

DIALECTICS OF DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS: IS THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT, THE SYNTHESIS?

Arun Kumar*

ABSTRACT

Was right to development an attempt to bring convergence between not only development and human rights but also between the two streams of rights discourses, namely civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights? How these theoretically and functionally incongruent concepts of development and human rights were synthesized to make right to development as a legitimate and universal idea? This paper while surveying development theories in the post fifties, tries to track the evolution of right to development as the synthesis between development and human rights. It further explores whether the 'Red' and 'Green' agenda can co-exist in the context of intensified resource use as part of capital accumulation.

In the post second world war era, the process of economic development began to be conceived in terms of economic growth, construction of infrastructure, expansion of industry and increased production and consumption of goods and services. This accorded a universal legitimization for modernization paradigm thanks to the initiative made by the UN in 1951 to develop a set of measures to

* Assistant Professor of Political Science, Government Victoria College, Palakkad, Kerala
Email: arunpolitics@gmail.com



assess the economic development of underdeveloped societies. This mission of economic development of underdeveloped areas was a continuum of what Harry S. Truman said in his inaugural address on January 20, 1949:

‘We must embark on a bold new programme for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of under developed areas. The old imperialism (exploitation for foreign profit) has no place in our plans. What we envisage is a programme of development based on the concept of democratic fair dealing’ [Esteva, 1992 : 48]

One of the authors of the UN study, Sir Arthur Lewis later came with his model of development that subsequently became a universal pattern. Arthur Lewis model which was an attempt to capture the simultaneous determination of income, growth and distribution had the following assumptions; availability of a surplus population, within the traditional and technologically backward agricultural societies; existence of a conventional subsistence wage in industrial sector which does not rise as the surplus agricultural population is transferred to industrial employment; and transfer of labour from agriculture to industry at a constant wage rate which permits industrial capitalists to receive an increasing share of a rising national income as profit and to reinvest this profit in activities which progressively expand the share of industry in the national output. This process converts economics which saved and invested four to five percent of national income to economics which save and invest 12 to 15 percent [Lewis, 1954:75]. This has two implications for development: development is a matter almost exclusively of economic growth and increase in gross national product; and growth requires a capitalist / entrepreneurial class (industrial bourgeoisie) that should be favoured by the economy [Marks, 2004:68]. The above thesis was redeemed by Rostow in his work, *The Stages of Economic Growth, A Non-Communist Manifesto*.

To Rostow, economies evolve from traditional agricultural societies to a centralized national state to the take-off stages, where there is sufficient human and financial capital and technology for growth to become a normal condition, and then to the stage of maturity, and finally to the phase of high mass consumption. The commodity specialization and infrastructural and technical development would provide the ‘spurt’ required for economic take off and self-sustained growth that would occur in successive stages and result in a mature capitalist society oriented to mass consumption [Rostow, 1990:134].

Thus, development theory emerged as an important concern after World War II with the beginning of the era of de-colonization and under the shadow of



the cold war. Its general ethos was one of inevitable progress definable broadly as a movement from tradition to modernity, 'reflecting Britain's experience in the industrial revolution with free labour, reliance on market forces, a gradual process of industrialization, adequate levels of investment generated by net profits and technological innovation [Kothari, 1988]. Truman's doctrine of developing the underdeveloped was taken care of. For this, Schumpeter's theory was extended stressing the importance of creating infrastructure adequate to modern industry, engendering the entrepreneurial spirit and setting up poles of growth which would attract private enterprise. This model could be better explained by analyzing Harrod-Domar model which suggests a circular linkage between the rate of economic growth, rate of investment and capital output ratio. An increase in the output or income increases the investible surplus and fuels economic growth. While Arthur Lewis considers surplus creation as the function of unlimited supply of surplus labour at a constant wage rate, Domar considers this as a function of a lower capital output ratio. The rate of economic growth is determined by the ratio of the rate of investment and capital output. The increased investment means rise in economic growth, which enhances the saving capacity and the same could be attained through the lowering of capital output ratio also.

Harrod-Domar defines capital output ratio as the ratio of total output or income and total capital used for generating that output. Here comes the justification of increased capital investment for technological progress that ultimately leads to the process of modernization. The argument here is that, the technological progress which is largely the function of demand for lowering the capital output ratio for enhancing growth rate, culminates in the hegemonic process of modernization which is 'irreversible'. The factors that were viewed as central to the complexity and dynamism of modern societies were markets, patterns and images of mass consumption, industrialization and the increasing division of labour, formation of liberal democracy etc. In short 'modernization is a positively transforming process that are irreversible' [Parsons, 1971:83]. The same pattern is suggested by Arthur Lewis too, showing that the share of profit and, therefore, the rate of savings and investment would rise continuously in the modern sector, and capital will continue to be expanded until all the surplus labour has been absorbed. Rising share of profits serves as an incentive to reinvest them in building industrial capacity as well as a source of savings to finance it [Lewis, 1954 :43]. In short the development theorists who conceive development as the function of increasing economic growth, like Lewis, Harrod-Domar and Rostow were justifying modernization as a paradigm to be relied on, with capital formation as its soul.



Though there are major ideological differences regarding the distribution of benefits and instrumentalities, the Liberal and Marxist Schools share a common perception regarding the fundamental importance of capital accumulation, industrialization, growth and technology. The best practical example in this regard was the Soviet Model of non capitalist development of the early sixties which stressed the significance of these techno-economic factors more than the necessity of a socialist revolution [Kothari, 1988: 72]. Besides social and economic costs, this model of hyperactive production and consumption, leads to a severe environmental challenge and social conflicts having political consequences. This brings in an ecological approach in addition to the political economy approach to the process of development.

The mode of production, as Marxists conceive, it, falls short of having ecological infrastructure of human society as its base. The relations of production and productive forces do not appreciate the importance of ecological infrastructure i.e., soil, water, animal, mineral and vegetative base of the society. It, therefore, proposes to complement the concept of modes of production with the concept of modes of resource use [Gadgil and Guha, 2009 : 39]. This however does not mean that Marxist theory is lacking a sense of environmentalism. Marx chose to suggest that the social relations of production need to be transformed to fully realize the fruits of technological development. 'Therefore Marx's core concept of the labour process under-represents the significance of natural conditions which cannot be manipulated and over-represents the role of human intentions and power for transforming nature. But at a deeper level Marx implicitly supports environmentalism by opposing commodification' [Baviskar, 1997:37].

Gadgil and Guha put forward four distinct modes of resource use: gathering (including shifting cultivation), nomadic pastoralism, settled cultivation, and industry. [Gadgil and Guha, 2009 : 42] Each mode of resource use differs from the other in terms of technology that consists of the source of energy, materials, knowledge base relating to resource use each mode is depending, economy which deals with the spatial scale of resource flows and the mode of resource acquisition, the social organization including division of labour, mechanisms of control over access to resources and ideology that describes the broad perception of the man-nature relationship.

As Rostow and other development economists argue, as transition from traditional agriculture society to modern industrial market society progresses,



the mode of resource use too undergoes an irreversible change along the axis of technology, economy, social organization and perception of man-nature relationship. This brings to the fore different forms of social and political conflicts. Gadgil and Guha explain the characteristics of industrial mode thus:

Technology: If the pattern of energy use in the gatherer mode may be characterized as passive (relying only on human muscle and wood fuel power) and that of agriculture mode as active (augmenting human power with animal power, wood fuel and water power), in the industrial mode energy use follows an extractive path, wherein natural resources are both harnessed (hydro power) and mined (fossil fuels) for human consumption. The industrial mode has also brought into use a whole range of man-made materials; (metals, plastics, silicon chips and synthetic pesticides). The newly fashioned materials can now be preserved to be used for long periods, and transported for consumption elsewhere.

Economy: Over the last three centuries, industrial societies have steadily expanded their resource base. This has been achieved by a growing knowledge about the working of nature-through the hypothetical deductive method of modern science and by the links established between scientific discovery and practical application – in order to tap additional sources of energy, process materials and transport goods faster more economically over ever-longer distances. This process of the intensification of resource use has led to the continual over-use and exhaustion of many resources. The typical response to such exhaustion has been to find a substitute and it leads to the expansion of resource base and facilitates resource flow from one part of the globe to another part. The resource flows were highly asymmetric, with industrial societies receiving large volumes of unprocessed resources at low prices and exporting small volumes of processed resources at much higher prices (Gadgil and Guha, 2009:43).

Since the flows of resources are highly asymmetric, the social organization too becomes divided along the axis of access and control over the resources. This process of resource extraction has benefited few corporate and elite industrial capitalist groups at the expense of village – based systems of community forest and pasture management. As Guha and Gadgil neatly depict:

Consumers in the high centers of industrial civilization can draw upon the natural resources of most parts of the globe, taking for granted the continued supply of teak wood from India, ivory from Africa and mink from Arctic. This elite is now scarcely affected by the natural variations with the resource availability



in space and time; it has developed a life style which could truthfully be called global. In the process it has wiped out myriad of locally –adapted life styles in different parts of the world [Guha and Gadgil, 2009:47].

Such an analysis explores whether the ‘Red’ and ‘Green’ agenda¹ can co-exist in the context of intensified resource use as part of capital accumulation. The ecological Marxist analysis in this context seeks to encompass the following :the concepts of classical development economists who attach more significance to the formation of capital for enhancing surplus and thereby savings for propelling economic growth; Marxist idea of primitive accumulation as occurring during the initial phases of capitalist expansion; Harvey’s concept with its subsequent improvisation using his theory of accumulation by dispossession ; Patnaik’s concept of accumulation by encroachment, and the ecological analysis of Indian population by Gadgil and Guha. The whole purpose of this mixing up of political economy and ecological approaches is to discern whether there exists a convincing pattern of social organization with contesting claims over the benefits of developmental projects using industrial mode of resource use.

Here this paper intends to supplement theories of capital accumulation, primitive accumulation (Marx), accumulation by dispossession [Harvey, 2001:21], and accumulation by encroachment [Patnaik, 2005] with the theory of ‘mode of resource use’. What emerges from the synthesis of these two perspectives which are intrinsically complimentary to each other, is a triangular pattern of social organization in the modern era of industrial mode of resource use. Before getting into this triangular pattern of social organization, the above said concepts of capital accumulation need to be briefly discussed. Marx describes the nature of primitive accumulation in England in the late 18th century, thus:

A multitude of small farmers, who maintained themselves and families by the produce of the ground they occupy and by the animals kept on a common... and who therefore had little occasion to purchase any of the means of subsistence, were converted into a body of men who earned their subsistence by working for others, and who are now under a necessity of going to market for all that they want. Circumstances of the poorer were altered in almost every respect for the worse. From little occupier of land they were reduced to the state of day labourers and hirelings. By the 19th century, the memory of the connection between the small farmer and communal property had vanished, and those expelled received no compensation for the 3,511,700 acres of common land which between 1791 and 1831 were stolen from them.....’ [Fowkes, 1976:125].



A closer look at displacement due to dams which account for nearly 80 million people worldwide [White head, 2010:13] brings a similar process like the one which happened in England during the Enclosure Movement. Judith Whitehead considers both process of displacement as 'examples of accumulation by dispossession inextricably bound up with not only initial phases of development, but reappearing periodically when capital experiences a falling rate of profit'. Prabhat Patnaik calls this process accumulation by encroachment. Here certain blocks of capital grow through the displacement of pre capitalist production or state sector production or through the sheer appropriation of common resources which have not hither to formed a part of private property (Patnaik, 2005 : 19).

This process of accumulation by encroachment which has now become a common phenomenon in the industrial mode of resource use facilities the concentration of capital and growth of international capital economy and transformation of self- sustained peasants into dependent labourers. Here comes the significance of the triangular pattern of social organization emerging out of the process of accumulation by dispossession as part of intensified resource extraction and consumption in the industrial mode of resource use. The three categories in the social pattern are Ecosystem People, Ecological Refugees and Omnivore.

Following Raymond Dasmann, Gadgil and Guha use 'Ecosystem People' to refer to people who depend on the natural environment of their own locality to meet most of their material needs and who constitute four-fifth of India's rural people. They are poor, 'not-so-affluent, must scratch the earth and rope for rains in order to grow their own food, must gather wood or dung to cook it, must build their own huts with bamboo or sticks of sorghum dabled with mud', in short, though living poor, they are sustained. The intensified extraction of resources shrinks the capacities of local ecosystem to support these people who constitute mainly of peasants and tribes. Being living away from the center, these people are powerless to prevent the depletion of their natural resources. The Indian experience amply supports this theoretical formulation. [Gadgil and Guha, 1995 : 17]

Dams and mines have physically displaced millions of peasants and tribes in independent India. Those who have fled the shrinking local habitat became sugarcane harvesters in Maharashtra, farm labourers in Punjab and Haryana, and domestic servants of metro cities in the urban India. They constitute one-third of India's population. They are the displaced with little that they can freely pick up from the natural world, but having not much money to buy the commodities that



the shops are brimming with either [Gadgil and Guha, 1995 : 18]. They constitute the second category, 'the ecological refugees,' who pay the price for the expansion of resource base through encroachment. The tribal population, who once lived in the hilly tracts of Vidhya and Satpura along the banks of Narmada, and who have been displaced and rehabilitated in the state of Gujarat, belong to this category.

The rest, one-sixth of India's population, are the real beneficiaries of economic development, consisting of bigger landowners with access to irrigation, modern entrepreneurs in the pocket of industrialization, workers in the organized sector and urban professionals – lawyers, doctors, investment bankers, employees in government, semi-government and government aided organizations. These people have purchasing power to buy cars, fly in aero planes. They have the clout to use the power of the state to ensure that the goodies come to them cheap and can pressurize state for getting subsidized irrigation, electricity fuels and more. Raymond Dasmaann calls them 'biosphere people'. They are the third category the 'omnivores'. The Britishers who began the pedigree of Omnivores through colonization that drained India's natural resources also left behind an indigenous breed of the same class—the Indian Omnivores—who assisted the British in the task of extracting the natural resources. These Omnivores are cornering the benefits of asymmetrical flow of resources and their intensified extraction. They perpetuate accumulation by encroachment and transform the ecosystem people into ecological refugees. These ecological refugees later become 'exploitable (global) proletariat in the hands of capital' [Luxemburg, 1971:89].

It has been theoretically argued that democracy being flexible ontologically, allows the minority—the Omnivore – to thrive at the cost of a much larger majority by perverting its (democracy's spirit) spirit—the majority rule—and subverting its working-reaching authoritative decision that affect their life by participation. Gadgil and Guha explain how this is made possible legitimately under the façade of democracy. To accomplish this, the Omnivore have built up an alliance akin to an iron triangle—an alliance of those favored by the state (industry, rich farmers and city dwellers); those who decide on the size and scale of these favours (the politicians); and those who implement their delivery—bureaucracy and technocrats [Gadgil and Guha, 1995:41].

The operation of these iron triangle is in such a way that the state absorbing the large fraction of the cost of resources such as water, power, raw materials, fertilizers etc. provide them to the industry, city dwellers for their profligate life



in the urban centers, and to rich peasantry for agriculture at throw away prices. This process of intensified resource capture under the aegis of state often takes the form of accumulation by encroachment that results in the dispossession of the majority of the marginalized who account for nearly five –sixth of the population, for instance in India. This results in gross human right violations of the victims who comprises of the land less labours, small peasants, herders, country boat fisher folk, nomads and tribes who had once been the ecosystem people before ending up in the margins of urban areas as ecological refugees. The development and human right thus remained two contradictory concepts in this regard until 1980s. The very basic logic behind this incompatibility between development and human right could be found in the Law of Ecology. That ‘there is no free lunch in this world’ means somebody pays for the extraction of resources somebody does. Here the cost of development in the form of human right violations are neither paid by the state which gathers resources for building heavy industries and planning more urbanization nor the omnivores who enjoy the benefit of these.

Towards a Right to Development

The growing criticisms on the human right violations brought about by the western model of development and the injustice and inequality it breeds among nations and individuals attracted the wrath of the international community making it imperative to think about an alternative. It was in this context that the developing countries had come up with the demand for a ‘New International Economic Order’ (NIEO) that required a revision of the international economic system in favour of Third World countries, replacing the Bretton Woods system which had benefited the leading states that had created it. The period which witnessed the birth of modern environmentalism following the publication of the *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson and emergence of New Social Movements with a set of third generation human rights that supplemented the civil and political rights or the first generation rights and the socio-economic and cultural right or the second generation rights with a new array of rights outside the individualist spectrum and the demand for sustainable development created a conducive atmosphere for the convergence of development and human rights. Drawing on the insights of Amartya Sen and the vision of Mahbub ul-Haq, UNDP launched the idea of ‘human development’ which embraces human needs and social goals beyond material well-being, such as higher standards of education and health, wider opportunities for work and leisure, increased capabilities and choices for the individual. In the words of Sen, human development is about people, about



expanding their choices they value [Sen, 1999:18]. Neither human development approach nor human capital formation approach nor human resource development approach that focuses on human beings as means to increase income and wealth nor human welfare approach that considers human beings as beneficiaries rather than participants in the development process help in establishing linkage between human rights approach and development. It was in this context that the right to development emerged in the discursive domain of human rights and democracy.

The right to development proclaimed by the United Nations in 1986 in the Declaration on the Right to Development was an attempt to bring convergence between not only development and human rights but also between the two streams of rights discourses that assumed salience with the adoption of UDHR, namely civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights. The Right to Development thus appeared to be an overarching composite right comprising of both civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights. More than that, right to development can be described as a human right to human development. The Human Development report 2000 says:

The promotion of human development and fulfillment of human rights share, in many ways, a common motivation, and reflect a fundamental commitment to promoting the freedom, well-being and dignity of individuals in all societies. If human development focuses on the enhancement of the capabilities and freedoms that the member of a community enjoy, human rights represents the claims that individuals have on the conduct of individual and collective agents and on the design of social arrangements to guarantee and secure their possession of these capabilities and freedoms [Anand and Sen, 2000:3].

Further, Article 1 of Right to Development states, 'right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized'. This brings to fore the call for putting an end to the discriminatory development process that alienates marginalised sections from the enjoyment of the benefits of development. The aforesaid article of Right to Development together with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) had the potential for reversing the trajectory of development to make it more inclusive and human right friendly. Article 23 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, for instance, states that the indigenous peoples have the



right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development. In particular, they have the right to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions. But the right based approach to the process of development has not been appreciated much by the developing countries while formulating their development policies. Development with its modernisation drive seeks to accumulate capital by dispossession in favour of the influential and assertive 'omnivore' and this dispossession by encroachment deprives the ecosystem people of their basic rights and transforms them into 'ecological refugees'. Indian experience stands as a vivid instance for this where the concepts of democracy, development and human rights acquire a very problematic relationship.

Notes

Red - Green agenda here refers to the scope of Ecological-Marxism as an alternative to the existing theories that fall short of explaining social conflicts rooted in environmental causes. Ecological-Marxism takes a critical view of industrial capitalism and believes that the antagonistic relationship between capitalist accumulation and growth and the environmental will expose the crises tendencies within capitalism - i.e. environmental degradation means that the resources for capitalism will disappear and the system will collapse. Nature cannot be treated as a commodity.

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