

Development and Patronage

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Introductory Essay

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The predominance and consequences of globalisation 'from above' compel us to raise fundamental questions, the answers to which (with the further implication that these are 'universally' applicable) have long been taken for granted: questions that could not and cannot be answered through the prism of old paradigms, questions which do not even interest the powerful, for they are 'less curious than the powerless ... because they think they have all the answers. *And they do*. But not to the questions that the powerless are asking' (Kumar, 1996:2). Yet the paradigm and practice of the powerful still prevail: the chariot of modernisation and industrialisation is galloping ahead at an alarming speed, the market has broken through the walls of the previously impenetrable fortresses of nature and of indigenous peoples: the Amazon, the Mekong, and now the Nile. The world has surrendered to the universal mode, to the dominant paradigm and discourse on development. And it is precisely the validity of this discourse that we will explore here: its ethics, and whether or not it answers the many questions that humanity is raising.

The dominant discourse

The dominant paradigm on development is based on the science and technology whose power and influence was made possible through military might, colonisation of the South, domination and occupation, violence against women, and destruction of nature and the environment. Very few people question whether this science is ethical and natural, which is why the dominant discourse on development and its various related facets also goes unquestioned. The very framework of our intellectual development, which has been informed and shaped by the same dominant discourse, does not permit that. The South has also yielded to this discourse, this world-view or cosmology. As Kumar aptly put it:

The 'South' has, for too long, accepted a world view that has hegemonised its cultures, decided its development model, defined its aesthetic categories, outlined its military face, determined its science and technology, its nuclear options. A cosmology constructed of what has come to be known as 'universal' values; a cosmology whose philosophical, ideological and political roots were embedded in the specific historical context of the culture of the West (ibid., p.3).

Without necessarily implying that these are the antithesis of the dominant paradigm, the corollary is that the existence of various knowledge systems -- sciences if you like -- must be recognised, along with the acceptance that Northern science is just one such knowledge system, and not *the* science, *the* paradigm, and *the* discourse.

The subject in the process of social development must be people, for the essence of development must be to improve people's standard of living. A change for the better first of all implies the consent of the people. What constitutes a *better standard of living* must be defined by the people themselves. However, people have until now often been dragged into a definition and measurement of the process of 'social development, using the yardstick of

Northern values. Consequently, people's own social and traditional organisations have been seen as archaic (if not as actually fettering development), traditional values as backward, and their knowledge systems as 'unscientific'. People were expected and even taught to abandon their traditional organisational systems, their values, and so on. In short, changing their identities was the precondition for the kind of 'development' prescribed by the North. Thus, people's authentic institutions or associations -- the family, councils of elders, religious institutions, credit associations, their values and customs -- were (and still are) supposed to be written off and replaced by alien 'modern' forms.

Development revisited

What, then, is development? What does it mean? Who defines it? What are the criteria used to define development or under-development? And what are the yardsticks (and whose are they?) used to determine whether or not a given society is 'developed' or 'under-developed'? These are crucial questions that urgently need to be raised at this historical conjuncture, in a world whose very existence is threatened by the alarming way in which its ecology and environment are being destroyed.

Another factor is the collapse of the 'development' models that were attempted in the South, compounded by the post-Cold War social amnesia in the North. Since 1949, when the term 'under-development' entered the official discourse, development has always been one-sidedly understood to mean economic or material growth. The UN and other international bodies, as well as political establishments and academic institutions, took this skewed definition for granted. Some went further still, pointing to the 'indicators of development', and taking GNP as the principal, if not the only, such indicator. In a nutshell, development = modernisation = industrialisation.

The Northern notion of development has characteristics that derive from its own historical evolution -- starting with the industrial revolution and colonial expansion -- and so has cultural and ethical foundations that are peculiar to the North. This evolution and the resulting cultural and ethical foundations are either absent from, or quite different in, the South. Prior to colonialism, Southern peoples had various political, social, and economic organisations, each based on their own cultural and ethical foundations. These differ significantly from those of the North. At the dawn of colonialism, however, Southern identities were forced to change in order to satisfy the economic and political motives of the colonial powers. In a compelling deconstruction of the Northern discourse on development, Gustavo Esteva notes:

When the metaphor returned to the vernacular, it acquired a violent colonising power, soon employed by the politicians. It converted history into a program: a necessary and inevitable destiny. The industrial mode of production, which was no more than one, among many, forms of social life, became the definition of the terminal stage of a unilinear way of social evolution ... Thus history was reformulated in Western terms (Esteva, 1992:19).

Or, as Sailendranath Ghosh has it,

countries which ought to be regarded as maldeveloped -- which waste resources and degrade man -- are called developed on account of their elitist consumerism, military power and

technology for maximum exploitation of man and Nature (Ghosh, 1988:43).

When the term 'under-development' was coined after the second world war, it essentially reinforced the hegemonic content in the Northern beliefs and definitions of what 'development' is about. But what about the values in other cultures? What are the definitions and indicators of 'development' in the South, in other social forms? Are material abundance, economic prosperity, or technological 'advancement' the only indicators of 'development'? What about richness in human values as reflected in family, social, gender, racial, and ethnic relations? In many (pre-industrial) Southern cultures, there are indeed social and ethical values that are considered to be proper norms in a human society, and which could just as well be taken as indicators of 'development'. There is no point in pitching the values of the North ('developed'(?), industrial, rich) against those of the South ('under-developed'(?), pre-industrial, poor), or *vice versa*. Inasmuch as the North seeks recognition and respect for *its* values, similarly it must respect and recognise those of the South. Dichotomies need to give way to mutual recognition, though without denying the universality of certain human values which are pertinent and central to human development: values such as gender equality, liberty and the right to free expression, ethnic equality, and harmony among peoples.

In this respect, despite its weaknesses, the *Human Development Reports* published annually by the UNDP since 1993, and the Human Development Index it uses to indicate levels of 'development' country by country, are quite a break from the previous discourse on the determinants of development indicators. It constitutes a major breakthrough in the process of re-thinking development paradigms. If dichotomies are to be avoided and recognition of values in all cultures is to prevail, development should be taken as a totality of people's material well-being on the one hand, and the flourishing of ethical and cultural values on the other. Can one speak of 'development' in terms of material abundance, if this is accompanied by ethical and cultural impoverishment? And *vice versa*? Ethical impoverishment is worth emphasising here, for it is the source of misunderstanding that often lead to conflicts among peoples.

Globalisation

With the completion of the globalisation process, the formula development = modernisation = industrialisation has added one more element: 'marketisation'. Globalisation and 'the end of the Cold War' are not empty phrases. They signify not only the emergence of a uni-polar world dominated by the market system, but also the whole chain of changes that have resulted. These changes are occurring within the very structures of society, within the sovereignty of the nation-State in the South, with the emergence of new class fractions associated with and dependent on the global market system, and in a global political context (and UN system) dominated by the USA.

In concrete terms, certain social, political, and economic problems are aggravated as the result of the globalisation process and the predominance of the market. Poverty in general has been globalised, turning hundreds of millions of people in the South into sheer paupers, and rendering many millions of people in the North unemployed. In today's world, poverty is no longer the exclusive identity of the South: it is also widespread in the North. The feminisation of poverty characterises this globalised poverty, and is the other side of the same coin. The position of women in many parts of the world has worsened (as many UN reports

demonstrate), and violence against them has continued unabated, with the outbreak of wars and conflicts and the intensification of trafficking in women and sex tourism. Environmental degradation and the disturbance of the ecosystem have reached such alarming levels that the future of human civilisation is now seriously in question. Ethnic tension and conflicts have become the hallmarks of the late twentieth century, with a deterioration in the conditions of indigenous peoples everywhere. Complementing this crisis in the prevailing development paradigm, the imposed secularism of the nation-State in the South -- imitating the modernisation process of the North, in the name of 'development' -- has re-kindled certain traditional and local values that have in turn contributed to the spread of religious fundamentalism. The economic policy prescriptions (medicines!) and conditionalities imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have thrown millions and millions of people around the globe into poverty. *This is the reality of the world at the dawn of the twenty-first century: the reality of globalisation and the post-Cold War era.*

If the Northern modernisation processes that took place in previous centuries broke every national frontier through gunboat diplomacy, or through direct colonisation and occupation, the current process of modernisation -- peddled through globalisation -- has a different face. Today, it is the mega-financial institutions that impose their will through Southern governments and nation-States. From the tiny island of Fiji in the Pacific to Ghana in West Africa, the peoples of the South are subjected to the economic medicine of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) which make, among other things, devaluation of national currencies, privatisation schemes, and the withdrawal of State subsidies and State intervention in the economy absolute conditions for receipt of IMF or World Bank loans. The consequence of this is the integration and absorption of Southern national economies into the global market system, as well as the complete abolition of some public services, and withdrawals or cutbacks in overall public spending, government subsidies, and social-security systems. These cuts have seriously affected the condition of women, health systems, and public education. With the integration of their national economies into the global market system, countries of the South must then submit to the dictates or domination of the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs) -- the Bank and the Fund -- and now the new World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The South is also victim to the political 'rationale' of the BWIs. 'Political stability' is advanced without qualification as the 'precondition for development'. Examples such as that of the 'tigers' (Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan), Indonesia, and a handful of other countries in the South are cited as illustrations. Democracy and human rights are almost, in some cases, portrayed as 'luxuries' for the South. In other words, it is the powers in the North that know what people in the South need; and political issues such as democracy, human rights, and women's rights are luxuries that only the 'developed' and 'civilised' North can afford.

Such problems are further aggravated by the actual processes of globalisation, which are affecting mainly the peoples of the South. But what happens as a consequence of nuclear tests in the South Pacific or nuclear waste-dumping somewhere else affects people, and the poor in particular, everywhere. The trafficking of women and sex tourism know no frontiers. Nor does AIDS. Thus, globalisation has also made inter-dependence the reality of today's

world. The prevailing form of globalisation is that which comes 'from above'. Inter-dependence has, however, compelled many forces within civil societies the world over to explore ways of getting together in response to this process. Networks have been formed, fora have been opened, social movements have spread, and many NGOs are still emerging in many countries. This is a natural response by civil societies to the consequences of the policies of those who dominate the world today: a kind of globalisation 'from below'.

Beyond inter-dependence, globalisation has also brought new issues, new questions, and new problems on to the development agenda. What is crucial within the context of these emerging questions and challenges is the role that civil-society organisations in the North can play in constructing and developing a new and genuine form of South-North cooperation and solidarity. If it is true that it was not only a poor country, Vietnam, which defeated the aggression committed against it by the USA, but also the anti-war solidarity movement in the cities of the North and in the USA in particular, it is also true that the struggle against globalisation 'from above' cannot be won without the active participation of civil-society organisations in the North.

This has now reached the level of necessity in order to create a united political response to the reality of globalised problems. At the level of consciousness too, it is vital to go more deeply into contextualising the problems that are arising in the globalisation process, which are in reality the problems faced by oppressed peoples everywhere. It is crucial for NGOs, social movements, and other organisations of civil society to adopt such a perspective. Because, in developing a strategy, it has become imperative to analyse one's own particular problem from the global perspective, and the global problem from the local perspective. The reality of globalisation compels us to broaden our scope, to reinforce our consciousness and knowledge, and raise these to a higher level.

Development and gender

The contemporary world had never seen such a fascinating social awakening as it did in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly in the women's movement, and the emergence of feminist-inspired thinking and paradigms, which later led to the emergence of a gender perspective. Without doubt, this noble movement has contributed greatly to changing perceptions of relations between the sexes, however modestly, throughout the world. However, despite all the legislation of governments, the UN declarations and resolutions, and the global fora on women, the position of women has not yet substantially changed. On the contrary, according to recent issues of the UNDP *Human Development Report*, the conditions of women in many parts of the world have in fact worsened. Assuming that all other existing conditions remain unchanged, the condition of women will certainly continue to deteriorate.

Though the discourse on women's equality continues, the gender component within the wider discourse on civil society and social development must come to occupy a determinant position. 'Structurally', civil society is that part of society which is located outside the realm of the political power (the State). Women, both numerically and as those who have been disempowered since the dawn of history, constitute a profoundly important and organic component within any democratic civil society. The language and definition of the term 'development' must start with changes and improvement in the conditions of women, who are the most relegated -- yet crucial -- element not only of civil society, but of human civilisation

itself. If development means change for the better, its definition must start with what constitutes the better: a change and improvement in the condition of women. We have to start with the question: what must change? What is universal in this respect is the degraded position of women in society, both because their material conditions of existence are inadequate, and because of men's attitude towards women, and the attitude of women towards themselves. Patriarchy must disappear both from the minds of men and of women. The injustice, the physical and psychological violence unleashed against women, originate from and have their roots in patriarchy. Patriarchy is not just oppressive and exploitative; it is also violent. It comes under the guise of tradition, custom, culture, and even religion: all justifying the degradation of women and the violence against them. Consciously or unconsciously, this is violence by the community against women and, therefore, against itself. This is what under-development is, and it is precisely this under-development which is universal, from the Medina of Sana'a in Yemen to Harlem in the USA, from Cape Town in South Africa to Reykjavik in Iceland.

If we opt for a humane society, development and democracy must be defined and measured according to positive changes firstly in the *position* of women, and secondly in the *attitude* towards women of men and women alike. This is fundamental, for it constitutes a truly radical change. The most difficult thing for human beings to change is themselves: liberating themselves from the thinking transmitted from the past in the name of tradition. Development means that each man, among other things, should start thinking differently and in a positive way about the women whose lives are linked with his.

This should not be taken as an appeal for change in the direction of Western thinking, for in this sense the West itself is still under-developed. The position of women in the West and the attitude of society towards them is still deplorable, to say the least. In the case of Africa, this patriarchal and traditional outlook has been reinforced by colonial intervention, and now by the injection of 'modernisation' and 'modernity' through institutions such as the IMF.

Development and human rights

If there is one area where the dominance of the development discourse is glaringly obvious, it is that of human rights. The prevailing discourse on human rights is historically specific to the period of the European Enlightenment, with its ideological and philosophical foundations in liberal thought. Its material foundation is the private industrial mode of production and the market economy. Private interest, the interest of the individual, private profits, and competition were its creed. Equating with and restricting the concept of human rights simply to the right of the individual has its historic basis in the rise of capitalist industrialisation. This discourse is advanced by the powers that currently dominate the economic, social, and political life of the industrialised societies. As Corinne Kumar has rightly pointed out, the dominant discourse is and was 'a partial dialogue within a civilisation' (ibid., 11).

Today, the Western discourse on human rights has become the global language, having negated other civilisations, values, philosophies, and State systems particularly in Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Arab World, and so on, firstly through colonial conquests and now through the globalisation process. The values in most civilisations of the South that rested not only on respect for the rights of the individual, but equally on the well-being and interest of the collective on the one hand, and on respect for the environment on the other, were

scrapped by the expansion of industrialisation and the market. In much of the South, therefore, the rights and interests of the collective are equally important as those of the individual, since it is the collective and not the individual which plays the most decisive role in life in the South. This should in no way be taken as a defence of 'tradition', inasmuch as 'tradition' in this context is not being seen in opposition to 'modernity'. On the contrary, in 'traditional' societies, there are also patriarchy, violence, and repression that should be abhorred.

Human rights are, however, generally considered as being the agenda of the South. This assumption denies the existence of human-rights violations in the North. Yet human-rights violations in the North constitute a serious problem, as the capacity of citizens to live decently as human beings gets weakened by the day. There were forty thousand homeless people in Chicago alone in 1986, there is a seven per cent rate of illiteracy among Afro-Americans just in Mississippi, and the increasing problem of unemployment is regarded by the Chicago school of economists as insoluble. If a great many citizens of countries in the North cannot live as human beings because of want, hunger, homelessness, illiteracy, and other material needs, then what is this if not a violation of human rights?

Equality and partnership in development

One relic of the dominant discourse is reflected in what passes as 'partnership in development'. After the 1939-1945 war, the North was categorised as 'developed' and the South as 'underdeveloped'. 'Logically' it followed that it was the South which needed 'development', and that the North would help the South to 'develop'. This was somewhat tempered after the 1960s, and was followed by claims of 'equality and partnership' in the 'development' process in the South. The question of 'equality and partnership in development in the North' has never been considered, for the existence of under-development in the North has not yet been recognised.

However, globalisation 'from above' (of the market) has made inter-dependence -- something beyond solidarity -- a necessity on the part of the globally- marginalised, who are increasingly being made dispensable for the sake of industrialisation, expansion of the market, and 'modernisation'. Those who are involved in the development process, in the struggle against poverty, against violence against women, against the destructive exploitation of the natural environment increasingly realise the inter-dependence of global civil society. This has been translated into the formation of various global and regional networks and fora. There is much hope inspired by this greater degree of contact within global civil society, the process of globalisation 'from below'.

However, this global civil society is a conglomeration of great diversities. There is a long way to go before a unity of social action can be achieved. One such constraint is the lop-sided view concerning equality and partnership in development. Contemporary inter-dependence has meant that a development project has changed from being the concern of a given locality or region into being of wider concern to global civil society. For example, the social movement against French nuclear tests in the South Pacific is no longer the concern only of the people of the Pacific; an environmental project to preserve the forests in the highlands of Ethiopia has positive impact in the Sahel as a whole; and so on. The fight against material poverty in the South also has a positive impact on the North. Such inter-dependence renders

the 'donor:recipient' dichotomy obsolete. Partnership in development is no longer an expression of solidarity, but has become an imperative: equality between 'donors' and 'recipients' is now an absolute necessity.

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