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Need For a Participatory Model of Development

SR MEHTA*

An attempt has been made here to critically examine the various perspectives of development. Of these, the dominant paradigm of 'Modernization' based on the capitalist path of development was found inadequate and weak for the development of the developing nations. Instead of development of new nations, this led to crisis of income and regional disparities, poverty, unemployment and underemployment, shanty living conditions, inadequate educational and healthcare facilities and population growth. In response to inadequacy of this paradigm, Latin American scholars proposed a framework of development for the developing nations, which is a derivative of Marxian perspective of political economy and recognizes the underdevelopment of new nations as a consequence of the development of the developed nations. These have been referred hitherto as the Dependency Theory or the World System Theory within the realm of the sociology of underdevelopment.

Of these neo-Marxian perspectives, the World System theory has been observed to come closer in understanding the influence of international capitalism as a factor of development or underdevelopment of a nation. However, this perspective also falls short of the expectation of the developing nations and has faced the wrath of both the Marxists and the non-Marxist scholars. It would be worthwhile to examine the critique on this perspective before we direct our attention to the need for the participatory model of development in the context of

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developing nations which has amply shown positive results in Mao's people's movement in China, Gandhian mass movement in India, Another development and its application in the Latin American countries as a result of Human Scale Development, and increasing involvement of grassroot organizations and social action groups through the process of conscientization, multiplying effect of electronic media, and diffusion of innovations as a part of development communication perspective.

However, let us first take up the critique provided by the Marxists and non-Marxists on the underdevelopment theory (dependency theory or its sister variant world system approach) Marxist scholars' argument is that in conceiving capitalism, the relations of production within the capitalist system have been ignored both by Frank and Wallerstein. In fact, they have confused capitalism with the existence of an economic system. Even no importance has been accorded to the factor of unequal exchange so crucial in productivity of its free labour force in the growth and maintenance of capitalism. As such, both the class formation and class struggle have been treated as residual categories in the analysis. The thrust on national and international contexts of class struggle has not been taken into account. This has compelled the Marxist scholars to emphasize that there is a need to consider the nation-State as a unit of analysis rather than the global capitalist system. This necessitates to consider class conflict existing within the indigenous social structure of the developing nations for the development purposes. Empirically speaking, even some of the Marxists observe that the underdevelopment theory has not correctly interpreted the empirical data on the development of the developing nations as development is taking place and capitalism is fulfilling its historical mission. The development problem is not due to their dependence on the

developed nations but mainly due to internal contradictions within these nations. The world system theorists studied relations of the 'core' with the 'periphery' but they focussed on the capitalist 'core' countries to the neglect of the socio-economic structures of the Third World and misinterpreted the nature of capitalism which was contrary to the expectations of the Marxist scholars (Harrison 1989).

On the other hand, the non-Marxists pointed out that the world system approach in tautological. It is argued that if formal colonialism was responsible for the under-development of the Third World, then it should imply that countries which did not experience colonial domination, should be more developed than the other parts of the Third World. However, this theory negates any such division because it believes that capitalism has penetrated every new nation, whether it experienced colonialism or not. These nations have been classified as colonies, semi-colonies or neo-colonies and even nations of Eastern Europe and China have been incorporated into the world system. It is further observed that every society, to a certain extent, is dependent on the other, so the dependency of the developing or the developed nations is not an issue of underdevelopment. Besides, we cannot ignore the non-economic linkages of the 'periphery' to the 'centre' as these are contingent upon the specific cultural characteristics of the developing nations. The world system theorists considered all social action and interaction and culture to represent some kind of objective economic interest and this is non-convincing. Moreover, non-Marxists like Marxists, argue that empirically speaking development can and is taking place in the Third World and it is closely linked with the formation of close ties with the 'core' societies. It is stated that as and when these ties are weakened, the underdevelopment of the periphery nations increases. Moreover, the

dependency theory fails to account adequately with the transfer of technology and the role of values and diffusion in development. These arguments suggest us to get back to the position which the modernization theory occupied (Harrison 1989).

In the wake of the above critique on the sociology of underdevelopment (dependency theory and world system theory) and earlier criticism of the 'modernization' paradigm, it is clear that none of these perspectives are adequate in articulating and managing social and economic inequalities in the developing nations. The debates and the counter debates in these perspectives are inconclusive. The gun or butter argument by development scholars, currently is, that there is a need to take into account the indigenous social structures of the developing nations including their political structures and the relationships of these nations (social, economic, cultural, political and military) with the developed nations, through development oriented bureaucracy and local leadership along with participation of people to relate development initiatives to their needs and aspirations. This should form the basis of a 'paradigm' for the development of these nations. This brings into focus the participatory model of development for the developing nations as the earlier perspectives (Modernization and Dependency and World System Theory) on development have provided only privileged roles to national elites (Mehta 1999). As such, people's movements through the mobilization of grassroot organizations and social action groups supported by NGOs in interface with local leadership and bureaucracy for encouraging development initiatives that suit to the needs of the people, remain a serious alternative for the development of the developing nations.

Before we highlight the essential elements of a participatory model of development for the developing nations, we need to understand the concept of

participation. Puri (2004) in her perceptive analysis of participation at the community level points out that over the years there is a greater agreement about the desirability of participatory model of local resource management, both by those who emphasize on participation as a means to achieve institutional efficiency, and others who conceive participation as a mean to realize the goals of empowerment, equity and democratic governance. However, recently the second dimension of participation has caught the imagination of academics and the policy makers because of people centred policies, civil society and social capital aspects associated with the participation than the first one. Despite it being a fuzzy concept, participation to some may simply mean membership in a group and to others, it may convey having an effective voice in the decision making process.

Referring to Amartya Sen's capability approach (the goal of the Public Policy approach is to enlarge a person's functioning and capacity to function and expand the range of things that he or she can do in his or her life), a distinction has been made by Puri between efficiency-based participation and agency-based participation. The former focusses on participation as an instrumental means to achieve the goals that may vary from institutional efficiency to the state-defined public interests while the latter emphasizes on the role of human agency in empowering those who are affected by policies and political change, besides providing opportunities that may promote an equitable distribution of costs and benefits among them, thus making participation a goal in itself.

In the historical context, we can look towards Aristotle who considered a citizen as one who is entitled to participate in an office and contributes towards deliberation or decision for the self sufficiency of the city or to other political scientists, who conceive of

political participation as a mechanism of communicating the needs and preferences of the citizens to the decision makers in the political system in order to bring pressure on them to respond. In the Indian context, Gandhi's concept of 'Gram Swaraj' and MN Roy's people's committees, come close to treating participation as an end to itself to promote participatory democracy based on community life and values. However, in the contemporary scenario, participation has to be viewed in the context of a liberal bureaucratic welfare state, the decisions of which determine, practically all the spheres of public as well as private life besides situating it in increasing process of globalized economy and knowledge revolution and of demands made through a political voice by marginalized groups and other excluded sections of the society. As such, participation shall have to be viewed in relevance with the role of the State to provide institutional structures to facilitate it besides that of global organizations like The World Bank and the global and local actors (NGOs) and research institutes and universities which generate global knowledge and identify the people who need to be included in the participatory process (Puri 2004).

For effective 'Good Governance', it is argued that two pre-requisites are essential. First, there is a need for active participation of the civic community in public affairs while the second refers to a civic culture which should bind participants together through horizontal relations of reciprocity and cooperation and not through vertical relations of authority and dependency. Further, there is a need to instill in the minds of the people norms and values that promote cooperation, solidarity and public spiritedness in terms of social capital to build up a social organization based on trust, norms and networks in order to improve the efficiency of the society through coordinated action (Putnam 1993). So, instead of 'top-

down' approach of the State for the development of the developing nations, the 'bottom-up' approach through involvement of 'people' was considered more effective in efficient development of new nations. There is, therefore, now a greater stress laid on social capital to shape or influence the development initiatives for mobilizing the already existing local social networks to achieve varied policy goals (Rankin 2002).

Apart from the institutional agency-based efficiency perspective on participation, as highlighted above, another approach which is applicable as a part of the democratization process to include and recognize the marginalized groups of society as collective identities for furtherance of democratization of the system which provides interventions of a nature that suit these groups, is based on the Amartya Sen's concepts of entitlements and capabilities. Sen's argument is that the normative goal of empowerment (enlarging one's capacity and capability to function), equity (of both costs and benefits) and human agency is much more significant than the factor of institutional efficiency in the development milieu. The basic objective of development is to expand human capability referred as the alternative combinations of functionings from which the person can choose out of a range of options in deciding what kind of life he or she wants to lead (Dreze and Sen 1995, 1999). It is in this sense that development policies should view people as an end rather than as the 'means of production' (Dreze and Sen 1995).

However, participation whether conceived in equity sense or based on agency interventions highlights significantly the idea of community and the local. Both these perspectives seem to ignore the fact that any community has internal differentiation, competition and conflict and power differential within its space. This has led to criticism of the social capital and efficiency-based participation approach on the

count that the proponents of these schema have not taken into account the elements of bad social capital existing in the community that is the paradoxical co-existence of trust, cooperation and reciprocity with coercive, hierarchical and exclusive communal formations. They also seem to have ignored the fact that in most situations, collective action at the community level is circumscribed by ascriptive affiliations such as caste, religion and tribe. On the other hand, the capability theory of participation is better equipped to withstand the ideas of difference, while dealing with empowerment, equity and voice. In this regard, Sen's argument is that a person is exposed to poverty when his or her exchange entitlement is insufficient to meet his or her basic necessities of life, which are often determined by his or her gender and class status in the society. But, in spite of that, issues of difference and power inherent in communities affecting their participatory goals for development are not given much attention. These are, rather, seen as impediments towards people-based development, but are likely to disappear, once the participatory development is institutionalized. In short, both the perspectives on participation (social capabilities more than social capital) have recognized that inequalities, social hierarchies and discrimination are realities confronted in day–to-day and face-to-face relations and interactions within local communities (Puri 2004).

After peeping into the window of theoretical formulations on participation as given above, it may be desirable to examine the operationalization of the same in the development process. It is now a very well recognized fact that in a participatory model of development, people have to be set in the centre-stage of development. The cultural perspective specific to a nation demands that people's needs, aspirations, motivations and inclinations should be given the utmost considerations. In this context, although it is desirable to evaluate the value preferences of the people, yet it is a difficult task to make an assessment of the people's preferred social activities. In the context of the developing nations, there is a need to empower people, especially the weaker sections, so that they are capacitated socially and psychologically to initiate action on their own in relevance with their own needs and interests in a more effective and efficient manner. Felt needs of the people should be given priority over the real needs of the planners, by making a beginning with the overlapping needs, that is, the needs that overlap the felt and real needs. We need to involve people not only in designing but also in the implementation of the development schemes to promote agreement, co-operation and interaction not only in between the beneficiaries but between them and the implementation agencies so as to reduce delays, increase service output and minimize costs (Paul 1987).

Basically, three steps have been suggested in evolving a strategy of participation of the people in the development initiatives First, there is an urgent need for conscientization of people through information sharing and consultations. A large segment of the population, especially the marginalized groups, have absolutely no idea of the type of problems that need developmental attention and tackling. They need to be made aware, conscious and given relevant information and provided knowledge so that they could assert their voices and make suitable demands through appropriate political means on the governing and implementing agencies. Secondly, people must be involved in various decisions on issues concerning them to undertake development initiatives. Decision making is a complex phenomenon and whether taken at the individual or collective level, is based on maximum utilization expectation of people from the actions involved along with the likely consequences that may result from such actions. As such, we need to weigh pros and cons related to such actions within the social organizational and value framework of the community or society. This would necessitate analysis of the community or societal social structure including power structure and leadership patterns, norms, values and sanctions which may retard or promote development initiatives or diffusion of innovations, influence patterns through caste and class affiliations, gender roles and equity dimensions, land-labour arrangements and relationships, family structure, religious adherences of people etc. In short, a thorough analysis of the community social structure can prove instrumental in involving people and helping them to take decisions on the specific development schemes in relevance with their needs (Mehta 1999).

Before taking up the third step, an empirical model for Community Involvement by Christopher and his associates (1957) based on the analysis of the existing social structure of the community, is described briefly. Analysis of the community social structure brings out the convergence of interest of those members of the community that have appropriate sentiments related to social order, beliefs and rationally calculated purposes in regard to a problem which is also rationally perceived so by the agency involved to tackle the same. The next step is to establish an initiating set based on the convergence of interests to begin the action process by all those who can or have right to call upon each other and have some obligation in regard to each other through relationships which will provide a basis for them to cooperate and work together for the realization of some of the common goals or purposes. After the establishment of an initiating set, it must be legitimized and sponsored. In the case of a voluntary action, authorization of action should be diffused through out the community, that is, there is a need to have access to

groups, formal social institutional setups, and other influential persons whose sponsorship or approval can legitimize an action. This should be proceeded by the establishment of an execution set having personnel who need to work through various channels such as community organizations or groups, influentials or leaders, cliques or factional groups, propinquity (neighbourhoods) and kinship networks etc.

Further, there is a need to make use of the reciprocal rights and obligations already existing in the community to ensure that besides those who exhibited reservoir of good will, others who were indifferent, variable in their attitude, and had shown an organized opposition to the development initiatives or issues, are converted to the maximum extent to a group of people who provide legitimation, sponsorship and approval or remain neutral to the efforts of the agency to salvage the problem of development. This can be done by making appeals and justifications through both personal and impersonal channels of communication. Even then, there would be some contained opposition in the community to the development initiative, as no community is fully organized and there are factious and conflicting groups who compete, context and confront one another to find a space in the community. In this approach, the technical support system to the execution set is to be provided by the agency or organization seeking involvement of people (Christopher et. al, 1957).

After having discussed the community analysis of the social structure to involve people in the decision making process in a community action programme which led to enlistment of a large number of personnel on voluntary basis to conduct a survey in the area of Public Health in a county in the USA, we may highlight the third important step of participation of people in the development initiatives. This is related to institution building process at the community level.

As discussed above in the case of establishment of a execution set for community action, it is not an easy task to build up an institution for action as it takes long time through people's own initiative and affirmative action to tackle a developmental issue or a problem. A number of NGOs, over the years, are involved in the welfare of the people through their own initiatives. In fact, in the recent past, we observe rather an explosive emergence of these NGOs as a collective actor in managing the development activities. The invisible world of NGOs needs encouragement from the formal economic and political structures of the State, which often feel threatened by the emergence of such groups. As such, wherever, the spaces for economic and social development are available, the NGOs should be encouraged to occupy them (Maxneef et al 1989).

It is now increasingly realized that the mainstay of contribution to development by NGOs is not that much financial as it is organizational. In other words, the NGOs are not required to financially induce development but their efforts have to be directed in mobilizing people into organized structure of group action. It is also suggested that the two major actors in the development of people are the local governments and local communities but we have observed that bureaucracy and community are antithetical systems or styles of social organizations between the State and the people. As such, the alternative strategy to the governmental intervention is decentralization. Decentralization would comprise decentralization of power and authority through delegation of the same to semi-autonomous or parastatal agencies, devolution of power to local government and transfer of functions from public to non-governmental institutions or joint exercise of both (Cernea 1988).

But, the question often raised is that if centralization has failed in accomplishing development then what is the guarantee that the decentralization approach will hasten the development process towards its ultimate aim. However, the argument in favour of decentralization is that through this approach, we could ensure greater commitment of people to develop themselves through participation in the development activities. Further, it will help them to build up confidence in themselves to take appropriate decisions on their own. Centralized planned development has brought in greater dependency among the people which needs to be discouraged to imbibe self-reliance, basic for the progress of people in the developing countries (Mehta 1984).

Coming back to NGOs, it is observed that they are subjected to many handicaps. There are limited reliability of their efforts on a larger scale, inadequate ability to have self-sustainable technical capacity and lack of broad programming context. But they are advantageous in certain ways, for example, they have necessary capacity and willingness to outreach the inaccessible areas and the rural poor, besides promoting local participation. They can also operate on a small scale while innovating and adapting themselves to the new settings and situations (Cernea 1988).

It is also observed that those NGOs which entered into coalition with others, promoting one or other aspect of development initiative like health, population, environment, forestry, gender equity and empowerment, poverty alleviation, land use through cooperative efforts or youth affairs etc or if they have established networks in between and among different NGOs, then they proved successful in determining or influencing policy concerns at the national and international levels in accelerating and streamlining the development of new nations through the skill of strategic competence acquired

by them. For example, in anticipation of the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo (1994), NGOs associated with women's right and women's health, throughout the world were mobilized at national and international levels, in order to influence the action programme, prepared in advance for finalization at that meeting (Klugman 2000).

It is observed that people's organizations should attempt to find alternative ways of organizing the community or society through generation of values that provide direction to our economic and political life. Of late, people have become conscious of their worth and started voicing that they should be allowed to shape their own development process through setting up of their own agenda which should match with their needs, aspiration and motivations. Poverty eradication, equitable distribution of resources, access to resources especially to the weaker sections, appropriate education and skill development, technological innovations, social and welfare services should be on the priority agenda for development of the developing nations.

Development schemes or projects whether implemented or instituted by the governmental agencies or community based organizations must be monitored periodically to improve upon or provide corrective measures for successful realization of the developmental goals or objectives. For that purpose, evaluation system must be built within the planning process of the development programme and through feedback and feedforward mechanisms to the programme management, the efficiency of the agencies involved in development of people can be enhanced by taking note of cost-benefit dimension, service output and delays in implementation of the projects or schemes. It is observed that in the context of the developing nations, the efficiency of an organization is generally hampered by role diffusedness, structural inconsistency because of gap in expectation and performance and ad-hoc decision making. As such, evaluation can improve the functioning of a development agency and help in the process of institution building, so essential at the community level for involving leadership, voluntary organizations and mobilizing local resources for a wider community participation (Mehta 1999).

It is suggested that the essential elements in the participatory model of development are conscientization, organization and mobilization of people. This process can go a long way in ensuring greater social justice and equality for all. Further, it is believed that epistemologically speaking, the growth of development theory and practice will take place in a dialectic manner as at each stage, the lessons learnt out of practice will form basis for further building of theory in this model of development (Wignaraja 1991). We also need to have human rights and democracy as top priority on the development agenda of developing nations in a people-centred development perspective, in order to encourage human dignity and ensure full participation of people in the affairs of the nations. As such, a step towards social and cultural development must be in complement to economic development so necessary for human survival and well being. Media of communication can play a significant role in that direction. But, there is a need for democratization of media of communication for development purposes (Mehta 1992).

In short, the participatory model of development is mainly guided by the ethno-development perspective and the development communication perspective. In the ethno-development perspective, people are in the centre stage and they are to be conscientized, organized and mobilized and empowered to show commitment and responsibility towards themselves as well as towards others for evolving a self-reliant development strategy. On the other hard, in the development communication strategy, communication acts as a catalyst to accelerate the development process of the people by evolving a popular culture for development purposes and helping people to arrive at value consensus through resolutions of conflicts and tensions. Perhaps, in the context of developing nations, these perspectives should provide a better impetus to the development process than the 'Modernization' paradigm or 'Dependency' or 'The World System' theory (Mehta 1999).

It may be appropriate to emphasize here that the participatory model of development based on development communication perspective appears in line with the Habermas Theory of Communicative Action which advocates an action based on the negotiated understanding of the actors in a societal system, acquiring knowledge affluence and looking beyond modernity to tackle some of the emerging issues or realities by enlarging the public rather than the private sphere of social life and integrating these (lifeworld) in a coordinated manner with the polity and the economy (system).

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Forthcoming from IIAS

Nirvāṇa in Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā*

A Study in the Mādhyamika Concept of Nirvāṇa in the Context of Indian Thought

GC Nayak

The present work is an analytical philosophic enterprise dealing with a specific topic, viz. *nirvāṇa*, in Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā*, which represents and is a standing testimony to the Buddhist critical philosophy *par excellence*. A unique revolution in the world of thought has been brought about by Ācārya Candrakīrti, the great Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika thinker of 7th century C.E., through his theory of *nirvāṇa* as *sarvalnirvaśeṣa Kalpanākṣaya* (cessation of essentialist thought-constructions/speculative picture-thinking) developed in his *magnum opus, Prasannapadā*, thus giving the idea of *nirvāṇa* a novel turn, viewing it from a fresh perspective.

The idea may have had its basis in *Mūla Madhyama Kārikā/Madhyamaka Śāstra* of Nāgārjuna, the unique philosophical master-mind of the world of 2nd century C.E., and of course in the enlightenment of the Buddha, the credit goes to the author of this volume, however, for bringing to the fore the genius of Candrakīrti in working out the theoretical and practical implications of this idea by a rigorous analysis of the logic of essences (*Svabhāva*) and allied concepts. A critical and comparative study of *nirvāṇa* of *Prasannapadā* with that of early Buddhism on the one hand and of *nirvāṇa* with the concept of Vedāntic *mokṣa* on the other as well as points of comparison and contrast brought out with such pioneers of Western thought as Aristotle and Wittgenstein are features of special interest in the volume, meant for promoting a greater clarity in understanding.

The volume, primarily aiming at an understanding of the Buddhist concept of *nirvāṇa* in its proper perspective, through eradication of certain earlier misconceptions, highlights for this purpose Candrakīrti's unique critical philosophy advocated and worked out so diligently in *Prasannapadā* which is a significant milestone in the development of the Buddhist thought. It is expected to be of interest for all scholars of Indian thought. At the same time it is likely to prove itself to be of value for further intensive research in the field.

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