



Development as change in a neo-liberal world: An overview

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Abstract

The current dominant model of development based on market liberalisation and commercial globalization has been faulty. More often than not, it has conspicuously failed to deliver. In an age of neo-liberalism, development cannot only be growth-oriented. The humane aspect of development has to come in the forefront. However, most of the times, it is in the backburner. This has happened because the concept of development has been so poorly conceived and narrowly defined prior to the 1990s. The development that we want to harp on has to emphasize on advancing the richness of human life instead of the richness of the economy. It implies the enhancement of peoples' choices as a dynamic, evolutionary and continuous process. Choices connote freedom to take decisions that affect one's life as well as freedom from certain removable constraints on the functioning of human beings such as fear, hunger, illiteracy, unemployment, exclusion, discrimination and persecution. Participatory and people-centred development has redefined the goals of development.

The journey of developing countries towards growth, equity and modernization is now over six decades old. There are wide variations in the trajectories of their development. Of particular interest to stakeholders has been India's trajectory, as the country struggled to transform a subcontinent of wide diversities and divides into a cohesive nation and modernised economy. Its performance has been laudable in terms of growth, industrial structure, modern infrastructure and advances in critical areas such as space, nuclear energy and information technology but growth tends to be skewed as it misses the slums, the poverty-stricken villages and the crumbling environment.

This seminar paper focuses on the fact that the normative agenda of development has to be people-friendly in order to be all-encompassing. The multiple dimensions of development have to factor in economic dynamism, environmental protection and socio-

economic empowerment but at what cost? This question has ongoing pertinence and this paper tries to find answer to this in close connection between the issue of development and the issue of livelihood. The building of popular resistance is important. The issue of political will is critical. Conventional party system based on new political cleavages is often detrimental to the whole process of development. However, how will then inclusive democracy work. It will work but without trampling the rights of the underprivileged.

Keywords: development, neo-liberalism, stakeholders, inclusive democracy, peoples' choices, popular resistance

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The development debate is screwed, problematic and yet has been the mainstay of public discourse for a long time. It is a discourse that allegedly does not reflect reality but it reflects the crafty construction of reality. Thus it insulates itself from the alternative ways of thinking. Before unravelling the nuances of the development paradigm further, it is necessary to understand that development has come a long way in the past six decades. World War which II was a watershed which eventually changed the definition of development and events thereafter redefined development both as an enterprise as well as a scholarly discipline. The state was at the centre of the development discourse that co economies that could both develop economies and alter societies to suit human needs.

In the 1970s, the shortcomings of the state-led development became vivid. Policy planners understood that the main problem in the third world was the state itself. The development debate polarized—less state and more market. With that people-friendly development through state relegate to the background. Gradual disillusionment with the role of the state as an agent of accumulation, development and economic redistribution has swung the ideological barometer towards a celebration of the market. The basic premise that the state is a rational instrument of controlling and promoting change gradually crumbled. By 1980s, the disillusionment was complete. From all perspectives, state came to be viewed as an instrument of exploitation pre-empting popular or individual initiative. At present, the locus of developmental wisdom is believed to be centred in local communities and institutions and not in government bureaucracies. Indigenous knowledge and popular participation are examples of concepts that have come to occupy increasing prominence in the debate. When state was geared towards establishing control over the lives of the citizens, the unrest shown by people reveals that somewhere down the line they are not happy with

this kind of development. That means state was losing ground to meaningfully involve itself in the lives of its citizens. In many third world countries this happened. India was no exception which made a transition from socialist model to neoliberal model of development after the 1990s.

The idea of 'governance' that came up in development debates began to talk about ordered rule and collective action. It is here that civil society came to acquire relevance. It has emerged as the most celebrated concept of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that is expected to preserve democracy and inextricably links democracy to development. So new age development cannot ignore it. It is that part of society that connects individual citizens with public sphere/realm and the state. It is the catchword in the present development discourse. It has established itself as a significant even paradigmatic concept in the field of development policy and practice.

Accountability is a pillar of democracy and good governance that compels the state, the private sector and civil society to focus on results seek clear objectives, develop effective strategies and monitor and report on performance measured as objectively as possible. In principle, elections provide citizens with both answerability (the right to assess a candidate's record) and enforceability (vote the candidate in or out). In practice, democracies vary greatly on both dimensions, as do most attempts to exercise accountability.

Empowering poor citizens by increasing their influence in policymaking and aligning their interests, to the extent possible, with those of the non-poor can hold politicians more accountable. Elections, informed voting, and other traditional voice mechanisms should be strengthened, because these processes — and the information they generate— can make political commitments more credible, helping to produce better service outcomes. What role can civil society play in this? CSOs can help to amplify the voices of the poor, coordinate coalitions to overcome their collective action problems, mediate on their behalf through redress mechanisms, and demand greater service accountability. It needs to be kept in mind that participatory, transparent and accountable governance does not come easy. Nobody wants to open up or relinquish power easily — be it the politicians and bureaucrats at the helm of power or the traditional elites. Social forces must be created that would compel them to countenance sharing of power.

Civil society sector falls in a conceptually complex social terrain that lies mostly outside the market and the state. For much of the recent history, social and political discourse has been dominated by the ‘two sector model’ that acknowledges the existence of only two private sector) and the state. This is reinforced by the statistical conventions that have kept the “third sector” of civil society organizations largely invisible in official economic statistics (Salamon, Sokolowski and Associates, 2003). On top of this, the sector embraces entities as diverse as village associations, grass roots development organizations, agricultural extension services, self help cooperatives, religious institutions, schools, hospitals, human rights organizations and business and professional associations. As such, a comprehensive and representative understanding of the role and significance of the civil society sector continues to be a major gap in the literature, particularly in the context of developing countries.

One other factor helping to explain the historically constrained pattern of civil society sector development in the third world is the changing fashion in development policy and development ideology. During the 1950s and 1960s, development thinking emphasized the importance of a State as the principal agent of modernizing reforms. As a consequence, considerable effort went into differentiating a sphere of State action outside the pre-modern structures of tribe or community, and into creating modern, secular administrative structures that could effectively operate in this sphere. This development framework included a sphere of business in addition to that of government, but it downplayed, if not excluded, CSOs which were viewed as only marginal in the frame of affairs.

The shift to “structural adjustment” in the 1980s did not change this fundamentally. To the contrary, the “structural adjustment” paradigm of development merely replaced government with the private business community as the mode of development. In the process, however, it reinforced an essentially two-sector model of society that left little room for a vibrant civil society sector. The lack of civil society growth is thus understandable given that it been historically neglected in the central policy debate.

In short, the development of the third sector seems to have been inhibited by a long history of authoritarianism; by colonial heritage and a history of limited economic growth that restricted the growth of an independent urban middle class; by religious traditions that placed less emphasis on “modularity” and the fostering of independent institutional structures; by legal structures that often placed impediments in the way of civil society formation; and by development policies that stressed the creation of a modernizing State and

later the development of private enterprise rather the promotion of independent institutions outside the confines of the market and the State

Civil society is an agent on its own right—it's both an arena where associations compete for influence and in its interactions with the state or intergovernmental organizations---an agent. It is both a means and an end. In this slip between means and end what has not diminished, however, is the hope that civil society will deliver, and is the most desirable way to achieve both democracy and democratization in contemporary times. In the post-colonial development agenda where foreign policy of states are no longer governed by Cold War imperatives, the resurgence of civil society as the most tangible site to keep the state in check and influence policy. Since 1980s its intersection with development has begun to stimulate a growing body of empirical research and academic reflection.

Civil society is mostly likely to serve as a constructive oppositional sphere. But as a political reservoir of civic values, it must be kept alive to provide room for those ideas and interests that are not being incorporated by the state. Thus civil society is there to cater to those whose place at the state table is not reserved. As such it encourages people to act autonomously to achieve their goals thereby contributing to the creation of social capital. The social capital refers to the normative values and beliefs that citizens in their everyday dealings share, what Tocqueville referred to as “habits of the heart and the mind”. Civil society is viewed as the forum in which habits of the heart and the mind are nurtured and developed. In a neo-liberal regime, where the state makes no extra effort to include all groups, civil society becomes an alternative arena for inclusion. People seek their remedies in civil society. The burden of inclusion therefore falls on the civil society than on the state.

An important problem in some of the developing countries is over-centralization of decision making and the lack of stake holders involvement that permit patronage of powerful special interests and high levels of corruption. Corruption diverts scarce funds from development projects and social safety nets into private pockets. Furthermore it lowers investment, decreases efficiency and becomes an additional tax, thereby adversely affecting economic growth. Civil society can play a major role by contributing to greater transparency and accountability. Accountability has three dimensions: financial accountability implies an obligation of the persons handling resources, public offices or any other position of trust to report on the intended and actual use of the resources; political accountability means regular and open methods of sanctioning or rewards those who hold positions of public trust through

a system of checks and balances; administrative accountability implies system of control internal to the government including civil service standards and incentives, ethnic codes administrative reviews (Rondinelli and Cheema, 2003).

There are whole gamuts of questions on development along with introspection. As we moved through the 1990s, 'development' became an increasingly contested concept. At the same time, policy makers, researchers and practitioners began to consider how the institutions of civil society could offer approaches, methods and processes that were organized around participatory processes and were better suited to effective, sustainable development than the development institutions established after the Second World War. Civil society had brought a paradigmatic change in development and satisfied the need for open, transparent, accountable and participatory governance. It has filled in the gap where the state has failed to deliver.

Participatory development and civil society are the new catchwords in new agenda development that has left behind the residue of what is negative since the 1980s. Civil society is the precipice on which the new agenda works. In this complex and intricate web of new age development agenda, it is important to measure development through the new yardsticks where state is a facilitator but society is the real development propeller.

India has gone far in wooing the LPG regime. Building of a responsible and vibrant society through enhancement of human capabilities is the greatest challenge. People have to act as transforming agents. To comprehend ground realities, it is necessary to assess needs of the local people and optimum use of resources for the betterment of their lives. It is always seen that development has its victims. It's necessary to identify them through best rehabilitation packages and not to brush aside or marginalise them. The state-induced brutal developmental projects have to be made people-friendly and eco-friendly. Issues of livelihood, dignity and rights of people and the environment have to be taken into account. Rich biodiversity has to be protected too so that human development becomes holistic i.e leads to healthy, prosperous and contented life. Thus development needs to be sustainable by strengthening and deepening democracy. Group building and promotion of local leadership must be encouraged so that fruits of development percolate to the lowest rung of the social order. Inequitable growth infuriates the masses and coercive state is now faced with interrogation and resistance struggles. People no longer accept development that displaces them from their habitats. Civil society helps them to give them a platform and voice their grievances.

Strengthening of democratic decentralization is another significant function of the present day civil society. Good citizens need to be created who imbibe the ethical values and embrace the path of righteousness. Civil society therefore brings out development from the dualistic debates of the state versus the market and/ or state and the market. Civil society goes beyond that boundary and more. Put simply, the state involves relations based on regulation and control, while market relations are organized around the quest for profit. While in the sphere of civil society, people come together voluntarily, where they can identify shared interests and where groups can collectively shape norms and articulate purposes.

Civil society thus transforms itself into an associational space to reflect openly and critically and experiment with alternative ways of organizing social, economic and political life. Thus civil society becomes the 'freedom' to imagine that world could be different. With its emphasis on participation and self-determination, civil society approach places agency at the heart of development.

Civil society is an oft-repeated term that has been used in India. However, the term is gaining currency from the beginning of 1990s. In the decades prior to economic liberalisation in India, the civil society groups worked for the overall development of the society and tried to contribute for the overall development of the society and tried to contribute for the upliftment of the downtrodden. Broadly speaking, the contribution of civil society groups had been of three types (Tandon, 1986). Firstly, they brought certain critical developmental issues and concerns like environmental degradation, deforestation, land alienation, displacements, etc to the attention of the policy makers while also making it open for wider public debate. Secondly, they experimented with various developmental models and solutions to address the socio-economic problems of the society. The models of adult education, primary health care, toilets, irrigation system, bio-gas, ecologically balanced wasteland development, etc. were developed on the basis of micro-experiments carried on by them throughout the country. Thirdly, they contributed towards highlighting the plight of the most deprived sections of the society. Most of them worked with the women, tribal, landless labourers, informal sector workers, etc, for their political empowerment, social emancipation and economic development. Beyond the government and business, they acted as the third sector of society.

In the post-liberalisation times since the beginning of the 1990s, when the State started withdrawing from many of its responsibilities, addressing the concerns of society could not be left at the mercy of the political system. As Sarah Joseph (2002) writes, civil

society and social actors are being encouraged now to take up responsibility for the development and welfare functions which the state wants to shed. It is argued that the compulsions of survival in globalised financial and capital markets necessitate such a division of responsibilities. It is said that states, can no longer remain competitive and guarantee employment and redistribution of assets. Besides, there is a large scale prevalence of poverty, conflict, exclusion, marginalisation across the world. Handful of people belonging to corporate and government are also hijacking money through corrupt means. Therefore, the civil society groups have to focus upon governance and development. Various civil society groups are working in tandem with international organizations in India in regions hit hard by socio-economic development.

The civil society groups have three very important contributions in national development—i) innovation---they have been experimenting with new ways of promoting more sustainable, people-centred development and have been able to develop methods, models and equipment that have been widely adopted by the state and national governments as well as internationally.

ii) Empowerment----Involving in empowering socio-economically marginalised and exploited sections of society,

iii) Research and Advocacy---They have undertaken significant public education and policy advocacy through their sustainable research on the issues of women, tribes, dalits, environment, education, human rights, etc

With changing times and emerging challenges, the roles of civil society groups have been diversifying and changing. They have been targeted as the effective agencies by donors (like the World Bank and others) to route aid for developmental activities in the poor countries especially in the event of the rolling back of the state. Secondly, as recipients of aid, civil society organizations also provide safeguards to people adversely affected by the onslaught of the market. Thirdly, following the tradition of Tocqueville and Putnam, civil society is viewed as an effective watchdog that can curb any authoritarian tendencies of State.

The civil society organizations are making the Indian democracy alive and participatory especially since the 1990s. They are playing an important role in deepening the democratic process and expanding the spaces where the poor and excluded people can participate, contribute as well as challenge the process of governance. In fact, the civil society

groups are engaged in a wide spectrum of activities which encompass issues of governance, advocacy, policy making and facilitating people's participation through awareness generation. Policy advocacy role of the civil society groups should be specially highlighted in this regard as the few of the most important Acts like Right to Information, Rural Employment Guarantee , Domestic Violence etc., have been passed in India in the face of strong advocacy initiatives from the civil society. In addition to this many groups work in closely in association with the Panchayati Raj institutions (institutions of local governance in rural India) and municipalities especially in the period following the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts. These groups have empowered the poor and the marginalised. Identifying local needs, prioritising the same and implementing the programmes also have been made possible due to constant engagement of these groups in capacity building interventions. Many civil society groups are in partnership with the central and state government departments in implementing various programmes. Many renowned organisations work in close collaboration with the governments to implement various flagship programmes as well as use the apparatus of the governments to expand their own innovative models of development. Under such circumstances, many civil society groups have emerged to be service facilitator than service provider. The story of CINI (Child in Need Institute) which began its journey in Kolkata, West Bengal, is awe-inspiring and over the years it has emerged into a major non-governmental organisation with an outreach of five million people in the country. It works in four sectors---health, nutrition, education and protection of women, children and vulnerable groups. It links the government and community members in a way that strengthens mutual accountabilities for good governance and basic services.

Furthermore, integrating low income or hard-to-employ workers and the targeting of disadvantaged groups is also an important cornerstone of poverty alleviation strategies. This implies institution of measures targeted at groups of individuals such as ethnic minority groups, poor, women, redundant workers, the unemployed and youths. There are examples of CSOs rising because market fails to offer the goods and services these groups need. The potential measures may include retraining in skills for which there is local demand and job placement programs, programs focused on women employment/credit provision etc. The Self-Employed Women's Association in India is an striking example of how poor and disadvantaged people can enhance their bargaining strengthen through cooperation.

The civil society organizations are working for the empowerment of the women, tribes, dalits and other marginalized sections of society. Issues of civil liberty and political assertion of these groups have captured a lot of civil society space and in the process are creating pressure on the state in an unprecedented way. The struggle of SANTULAN(Social Animation towards United and Liberative Action), a Pune-based civil society group in facilitating the stone quarry migrant workers in the neighbourhood of Pune to lead a life of dignity has ushered in significant changes. SANTULAN has been incessantly trying to address the issues and miseries grieving their lives. It has adopted a two-pronged strategy that includes not only programmes designed for development and empowerment of the migrant/marginalized communities but also advocacy for policy change.

Another significant contribution of civil society is to channel and aggregate collective energy of ordinary people towards pursuing some common public purposes, in the domains of culture, community action, national development, etc. They are becoming open to ideas and taking advantages of new opportunities. Many organizations change according to the change in the contexts, they are sensitive to the changing needs and position themselves in order to be able to deal with the changing needs of their locality or area of operation. For example, the A.F. Ecology Centre in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, which was earlier engaged in watershed development program and through it was building productive assets for the local people and also generating employment at the same time, did change the focus from watershed to sustainable agriculture development soon after the Government of India introduced the National Employment Guarantee Scheme(NREGS).

The social movements constitute another prominent face of civil society. Their objective is to raise voices against anti-people policies of the government, for better governance and for a corruption-free society. These sporadic and spontaneous movements have been strengthened to such extent that the government is not able to ignore them and even the mass emotions that they represent. One example here can be given of movement by Anna hazare.

Even after more than sixty years of so called independence, the dynamics and politics of day-to-day life shows that the way development has been conceived, has not reached its desired destination. The mainstream model of development in India has led to immense hardship for women. It is critical to question women's positioning in any vision, model or strategy of development. As such, questions such as in which type of development

do we wish to see women's equality and women's human rights realized? Equally, what type of development or economic organization would best support women's human rights remain critical? Although defined in feminist literature in the 1970s, empowerment became popular in the development field in the 1980s. It is about mobilizing grassroots women, encouraging their participation and giving them voice in predetermined development strategies without giving them the power to challenge existing narratives of development and to articulate new alternatives. Discussions on alternatives continue to be critical. Human rights ought to be included in the policy making processes and operational activities. The language of human rights allows legitimate claims to be articulated with a moral authority that other approaches lack.

Civil society's role should be seen against the backdrop of women resistance struggles. State violence and atrocities in various parts of India give chilling evidences of patterns of violence which are similar whether in Maharashtra, Orissa or West Bengal women bear the brunt of state violence. For example, the anti-POSCO movement has seen women and civil society groups actively participating. Various inconvenient questions are being raised by various associations and networks deeply involved in advocacy and civil society decision-making processes. POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samiti has been formed where women are also there to resist land grab by the state. In recent years widespread resistance struggles has grown in the mineral rich areas like Chattisgadh, Jharkhand, and Orissa and also in parts of West Bengal and Maharashtra where the local people are resisting imperialist model of development. Women are actively participating in these movements. In spite of facing state violence and sexual assault in some places they are not intimidated. In various resistance struggles women have become iconic symbols of resistance. The Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Samiti (KAMS) is one of the largest women's organizations existing in India today that has targeted patriarchy. In Bihar and Jharkhand, the Nari Mukti Sangh(NMS) is a strong and popular women's organization that is giving space to women's voice and encouraging their participation in economic, political and social activity and decision making processes. Picketing at health centres where there are no doctors, at schools, where teachers are absent, fighting for equitable distribution of food grains, for better wages and remunerative prices, for equal wages for equal work between men and women at work, these tribal women's organizations are democratizing the processes of women's political, social and economic activities, thus making development and democracy more meaningful to them.

At the end of the day these struggles pin-point that development is not only about ideological purity but also to experience the reality and put up a fight with it. To break the barriers of inequality, invisibility and powerlessness, victims have to become beneficiaries even partners in the development process. The biggest challenge in development is thus sustainability. This is not just about economics. It is political tension beyond a certain type. The evolved civil societies have to take India on a reassuring path to development. All development projects need to be people-friendly. The latter need to be treated as subjects rather than objects of development. In an existing cauldron of new emergent economy, there is messy politics. We are not only split on party lines but divided in our ideologies of development. Plethora of development projects with grand agenda, whooping allocation and euphoric had more often than not failed to make significant headway because they are not people-friendly and talk about dispossession. Proper rehabilitation packages are required before dispassion. Besides, people are now ready to interrogate the State for what have been snatched from them. They are no longer ready to give unquestioned obedience and allegiance to the state because their welfare is inextricable linked to all measures that the State takes for them. Therefore they are ready to shun an arbitrary state. Herein, the role of cohesive development becomes so timely and significant. It embraces development that is inclusive, not exclusive.

In this acidic atmosphere of development that talks about dispossession, cohesive development is the real game changer without even batting an eyelid. Instead of patronage politics and mutual bickering, we have to structure our discourse to that. Instead of fault-finding and finger pointing we have to bring credibility and accountability in development. Economics and politics cannot be two warring couples in disarray.

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