

Development and Environment

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INTRODUCTION

The ultimate purpose of development is to provide opportunities for a better life to all sections of the populations and to achieve this, it would be necessary in developing countries to eliminate inequalities in the distribution of income, wealth, mass poverty and social injustice including the disparities between regions and groups. While they would have been able to make arrangements for new development opportunities, greater supplies of food, more nourishing food, better education and health facilities.¹Development implies transformation and distribution of economic resources in favor of socially and economically under development segment of the society.²The last two decades have seen rapid growth in neo- liberal philosophy and economic practices all over the world. Neo liberalism is a culturally specific formula which has been projected and propagated as a moral proposition having universal validity and applicability. It essentially stands for macro- economic growth and hardly pay any attention to the distributive aspects of economic growth. employment generation, social security, environment, social justice etc. Neo-liberal globalization is playing havoc with the environment

Progressive worsening of the environmental situation, particularly in post war years, is a reality. The recent past has seen scholars expressing grave concern about the deteriorating state of the environment. David Goldblath has observed that " contemporary forms of environmental degradation present one of the most, if not the most, complex and catastrophic dilemmas of modernity."³Habermas sees capitalism as "the primary cause of environmental degradation"⁴.Ernest U. Von Weizsacker has expressed his serious apprehensions that if the current trends of environmental degradation continue, the 21st century will be marked by an enormously endangered natural environment. He calls for a political intervention to salvage the future from environmental degradation; which he terms Earth Politics.⁵Giddens suggests that in order to avoid further harm to the environment the vey logic of unchecked scientific and technological development would have to be confronted. As the most consequential ecological issues are global in nature, forms of intervention would necessarily have to be global⁶. The basic causes of the environmental degradation, though they may sound simple, are very complex and intricate. These include.

- Emphasizing quantitative growth over qualitative growth.
- The failure of the economy to account for the social construction of environmental damage.
- Failure to bridge and cut across traditional political boundaries and build a consensus.
- The failure to perceive the environment in its totality.

The programme of economic liberalization will mean more rapid exhaustion of non-renewable resources, greater pollution of the environment and serious impoverishment of communities, dependent upon nature for subsistence. Promotion of human greed as the main driving force of development is at the root of all environmental crisis. Our model of development based on globalization and privatization has accentuated environmental degradation in our country.

Many people believe environmental problems are nothing more than problems of pollution. Destruction according to this view arises from the failure to control harmful bye-products of human activity.⁷ So the most common prescription for improving environment quality amounts to setting up ' Poison controls' centers to combat waste products and invisible impurities of modern civilization. Such deep rooted and complex causes cannot be corrected overnight along with the laws to help and new legislation to assist in circumventing the problem of environmental degradation. A different altitude, a change in perspective is essential.

The challenge has been to design and build a new model for economic growth and development that must sustain human growth without destroying its support systems. The environmental costs of the processes of development and globalization have caught the attention of Amartya Sen who has accepted that while advance in agricultural technology have increased the potential for improving living conditions in rural areas, environment degradation poses a serious threat to the livelihood of the rural population in the country. Niraja Gopal Jayal has expressed apprehensions about the modification and intensification of the contradictions between the claims of environment and development in India. She emphasized the necessity of developing an alternative perspective on development, involving the idea of quality of life which addresses humanistic concerns.⁸

Sumi Krishna⁹ raises the issue of why environmentalism has not had a greater impact on development policy and people's lives in our country because development processes marginalize the poor and environmentalism fails to provide space for people to make their own development choices. Manorama Saviour talked about the persistence of environmental colonialism⁹ in the third world and contradictions between policy pronouncements and actual retrogressive action in India.¹⁰

Conflicts over natural resources generated environment protest movements in the early 1970s which protested against state abetted destruction of natural resources at the hands of private interests and stood for the reassertion of the rights of the local people over natural resources. The following decade saw the spread and expansion of environmental awareness and environmental protest movements came to encompass protests against big dams struggles of fish workers against the operation of trawlers which threatened their livelihood and conflicts arising out of the effects of open cast mining upon subsistence agriculture.¹¹ The generation and spread of environmental awareness and new form of environment protests and struggles in the areas of fisheries, shrimp aquaculture biodiversity and development projects, have exposed the violence and excesses committed on our natural resources and the connivance of the state with commercial interests in them.

People's resistance has succeeded in forcing Indian state to review its policies which are proving to be detrimental to our environment. It is imperative that we try to understand environmentalism in the light of forces and factors responsible for the adoption of our model of development. Our Common future recognized economic growth as an important factor in the destruction of natural resources and environment. It made out a strong case for a new era of growth to counteract the adverse effects of economic growth. As a powerful statement against the violation of customary rights by state forestry, Chipko movement brought into sharp focus a wide range of issues concerning forest policy and the environment debate as a whole¹².

We have movements against Tehri dam project on the Bhagirathi river in the Himalayas region, the Vishnuprayag dam on the Alakananda river, the Koel-Karo dams in the Jharkhand region of southern Bihar the Silent Valley Hydroelectric project in the state of Kerala, Bedthi dam project in Karnataka and above all, the most celebrated struggle against the Sardar Sarover project on the Narmada river. Niraja Gopal has highlighted the inevitability of an "enduring tension between the goals of development and environmentalism in a developing country like ours". The veneer and pulp paper industry wreck widespread deforestation during the post-independence period and it is a lot of forest dwellers who found themselves at the receiving end of this process of state abetted deforestation.¹³

Indian judiciary has shown greater sensitivity and concern for environmental issues than the other two organs. i.e the executive and the legislature. In the land mark decision in 1995, Virendra Gaur V/s State of Haryana¹⁴. The Supreme Court observed –

"Article 21 protects the right of life as a fundamental right. Enjoyment of life and its attainment including the right to live with human dignity encompasses within its ambit, the protection and preservation of environment, ecological balance free from pollution of air and water, sanitation without which life cannot be enjoyed. Any contra acts or actions would cause environmental pollution. Environmental, ecological, air, water pollution should be regarded as amounting to violations of Article 21."

Judicial activism in the field of environmental protection has been applauded by people like M.C Mehta, Satyaranjan Sathe, Justice Kuldeep Singh and Justice Ashok Desai.

The concern for environment is also a concern for equity and social justice. Environment hardly figures on the agenda of our political parties. The biggest challenge that Indian environmentalism faces is of defining and practicing alternatives to the mainstream developmental and political processes.

DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT DESTRUCTION –GREEN MEASURES

India is a country predominantly inhabited by the rural people. Inevitably, equal concern and attention have to be devoted to the environmental consequences of developmental activities in rural sector. The need of the hour is –

- The enviro-illiterate officials have to be given enviro-legal education and public opinion must be activated to build up an environ-friendly pressures group.
- An ombudsman may be established by the parliament to oversee the functioning of the government environment agencies and make the erring authorities responsive and responsible towards constitutional goals.
- People must act as watch dog on government's eco-non-friendly activities and expose them from time to time
- The judiciary has to apply the adequate use of dormant penal sanctions under different environmental law against the offences of environment.
- Executive should work in coordination and cooperation between the developmental projects and management of environment.

The term sustainable development was used at the time of Cocoyoc Declaration in the early 1970s.

Since then it has become the trademark of international organizations dedicated to achieving environmentally beneficial development. Sustainable development means an integration of developmental and environmental imperatives. Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Environment includes vital resources for humans, the richness of biodiversity, the cultural, historical and social significance of environment.

DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRINCIPLES-- A SUMMARY

Sustainable development --development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.¹⁵

The Pre-cautionary principle – where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environment degradation.¹⁶

The Polluter Pay principle –The polluter should bear the expenses of carrying out – pollution prevention and control measures.¹⁷

The Preventive principle - States have ----- the responsibility to ensure the activities or control to do not cause damage to the environment of other states or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.¹⁸

The quality of higher education must be improved. and people must participate in development and environment processes, As the benefits of public participation are---

- improving the quality of decisions
- environmental problem solving.
- promoting environmental citizenship.
- improving procedural legitimacy.
- eliciting values.

Environmentalism must expand its ambit to embrace developmental concerns like education and employment by confronting crucial socio-political issues.¹⁹

We should fulfill our needs in such a way that does not destroy natural resources. The twin principles of transparency and accountability in public life and economic system will create a commitment in the context of environment. These should be in-built connection between prevailing dominant model of development and increasing intractability of environmental issues. Anil Aggarwal talks about four rays of hope despite dismal scenario with regard to environment. They are India's NGO Movement, the role of judiciary in environment protection, ordinary people's initiatives and media's support to environment concerns.²⁰ He called for a third war of independence by post-independence Indians, to be fought with themselves to protect their environment, society and culture.

The term "development" needs to be restored to its original meaning. In order to check environmental degradation, planning authorities should seek to enhance the environment as a party of development proposals. Significant adverse impacts on the environment should be avoided and alternative options which might reduce or eliminate those impacts pursued.²¹

The balance between environmental protection and developmental activities could only be maintained by strictly following the principles of sustainable development. This is the development strategy that caters to the needs of the present without negotiating the ability of upcoming generation to satisfy their needs. It is a guarantee to the present and a bequeath to the future. All environment related development activities should benefit more people while maintaining the environment balance. While thinking of the development measures the need of the present and the ability of the future to meet its own needs and requirements have to be kept in view while thinking of the present, the duty to future should not be forgotten. We owe duty to future generation and for a bright today; a bleak tomorrow cannot be countenanced. While today is yesterday's tomorrow, it is tomorrow's yesterday.

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