Development and Underdevelopment

* R.P. Singh

Introduction

We begin here with the view that every political system attempts its best to bring about large scale change in the desired direction. In pursuance of its objective, it exploits available resources to the maximum extent in a centralised or coordinated manner. This aspiration for change through institutional means is the essence of the concept of development and policy formulation for development and its implementation is a major task for all the governments. The poor countries, for their speedy economic growth mostly depend upon the promised help of the rich countries. Such movement for development is, in fact, enshrined with some values for overcoming human sufferings. The most widespread human suffering are malnutrition, poverty and diseases. In positive terms some advocate a commitment to development that transcends the limiting terms of economic growth to embrace such features of social justice as equality of opportunity, full employment, generally available social services, equitable distribution of income and basic political freedoms.

Development: Concept and Definition

The concept of development generally denotes some sort of an ‘advancement’ in the positive (desired) direction.

* Dr. R.P. Singh. IGNOU, New Delhi
In the societal context, it is referred to as progressive transformation of certain aspect of a given society. The idea of development as such has found expressions in the writings of the founding fathers of social sciences. The theories of development advanced by political economists and evolutionary sociologists have been shaped in the context of radical changes, which have taken place in the European society. Development after the Second World War has been the primary concern of the newly independent nations to meet the hopes and aspirations of their people. Hence, the issue of development and underdevelopment in recent times has achieved special significance because of conflicting claims of rival socio-economic and political systems.

**Economic Development**: Some economists have used the concepts of economic growth and economic development interchangeably. The economic growth refers to the rise in per capita income while economic development refers to the rise in income and changes in economic and social structure. Thus economic growth and the economic development refer to quantitative and qualitative aspects of development, the former being quantitative and the latter qualitative in nature. The themes of economic development as pointed out by various economists move around two central issues: i) Capital formation and ii) technical progress. Technical progress generally promotes capital formation and capital formation encourages technical progress.

Economic development of the society alone cannot raise the living standard of the society as a whole. The process of distributive justice are quite significant for ensuring a fairly balanced development of society. In this context state becomes an effective instrument of political development and legitimizes economic and social institutions and their networks. The model of economic
development which takes it for granted that social development will follow it, does not prove appropriate. Thus emphasis shifted on political development.

**Political Development:** The ‘developing nations’ has more recently produced a small but growing body of scholarly literature which has established relationship between socio-economic development and democratic political development. Researchers have confirmed that there is in general a high, positive relationship between socio-economic development and democratic political development.

In the above discussion we have tried to conceptualise two basic processes of development, namely economic development and political development while taking into account institutional spheres and societal level in which these process operate. These two processes have no doubt developed the society in a very effective way but at the same time they have advanced disparity in the society. These are the fundamental problems which have diverted the attention of social scientists from particularistic development to societal development. The development of the society as a whole is possible only when the society develops socially, economically and politically.

**Social Development:** Social development is a process which can be explained only with the help of economic and political development. It is very much interrelated with these two. The concept of social development has been introduced to appraise the dynamics of the developing societies. Social scientists have enumerated the contents of development under various categories such as nutrition, shelter, health education, leisure and recreation, security and opulence level or under the categories like output and income, conditions of
production, levels of living, attitude towards life and work, institutions and policies.

To conclude, the term development is fraught with various conceptual and ideological issues. Therefore a review of wide range of theoretical positions existing till date is attempted. Now it is evident that with the passage of time, concept and meaning of development has witnessed a positional, theoretical and ideological shift from economic development to human development.

**Human Development:** The concept of human development has been introduced quite recently. This term is used in very broad sense. In it developmental activities are people centred and economic growth is a means and not an end. It protects life opportunities of the present and future generations and protects natural systems which is the basis of all life. The objective of human development is to create an atmosphere in which people can expand their capabilities and opportunities for the present and future generations can be enlarged. According to Human Development Report 1990, human development is a process of enlarging people’s choices. It is achieved by expansion of human capabilities and functionings. At all the levels of development the three essential capabilities for human development are for people to lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable and to have access to the—resources needed for a decent standard of living. The realm of human development goes further—essential areas of choice, highly valued by people, range from political, economic and social opportunities for being creative and productive to enjoying self-respect, empowerment and a sense of belonging to a community.
Human Development

**Human Development Index (HDI):** United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) gave serious consideration to the fact that in the centre of all developmental activities should be people and decided to bring out reports on yearly basis since 1990 encompassing human dimensions of development. The Report therefore, proposed a new measure of development known as the Human Development Index. This index comprises three indicators: life expectancy, adult literacy and income expressed in dollars. The component indicators and the computing process of HDI were modified in subsequent Human Development Report. There are three basic dimensions of human development in HDI to measure the overall achievements of the country. These are longevity, knowledge and decent standard of living. Thus Human Development Report may be considered as a modest effort to propagate that there is no automatic link between economic growth and human development. This significant difference can be observed by a glimpse of the ranking of the countries based on per capita income and human development index. Human development index apart from the per capita income included two other variables i.e. life expectancy and literacy rate. The variable like human rights and political freedom were already left out because they could not be quantified. Due to these reasons many countries with moderate per capita income showed a high-level literacy and higher life expectancy, while others with relatively higher per capita income performed poorly with respect to the other two variables.

The Human Development Reports are contributing significantly by discussing in sufficient details the role of markets, globalisation process and international
institutions promoting human development. The HDR 1999 has incorporated several new themes related to health, culture, environment and political democracy and stability.

**Human Poverty Index:** Human development index measures overall progress in a country in achieving human development. The human poverty index reflects the distribution of progress and measures the backlog of deprivations that still exists. The Human Poverty Index measures deprivation in the same dimensions of human development as the Human Development Index.

**Gender-related Development Index:** The gender related development index measures achievements in the same dimensions and variables as the human development index, but captures inequalities in achievement between women and men.

The gender empowerment measure reveals whether women can take active part in economic and political life. It focuses on participation, measuring gender inequality in key areas of economic and political participation and decision making.

**The Human Poverty Index 1:** measures poverty in developing countries. There are three variables used in it. These are the percentage of people expected to die before age 40, the percentage of adult literacy and deprivation.

**The Human Poverty Index 2:** It measures human poverty in industrial countries. Because human deprivation varies with the social and economic conditions of a community. Therefore, for industrially developed country, a separate index has been devised. In addition to social execution, it uses the same dimensions of HPI-1.
Factors Responsible for Development

It has been observed that the development of a country or region cannot be assessed meaningfully on the basis of enumeration of its known natural resources. This is why the underdeveloped world possesses enough natural resources but they themselves are not able to exploit it fully because of their technological backwardness. Sometimes institutional barriers also affect the exploitation of natural resources for the most effective development. But now underdeveloped countries are using measures of official policy to have control on them as much as possible. Human resources have contributed a lot in the process of economic development due to which social structure is transformed and new opportunities appear. But economic development and changes are not, as a rule, equally pronounced in all countries or in all sectors of economy.

Social and political tensions between different areas and different occupational classes exist and retard the process of development because it clashes with the old relationships based on long accepted status, customary rights and duties. Hurdles in the process of economic development also exist due to various problems like unemployment, social tensions, wage disparities, etc.

To conclude, major factors responsible for development are of two types – economic and non-economic. Among the economic factors more important ones are natural resources, infrastructure, etc. Major non-economic factors are socio-political in nature. Some such factors are communal harmony, education, empowerment of people and good governance, which includes certain functions performed by the government or other agencies closely controlled or supervised by the government. The maintenance of law and order, national
defense, control and supply of finance and the provision of education and health services are leading examples. Today good governance has become vital necessity for development. Even in developed countries these are required for effective government. In a developing country even the smallest increase in the capability of the state makes a vast difference in the quality of people's lives. Thus an effective state will lead to higher standards of living, in turn paving the way for more reforms and further development.

**Underdevelopment: Concept and Definition**

The realization that traditional theories of development have not succeeded in resolving the problems of poverty, hunger, health, etc. led to a search for alternative formulations. As a result, explanations of underdevelopment became the focal point of this thinking. The origin of underdevelopment theories are outcome of two distinct sources i.e. i) the theoretical debate within Marxism and ii) the experiences of development in Latin America.

In his book “Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America”, Andre Gunder Frank explains that development and underdevelopment are both necessary result and contemporary manifestation of internal contradictions in the world capitalist system. Economic development and underdevelopment are relational and qualitative. Each of them is actually different from, yet caused by its relations with the others. He substantiates his argument by stating that economic development and underdevelopment are the opposite faces of the same coin. Andre Gunder Frank considers underdevelopment as not merely the lack of development. He argues that before there was any development there was no underdevelopment.
Development and underdevelopment are related through the common historical process both have shared during the past several centuries and the mutual or reciprocal influences that they have had, still have and will continue to have on each other through history. In this process colonization has got an important place and Frank writes that colonial exploitation which was part of the early expansion of the mercantilist system may have made critically important contribution to the development of capitalist successors now developed members.

Thus this notion of development and underdevelopment is based on the concept of exploitation. It may be associated with the contradiction of one class and another, the exploiting beneficiaries and the exploiting contributors to the process of capitalist development.

Another eminent economist Gunnar Mydral defines development as “the process of moving away from underdevelopment” and characterizes underdeveloped country as one where there is “a constellation of numerous undesirable conditions for work and life, outputs, incomes and levels of living are low, many modes of production, attitudes and behavioural patterns are disadvantageous and there are unfavourable institutions, ranging from those at the state level to those governing social and economic relations in the family and the neighbourhood. They are considered as undesirable from the standpoint of the desirability of development, a characterization affiliated with vagueness, but definite enough to permit its use.

**Major Characteristics of Underdevelopment**

Underdeveloped countries generally refer to those countries or regions where levels of real income and per capita income are lower than the standards of North
America, Australia and the Western European countries. In the underdeveloped countries the fruits of scientific and technological advancement are not applied on large scale in the field of industries and agriculture. The underdeveloped world constitutes a group of nations with a diversity at two levels: i) national and ii) international. But with the passage of time there is shift in parameters of assessment of development and underdevelopment. Now these are assessed with human development index as discussed earlier.

There are many cities in these underdeveloped countries which have some standard of living, technical achievement and commercial sophistication as compared with that of the developed countries. Even some of the underdeveloped countries are more advanced than the developed countries from technological point of view.

Underdevelopment and its Relationship with Creation and Distribution of Wealth

In the underdeveloped countries, it has been observed that there is marked inequality in the social distribution of income. The trend is that it is increasing day by day. Samir Amin has compared various countries of the Third World and observed that the higher the average income is per head, the more marked is the inequality in income distribution. His finding is that for the whole of Latin America, the 20 percent of the population receives 65 percent of the national income. Same is true in the context of India also. In India, when we compare national income, rural income and urban income we find that the per capita income is increasing in urban areas while per capita income in rural area has not witnessed any marked change. The evolution of the
system in no way suggests that, by gradual expansion, this privileged stratum will extend to the whole population.

**Underdevelopment as Distorted Development**

In reality, increasing social inequality is the result of conditions of externally oriented development. It opens much bigger market for luxury consumer goods. The increase in elite privileged group causes an increase in the demand of luxury goods. And at one level the demand of luxury good will be durable. At this level, and taking into account requirements in capital, technicians, ancillary infrastructure, etc. for the production and consumption of these luxury goods, the process of resource allocation is distorted to such an extent as to undermine all possibility of decisive progress in the sectors producing mass consumer goods.

**Dynamics of Poverty and its Impact on Developmental initiatives**

Poverty is not prevalent only in a developing country like India, it exists in developed countries in varying degrees and different forms. There are conflicting estimates of poverty because of various concepts and methodologies. However, most of these estimates are based on mainly two basic parameters of calories norms and level of income to meet this level. It does not take into account other basic necessities of life. Poverty not only includes minimum calories intake but in broader sense, include many other basic services which affect the quality of life of the people.

The level of living of the majority of people has been the subject of great concern. Owing to hidden complexities
involved, poverty has been viewed from different angles by social scientists of various disciplines. The term poverty in general connotes deprivation or insufficiency or inadequate material needs, cultural, social, political and spiritual requirements of the people. But in reality poverty in India is treated as an absolute phenomenon. The needs are often expressed in terms of a basket of food items to meet the essential calorie requirements. The minimum income or consumption expenditure which enables one to attain the basket is poverty line.

**Relative and Absolute Poverty**

Generally the terms rich and poor are relative terms. In defining one the definition of other is used. A similar relative view can be used to compare individual or group within a country. Relative poverty will always remain, because some countries or persons will always be judged poor in comparison with others. In this sense it becomes an index of inequality than of poverty which is defined in terms of deprivation with reference to some normative standard of living deemed as minimum necessity for development of human personality. But to define poverty in this way is to view it in absolute terms, that is, with reference to a predetermined standard or norms. Absolute poverty refers to a level of living so low that it prevents normal development of human personality - physical, social and mental. Central to the notion of absolute poverty is the concept of poverty line which is used to demarcate the poor from the non poor.

In India a larger proportion of people in rural areas belong to the poor category compared to urban areas. Given the fact that about three-fourth of the population live in rural areas, the rural poor account for more than four-fifth of the total poor. "Poverty which is outcome of complex factors are basically rooted in insufficient
availability of natural and man-made resources related to the needs of population and their uneven distribution. Therefore for the reduction of poverty the requirement is the induction of more man made resources and their efficient utilization as well as distribution in a manner that the required benefits accrues to the poorer segment of the population”.

**Need for Alternatives in Development**

We have witnessed that with the passage of time a great shift in the core theme of development has taken place. It is from economic to people centred development, in a case like India which covers a very wide area with varied geographic and economic factors. The people of this country have different socio-cultural and religious backgrounds. Therefore, in a country like this the unit of development should be a human being.

**Gandhian Approach**

Gandhi was a charismatic leader of the Indian national movement. He had his own vision of Indian economy, polity and society. His attitude towards politics, economics and society was the outcome of his religious world outlook. His extraordinary emphasis on ethical aspects of economic behaviour has differentiated him from others in the understanding of economic issues. He believed that economic and ethical considerations were inseparable. Gandhi has tried to describe an economic ideal to strive for rather than simply an economic plan to implement. It has been alleged that to some extent his economic philosophy was neither impractical nor impossible. “It has certainly meant to apply to an actual society, that of rural India in particular.”
Man, Society and Development

Gandhi considered life as one integral whole. He was not prepared to divide individual life into water tight compartments i.e. social, economic, political etc., therefore, Gandhi was of the opinion that the goal of an individual and the goal of a society can not be in conflict with each other. Gandhi believed in the “Good of All”. Thus the goal of an individual and the goal of the group of individuals (it may be society, the nation and the family of nations) could not be different. They all should strive for one objective and cooperate to supplement and compliment each other to reach ultimate truth of life.

Human being was the nucleus of Gandhian philosophy. Other things move around him. Therefore, he/she must be in the centre of any policy formulation. Gandhian economic model has emphasised an ideal economic order where people could well be motivated. (Gandhian economics have usually focused attention on specific policy that he proposed i.e. opposition, to modern industrial production advocacy of village industries in particular the spinning wheels, and boycott of foreign goods). Gandhi had emphasised that human being should make sincere efforts to limit his/her wants or desires. The multiplication of wants will make a person subject to an unending sequence of desires. Such a process will not lead an individual to any sustainable steady-state consumption path. In this context Gandhi wrote, “man’s happiness really lies in contentment. He who is disenchanted, however much he possesses, becomes a slave to his desires. And there is really no slavery equal to that of his desires .....And what is true for individual is true for society.”

But Gandhi was not of the opinion that poor should be content with poverty but rather telling the rich that
uncontrolled self-indulgence could not make one happy. Gandhi looked on rural development as consisting in large measure of changing individual preferences. Individuals may be impelled towards unlimited wants not only by their own desires but also by the prevailing social ethos. To conclude, Gandhian development was based on man/individual and prescribed ethical value load to sustain human development from further deterioration.

Conclusion

In this chapter we studied the various concepts related to development. The concept and definitions of development have changed due to various socio-political compulsions and the emergence of new economic order in the world. Therefore, the central theme of development shifted from economic components to human components. We have also examined various factors influencing the process of development. In this chapter efforts have been made to describe various dimensions adopted for the measurement and ultimately in deciding the position of human development in developing and developed countries.

We have also studied in this chapter the concept and definition of underdevelopment and its relationship with development. In this chapter the concept of poverty has been discussed in detail in the context of development and creation and distribution of wealth. In this chapter we have also studied the need of an alternative in development. In this context Gandhian concept of development has been analysed which attaches prime importance to the development of human being and society.
References


