarily for two reasons. Firstly, critiques of development made by the third world scholars so far were dismissed by the developed world as an anti-west propaganda or at best a strategy adopted by the underdeveloped south to fight and get more concessions from the developed north. Moreover, they also accused the underdeveloped school for creating an artificial divide between the north and south blocks without taking to its logical conclusions. Lackadaisical attitudes of the underdeveloped school proved to be counter-productive because on the hind site it worked as a much-needed adhesive force in uniting the highly heterogeneous developed world against the deprived third world.

Secondly, for the first time the developed world also felt threatened from the increasing environmental risks for which they alone were incapable to handle. Though, ever increasing depletion of resources was becoming the key issue in the sustainability of modern ways of life, yet more serious than this was the ecological and environmental crises that were resulting from the reckless exploitation and use of natural resources on the one hand and environmental

degradation like global warming, green house effects, ozone layer depletion etc. on the other. These crises were so serious that, they have not only placed a question mark before the on going processes of development but the future of human civilisation itself was also at stake. And it was indiscriminate in its effects irrespective of the rich and poor nation and population. Hereafter the developed world was compelled to think about alternative strategies of development and the concept of Sustainable Development was found to be the most appropriate to achieve that end. Hence, Sustainable Development was projected as the legitimate and ethical alternative to development. Subsequently, the United Nations Environmental Programmes (UNEP) convened many conventions on the theme world over. The Kyoto Convention on Climate and Earth Summit at Rio-de-Janeiro Brazil were most significant in this respect. The net result of these efforts was that the UNEP succeeded in outlining certain fundamental principles to achieve sustainable development. Moreover, in order to strengthen its project the UN Convention on Sustainable Development also identified a list of Social, Environmental, Economic and Institutional indicators to achieve the target (Butola 2004).

It is well over fifteen years since the publication of the Brundtland Commission Report and over a decade after the Earth Summit but the objectives envisaged in both of these remain illusive as far as their translation into practice is concern. There are various reasons for its failure but the most significant one is the adamant attitudes of the developed countries towards their consumption pattern and indiscriminate use of resources which has virtually sealed the practice of this concept. The continuing reluctance of the developed countries towards the degrading environment has placed a serious challenge before many in the world. The most vulnerable one are those who derive their livelihood as well as meaning of life and identity from their respective environment. As a result, the development has also been interrogated from the point of views of identity, deteriorating economic conditions and rising regional disparities.

9.3 DEVELOPMENT AS REGIONAL DISPARITIES

The experiences of the ongoing development activities at the local, regional, national and global levels suggest that development is essentially a differentiating activity. Scholars have suggested in the past that development in its initial stages results into regional and social divergences, it creates imbalance and inequalities but over a longer period of time these inequalities get reduced. It was argued that strong backwash effects and equally strong pull factors remain active in the initial stages of development but subsequently the trickle down, spread effects tend to remove the inequalities and development ultimately leads to even and all round development. Some of the factors responsible for the divergence convergence processes of development are:

9.3.1 Diversity as the Cause of Regional Disparities

It is argued that there are regions that enjoy certain relative advantages over others in terms of their natural resource endowments. Apart from these the relative advantages may also include rich resource base, favourable climatic conditions and easy accessibility in terms of its geographical location etc. It is argued that over time the relative advantages enjoyed by the developed region will reach a saturation point and there after it will remain no more lucrative and profiteering for the entrepreneurs to continue in their usual ways by restricting enterprises to developed regions

only. On the contrary, they will have to move towards the backward regions in search of market, resources, labour force and investment opportunities etc. This will increase the interaction between the developed and the backward regions and consequently the backward regions will also benefit from these changes and ultimately succeed in bridging the gap and balanced development will be a possibility.

9.3.2 Historical Advantages

It is believed that the division of the world into developed and underdeveloped parts or core and periphery is largely due to the historical processes which were set into motion with the onset of modern world system and capitalism. It is largely due to the replication of the capitalist structure at different levels that different regions have performed differently as far as their development is concern. There are not only developed core and backward peripheries at the global levels but also developed regions and backward peripheries with in the backward region and the structure continuously gets reproduced at subsequently levels. The legacy of colonial rule and particularly the regional and structural distortions that were introduced by the coloniser is largely responsible for inter and intra regional disparities in the colonies.

9.3.3 Diseconomies of Scale verses Agglomeration Advantages and Regional Disparities

Economic is all about profit maximisation. An entrepreneur always moves from regions of lower to higher economic opportunities. Economic opportunities may be in the form of rich resource base, ideal social and political climate, better accessibilities to market and raw material sources but it can also be in the form of availing certain agglomeration advantages. Meaning thereby, economic activities tend to concentrate at a few places in the vicinity of other economic activities in order to take advantages from the associatedness with other activities. Advantages like intra and inter sectoral flow of good, commodity and services along with innovation, diffusion and adoption of technology leading to ever increasing division of labour can accrue from the agglomeration. Apart from this proximity to market can also come due to similar reasons. Along with this often it is observed that a particular economic activity fails to come up at a particular place for want of a minimum critical and threshold limit to market, labour and other basic requirements. Hence areas which can meet the threshold limit attract development activities than those which fail to do so.

There are scholars who believe that lack of capital resources and rate of technological innovations, their diffusions and gestation period etc. contribute in the development as well as backwardness of a region. Regions that show positive performance towards these indicators develop faster than those are slow in their response. Differences in these, result into consolidation of regional disparities. There are some scholars who believe that lack of enthusiasm among certain culture groups regarding the use of modern technology and their reluctance to venturing into new enterprises has depressing impacts on the development impetus among some countries. As a result they remain at the low level of development. India is a classic case of the paradox of development and disparity. The next section discusses the development and regional disparities with reference to India.

9.4 DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL DISPARITIES IN INDIA

9.4.1 Colonial Impact

India has a long history of colonialism, the foreign domination and experiencing dependent development. Owing to its precarious position within the British colonial power it was subjected to colonial exploitation as well as disarticulations in its economic, social and regional structures. Uneven development was deeply entrenched into the very process of social formation and its remedy also lay in the structural transformation. Though India fought a prolonged struggle against the colonial domination, yet it also avoided addressing the issue of structural transformation. Consequently nothing much was expected after the independence of the country. In place of taking such a radical step India pursued a path of mixed economic development. This resulted into further consolidation of regional disparities and uneven development. Though regional disparities are pervasive and they are well pronounced in every aspects of our social life, yet the most significant articulation of these is found in the process and level of human development in India. Regional disparities in Human development epitomises the totality of social inequalities and regional disparities in India.

9.4.2 Levels of Regional Disparities in Human Development

Welfare and well-being of its citizens is the sole aim of development in any country. Human development is “*a process of enlarging the range of peoples choices- increasing their opportunities for education, health care, income and employment and covering the full range of human choices from a sound physical environment to economic and political freedom*”. Thus human development constitutes the core of every development project. Though most of the countries including India remain committed to this aim irrespective of differences in their approaches to achieve the desired objectives, yet the real issue of human development continues to remain a matter of intrigue as far as its translation into practice is concern. There are certain regions which show high levels of human development while there are others that occupy the last position in the scale of development. India is a classical example in this respect. The following table shows ranking of Indian States/Union Territories on the scale of development.

Regional Disparities in Human Development in India

States/Uts	Value	Rank
Chandigarh	0.674	1
Delhi	0.624	2
Kerala	0.591	3
Goa	0.575	4
Andaman & Nicobar Is.	0.574	5
Pondicherry	0.571	6
Mizoram	0.548	7
Daman & Diu	0.544	8
Manipur	0.536	9

Lakshdweep	0.532	10
Nagaland	0.486	11
Punjab	0.475	12
Himachal Pradesh	0.469	13
Tamil Nadu	0.466	14
Maharashtra	0.452	15
Haryana	0.443	16
Gujrat	0.431	17
Sikkim	0.425	18
Karnataka	0.412	19
West Bengal	0.404	20
Jammu & Kashmir	0.402	21
Tripura	0.389	22
All India	0.381	
Andhra Pradesh	0.377	23
Meghalaya	0.365	24
Dadra Nagar & Haveli	0.361	25
Assam	0.348	26
Rajasthan	0.347	27
Orissa	0.345	28
Arunachal Pradesh	0.328	29
Madhya Pradesh	0.328	30
Uttar Pradesh	0.314	31
Bihar	0.308	32

Source : National Human Development Report 2001; Planning Commission Government of India, March 2002, New Delhi.

From the above table the following conclusion can be arrived at:

- Smaller states and union territories have recorded higher levels of human development than the larger states. This is indicative of the fact that in a largely state-sponsored and development-oriented economy like India, the large size as well as population of the administrative unit prove to be a deterrent as far as human development is concerned.
- States and union territories that have experienced development of basic infrastructure in the field of education and health facilities through the activities of voluntary organisations, non-governmental organisation and Missionary etc. have recorded higher levels of human development.
- Economic development is considered to be the basic requirement for better human development. But the experiences of different states of India indicate that in order to attain

higher levels of human development mere economic development is not sufficient. States that show remarkable performance in the field of industrial and agricultural development have failed to register significant achievements in the field of human development.

- Certain communities may be laggard in terms of showing economic development and consequently form the geographical as well as the economic periphery of the country but they are very much part of the core as far as human development is concerned.
- There is a long way to go before India can match with other south Asian countries in terms of human development.
- To improve its current low position among the community of nations India will have to concentrate on development in the major states like UP, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam and Andhra Pradesh, etc.
- For the larger state the Kerala model of development could be improvised to the state specific requirements.
- The lower position of high-tech states like Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka is an eye opener to the policy planners as well as advocates of privatisation, liberalisation and globalisation. In other words technological superiority and excellence is no guarantee for human development. On the contrary, rich socio-cultural capital as well as vibrant and vigilant civil society can be a definite guarantee for the same. This is at least evident from the example of Kerala.

9.5 SUMMARY

To conclude, it can be said that the concept development assumes different meanings to different people in varying contexts. It has served various purposes at different point of time. But its use as the basis of state policy and ideology during the age of empires and particularly under the hegemony of American imperialism had proved detrimental to human progress, social well-being and environmental sustainability. Unilateral approaches to development practiced so far by the dominant world powers have resulted into division of world into to opposite camps along with displacement of people and degradation of our environment. Development for hegemonic control has also resulted in increasing social inequalities and inter-regional disparities. These are some of the entrenched cost of development that country like India can ill-afford to neglect. Prolonged uneven development among different regions and states of India has posed a serious challenge before its unity and integrity. Therefore, it is imperative to address the issues related to development in right perspective and in the interest of common good.

9.6 EXERCISES

- 1) Identify the major developmental issues according to different meanings of development.
- 2) What conclusions do you draw about regional disparities in India?