

Cultural Anthropological Perspective of Development Re-Examined

PERSPECTIVE ANTHROPOLOGIQUE CULTURELLE DU DÉVELOPPEMENT RÉEXAMINÉE

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Abstract: ‘Development’ –a term that entered popular discourse in the late 1980s has certainly become one of the most debatable buzzwords of the new millennium. The nature and philosophy of development has been the subject matter of profound debates and concerns in economic, political, cultural studies and academic circles since the mid 1980s. However, mainstream economic thought regarding development promises that it would lift the poor above poverty, dissolve dictatorship, protect the environment, integrate cultures, and reverse the growing gap between the rich and poor countries of the world. But in reality, models of the mainstream economic development has brought about the devastating destruction of the traditions, the continued subordination of poor nations and regions by richer countries of the west, environmental degradation, and posed a serious threat to indigenous and non-western cultures and economies. The conventional development thought has resulted in the penetration and expansion of western economist, media, technologies and tremendous clout to define the situation. This paper argues that through the development process, like colonization, modernization, globalization, the west is exploiting and exerting dominance over the other country’s economies, cultures and traditional way of life. The west makes space of development by identifying, defining certain problems and prescribes remedy for the “Third World” countries. Through the United Nations, the IMF, the World Bank, Donor Agencies and these institutions’ legal authority, the West along with its most advanced technologies and professional and institutional knowledge controls all major political and economic affairs of the globe. The paper argues this issue from anthropological perspective that is, holistic perspective, that encompasses economic and non-economic factors simultaneously. In fact, those who advocate development today inherit from Entitlement orientation. The Entitlement offered a universal application of reason to human affairs and it embedded in a philosophy of history with a meta-narrative concerning the continued onward march of society due to the result of science, technology and money. And in this connection, development resurrects an imagined totality of human culture. Anthropological perspective, on the other hand, rejects any such overarching “meta-narrative” and scheme of totalitarian human society and that would pretend to erase the irreducible differences of human experiences. Yet, whatever the nature and philosophy of development how anthropological view can provide alternative look in this regard has been attempted to reconstruct.

Key words: Capitalism, Cold War, Colonialism, Globalization, IMF, Modernization, Post-development, Third World, World Bank, Western Economics, Neoliberalism, UNDP, United Nations

Résumé: Le développement- un terme qui est entré dans le discours populaire à la fin des années 1980 est certainement devenu l’un des mots les plus discutables du nouveau millénaire. La nature et la philosophie du développement ont été le sujet majeur des débats et soucis profonds dans les études économique, politique et culturelle ainsi que le cercle académique depuis le milieu des années 1980. Néanmoins, la pensée économique principale sur le développement promet qu’il peut dégager les pauvres de la pauvreté, dissoudre la dictature, protéger l’environnement, mélanger les

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cultures et raccourcir l' écart de croissance entre les pays riches et pauvres du monde. Mais en réalité, le modèle du développement économique principal a entraîné la destruction dévastatrice des traditions, la subordination continue des nations ou régions pauvres aux pays riches occidentaux, la dégradation environnementale, et lance un défi sérieux aux cultures et économies indigènes et non-occidentales. La pensée de développement conventionnel a conduit à la pénétration et l'expansion des économies, médias et technologies occidentaux, et l'influence considérable sur la situation. Le présent article argumente que, à travers le processus du développement comme la colonisation, la modernisation et la globalisation, l'Occident exerce son dominance sur les économies, les cultures et les modes de vivre traditionnels des autres pays. L'Occident crée l'espace de développement en identifiant certains problèmes et en prescrivant des remèdes pour les pays du Tiers Monde. A travers l'ONU, le FMI, la Banque mondiale, les Agences de donateur et les autorités légales de ces institutions, l'Occident, moyennant ses technologies avancées et ses savoirs professionnel et institutionnel, contrôle toutes les affaires politiques et économique majeure du monde. L'article argumente de cette vue dans la perspective anthropologique, perspective globale, qui contient simultanément les facteurs économiques et non-économiques. En fait, ceux qui préconise le développement aujourd'hui héritent de l'orientation de Droit. Le Droit fournit une application universelle de la raison aux affaires humaines et s'impose dans la philosophie de l'histoire avec un méta-récit concernant la marche avancée de la société due au résultat de sciences, de technologie et d'argent. En la matière, le développement ressuscite une totalité de la culture humaine imaginée. La perspective anthropologique, d'autre part, rejette tout méta-récit et système de la société humaine totalitaire, et prétend à effacer les différences irréductibles de l'expérience humaine. Cependant, quoi que soient la nature et la philosophie du développement, comment le vue anthropologique peut offrir un aspect alternatif sur ce point a été tenté de reconstruire.

Mots-Clés: capitalisme, guerre froide, colonialisme, globalisation, FMI, modernisation, post-développement, Tiers Monde, Banque mondiale, économies occidentales, néolibéralisme, PDNU, ONU

1. INTRODUCTION

Development as a practical and intellectual project has been steeped in optimism. Yet, after more than several decades of development, many areas of the world are worse off today than they were before, despite development programs and aid. Millions of Africans and Asians suffer and die from starvation and malnutrition. In the face of such failure, deterioration and destruction, it is not wise to persist in talking about development as the harbinger of human emancipation. It would seem that the model of development now widely pursued as part of the problem rather than the solution. The sooner we demythologize this ideology the better. It disorders our imagination, limits our vision, blinding us to the alternatives that human ingenuity is capable of imagining and implementing. The myth of development is elevated to the status of natural law, objective reality and evolutionary necessity. In the process all otherworld views are devalued and dismissed as 'primitive', 'backward', 'irrational' or 'naive'.

Development is, in conventional sense, the process whereby other people are dominated and their destinies are shaped according to an essentially Western way of convincing and perceiving the world. The development discourse is the part of an imperial process whereby other peoples are appropriated and turned into objects. It

is an essential part of the process whereby the 'developed' countries manage, control and even creates the Third World economically, politically, socially and culturally. It is a process whereby the lives of some peoples, their plans, their hopes, their imaginations, are shaped by others who frequently share neither their lifestyles, nor their hopes nor their values. The real nature of this process is disguised by a discourse that portrays development as a necessary and desirable process, as human destiny itself. The economic, social and political transformations of the Third World are inseparable from the production and reproduction of meanings, symbols and knowledge, that is, cultural reproduction (V.Tucker, 1999:2).

In fact, considerable attention has been given to the analysis of the economic mechanisms of underdevelopment and, to a lesser extent, the social and political process. In this regard, dependency theories have produced important analysis of the ways in which economic processes of development have produced underdevelopment. However, the cultural dimension, the production of cultural meanings and symbols, has not received adequate attention. In the development studies, culture has tended to be regarded as something of an epiphenomenon, secondary in importance to the all-important economic and political domains. To date it is the least examined aspect, and this has considerable implications. In this treatise it will be argued that the failure to critically examine powerful culturally

constructed myth is at the root of the current impasse in development thinking and practice. By emphasizing the cultural dimension of the development process I am not replacing one form of reductionism with another. I am neither underestimating the central importance of political economy nor am I proposing culture as a new paradigm. The purpose of this article is rather to address a major blind spot in development thinking and in this regard, how anthropological view has been able to endow with the holistic and humanistic approach in relation to the mainstream development thinking would be my concentration to trace out.

2. MEANINGS OF DEVELOPMENT OVER TIME

Overtime 'development' has carried very different meanings. The term 'development' in its present sense dates from the postwar era of modern development thinking. In hindsight, earlier practices have been viewed as antecedents of development policy, though the term 'development' was not necessarily used at the time. Thus, Kurt Martin (1991) regards the classic political economists, from Ricardo to Marx, as development thinkers for they addressed similar problems of economic development. The turn of the century latecomers to industrialization in Central and Eastern Europe faced basic development questions, such as the appropriate relationship between agriculture and industry. In central planning, the Soviets found a novel instrument to achieve industrialization. During the Cold War years of rivalry between capitalism and communism, the two competing development strategies were Western economics and some form of Central Planning (in Soviet, Chinese or Cuban varieties). In this general context, the core meaning of development was catching up with the advanced industrialized countries.

Cowen and Shenton uncover yet another meaning of development. In nineteenth century England, 'development' they argue, referred to remedies for the shortcomings and maladies of progress. This involves questions such as population (according to Malthus), jobless (for the Luddites), the social question, (according to Marx and others) and urban squalor. In this argument, *progress* and *development* (which are often viewed as seamless web) are contrasted and development differs from and components progress. Thus for Hegel, progress is linear and development curvilinear (Cowen and Shenton, 1996:130). Accordingly, twentieth century development thinking in Europe and the colonies had already traversed many terrains and positions and was a reaction to nineteenth century progress and policy failures were industrialization left people uprooted and out of work, and social relations dislocated.

The immediate predecessor of modern development economics was colonial economics. Economics in the

European colonies and dependencies had gone through several stages. In brief, an early stage of commerce by chartered companies, followed by plantations and mining. In a later phase, colonialism took on the form of 'trusteeship': the management of colonial economies not merely with a view to their exploitation for metropolitan benefit but allegedly also to develop the economies in the nearest of the population. Development, if the term was used at all in effect referred mainly to colonial resource management, first to make the colonies cost-effective, and later to build up economic resources with a view to national independence. Industrialization was not part of colonial economics because the comparative advantage of the colonies was held to be the export of raw materials for the industries in the metropolitan countries. Indeed, here are many episodes, amply documented, when European or colonial interests destroyed native infrastructures (textile manufacturing in India is the classic case) or sabotage efforts as industrialization in the periphery (Egypt, Turkey, Persia are case in point; Stavrianos, 1981). This is a significant difference between the colonial economies and the latecomers in the Central and Eastern Europe.

In modern development thinking and economics, the core meaning of development was economic growth, as in growth theory and Bug Push theory. In the course of time mechanization and industrialization became part of this, as in Rostow's *Stages of Growth*. When development thinking broadened to encompass modernization, economic growth was combined with political modernization, i.e. nation building, and social modernization, such as fostering entrepreneurship and 'achievement orientation'. In dependency theory, the core meaning of development likewise was economic growth, under the heading of accumulation, which led to the 'development of underdevelopment' and an intermediate form of 'associated dependent development'. The positive goal was national accumulation (or autocratic development). With the onset of alternative development thinking, new understanding of development came to the fore focused on social and community development. With human development in the mid 1980s came the understanding of development as capability, following Amartya Sen's work on capacities and entitlements, In this view the point of development above all, is that it is enabling. The core definition of development in the Human Development Reports of UNDP is 'the enlargement of people's choices'.

Two radically different perspectives on development came to the fore around the same time. Neoliberalism, in returning to neoclassical economics, eliminates the foundation of development economics: the notion that developing economies represent a 'special case'. According to the neoliberal view, there is no special case. What matters is to 'get the prices right' and let market forces do their work. Development in the sense of government intervention is anathema for it means

market distortion. The central objective, economic growth is to be achieved through structural reform, deregulation, liberalization, privatization—all of which are to roll back government and reduce market-distorting interventions, and in effect annul ‘development’. In other words, one of the conventional core meanings of ‘development’ is retained, i.e. economic growth, while the ‘how to’ and agency of development switches from state to market. Accordingly, neoliberalism is an anti-development perspective, not in terms of goals but in terms of means. Post-development thinking also puts forth an anti-development position. This is still more radical for it applies not merely to the means (the state is accused of authoritarian engineering) but also to the goals (economic growth is repudiated) and the results (which are deemed a failure or disaster for the majority of the population) (Rahnema and Bawtree, 1997). An overview is in table 1.

Table 1 Meaning of development over time

Period	Perspectives	Meanings of development
1870>	Latecomers	Industrialization, catching-up
1850>	Colonial economics	Resource management, trusteeship
1940>	Development economics	Economic growth, industrialization.
1950>	Modernization theory	Growth, political and social modernization
1960>	Dependency theory	Accumulation –national, auto-centric.
1970>	Alternative development	Human flourishing
1980>	Human development	Capacitation, enlargement of people’s choices.
1980>	Neoliberalism	Economic growth-structural reform, deregulation, liberalization, privatization
1990>	Post development	Authoritarian, engineering, disaster

(Quoted from J.Pieterse, 2001:7).

Thus the lineage of development are quite mixed. It includes the application of science and technology to collect organization, but also managing the changes that arise from the application of technology. Development virtually from the outset has included an element of reflexivity. It ranges from infrastructure works (roads, railways, dams, canals, ports) to industrial policy, the welfare state, new economic policy, colonial economics and Keynesian demand management.

There are several ways of making sense of this shift

of meanings of development over time. One is to view this kind of archaeology of development discourse as a deconstruction of development, i.e. as part of a development critique. Another is to treat it as part of historical context: it is quite sensible for development to change meaning in relation to changing circumstances and sensibilities. ‘Development’ then serves as a mirror of changing economic and social capacities, priorities and choices. A third option is to recombine these different views as dimensions of development, i.e. to fit them altogether as part of a development mosaic and thus to reconstruct development as synthesis of components (Martinussen, 1997:3).

3. VIEWING DEVELOPMENT AS A SET RELATIONS IN THE LIGHT OF DISCOURSE BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR

Grand development policies has become mechanisms of control as a set relations that were just as pervasive and effective as their colonial counterpart and as a discourse (in the Foucauldian sense, 1877.1980.0988) ‘development’ creates a space in which only certain things could be said and even imagined. The created space stipulates as only through material advancement could social, cultural and political progress be achieved. This view determines the belief that capital investment was the most important ingredient in economic growth and development. The advance of poor countries is thus seen from the outset as depending on ample supplies of capital to provide for infrastructure, industrialization and overall modernization of society. And obviously this capital should come from rich countries. Moreover, it is absolutely necessary that governments and international organizations take an active role in promoting and orchestrating the necessary efforts to overcome general backwardness and economic underdevelopment. Through this process of capital formation and the various factors associated with it: technology, population and resources, monetary and fiscal policies, industrialization and agricultural development, commerce and trade. There is also a series of factors linked to cultural considerations, such as education and the need to foster modern cultural values. Finally, there is the need to create adequate institutions for carrying out the complex task ahead: international organizations (such as the World Bank and the IMF); national planning agencies and technical agencies of various kinds. Yet, Development is not merely the result of the combination, study or gradual elaboration of these elements; nor the product of the introduction of new ideas; nor the effect of the new international organizations or financial institutes. It is rather the result of the establishment of a set of relations among these elements, institutions and practices and of the systemization of these relations to form a whole.

In view of understanding development as a

discourse, one must look not at the elements themselves but at the system of relations established among them. It is this system that allows the systematic creation of objects, concepts and strategies; it determines what can be thought and said. These relations – established between institutions, socio-economic processes, forms of knowledge, technological factors and so on – define the conditions under which objects, concepts, theories and strategies can be incorporated into the discourse. Actually, the system of relations establishes a discursive practice that sets the rules of the game: who can speak, from what points of view, with what authority and according to what criteria of expertise; it sets the rules that must be followed for this or that problem, theory or object to emerge and be named, analyzed and eventually transformed into a policy or a plan (Escobar, 1995).

In fact, Development proceeded by creating 'abnormalities' (such as the 'illiterate', the 'underdeveloped', the 'malnourished', 'small farmers' or 'landless peasants'), which it would later treat and reform. Approaches that could have had positive effects in terms of easing material constraints became, linked to the type of rationality, instruments of power and control. As time went by, new problems were progressively and selectively incorporated: once a problem was incorporated into the discourse, it had to be categorized and further specified. Some problems were specified at a given level (for instance, a nutritional deficiency identified at the level of the household could be further specified as a regional production storage or as affecting a given population group), or in relation to a particular institution. But these refined specifications did not seek so much to illuminate possible solutions as to give 'problems' a visible reality amenable to particular treatments.

The end result is the creation of a space of thought and action, the expansion of which is detected in advance by the very same rules introduced during its formative stages. The development discourse defined a perpetual field structured by grids of observation, modes of inquiry and registration of problems and forms of intervention. To be sure, new objects have been included, new modes of operation introduced and a number of variables modified (for instance, in relation to strategies to combat hunger, knowledge about nutritional requirements, the type of crops given priority and the choice of technology have changed); yet the same set of relations among these elements continued to be established by the discursive practices of the institutions involved.

In a similar vein, patriarchy and ethnocentrism influenced the form development took. Indigenous populations had to be 'modernized', where modernization meant the adoption of the 'right' values – namely, those held by the white minority or a mestizo majority and, in general, those embodied in the ideal of the cultivated European; programs for industrialization and agricultural development, however, have not only made women invisible in their role as producers but

have also tended to perpetuate their subordination. Forms of power in terms of class, gender, race and nationality thus found their way into development theory and practice. The former do not determine the latter in a direct causal relation: rather, they are the development discourse's formative elements (Rheena, Bawtree and Escobar 1997).

Finally, what is included as legitimate development issues may depend on specific relations established in the midst of the discourse: relations' for instance, between what experts say and what international politics allows as feasible; between one power segment and another (say, industry versus agriculture); or between two or more forms of authority (for instance, the balance between nutritionists and public health specialists, on the one hand, and the medical profession, on the other, which may determine the adoption of particular approaches to rural health care). Other type of relations to be considered are those between sites from which objects appear (for instance, between rural and urban areas): between procedures of assessment of needs (such as the use of empirical data by World Bank mission), and the position of authority of those carrying out the assessment (this may determine the proposals made and the possibility of their implementation). Thus, in the resultant consequence 'development' was –and continues to be for the most part – a top down, ethnocentric and technocratic approach, which treated people and cultures as abstract concepts not as a cultural process (culture is a residual variable, to disappear with the advance of modernization) but instead as a system of more or less universally applicable technical interventions intended to deliver some 'badly needed' goods to a 'target' population. It comes as no surprise that development has been bounded the poor, developing world into the grip of advanced nations as a set relations simultaneously becomes a force so destructive to Third World cultures, ironically in the name of people's interests (slightly tailored from Escobar's, 1995)

4. DEVELOPMENT: MAINSTREAM VERSUS OTHER THINKING

Development thinking goes back to nineteenth century political economy but modern development thinking is no more than fifty years old. In relation to the complexities of social life, development as applied social science has been an arena of ideological posturing or pragmatic reformism. At times, in relation to the collective body, development interventions seem like performing surgery with a chainsaw. Still, in some conditions surgery with heavy equipment beats no surgery at all.

Development knowledge is fragmented by discipline-centrism. Each discipline compartmentalizes development 'to suit its own areas of specialization,

research methods, and theoretical frameworks' (Brohman, 1995: 303). Within this division of labor there has been a definite hierarchy.

'Development in its halcyon days was mainly economic development. Other disciplines entered the area apologetically or stealthily – as the supplementary knowledge of social structures facilitating or hindering economic growth, as insights into the psychological factors motivating or discouraging economic growth, as information about the political factors influencing economic decisions' (Nandy, 1995: 146).

Meanwhile divergent theories are often applied in different policy spheres and economic sectors at the same time, making really existing development a patchwork of zigzag premises and policies.

Neoclassical development economics, steeped in mathematics, as a formidable instance of applied Cartesianism. Partly, this is a rendezvous with intellectual and managerial power to classify, administer and change the world.

Conventional development is a politics of measurement, a matter of 'fixing' within the limited spheres, achieving desired change by manipulating indicators and modifying numerical relationships, such as the ratio of external debt to GDP, or debt to exports. The gap between economic development and social and cultural development, or the hard and soft dimensions of development, is reproduced in the institutional division between the Bretton Woods institutions and UN agencies, in which the former hold the purse strings. Indeed, this mathematical universe is indebted in many different ways for the sake of macroeconomic and financial management (R. Munck and D. O'Hearn, 1999:72). Modern development has placed technological progress over human development.

During the period of development journey, both in the pre and post independent nation states, development as discourse of socio-economic advancement has been conceptualized and understood as a part Western development thinking. In the past, the objectives of development and strategies to attain these objectives have been prescribed and designed by forces who have little understanding of the socio cultural and political process of the countries. This outside forces always attempted to influence the course of history and development in many countries of the world. The following quotes vividly present the philosophical inadequacy of mainstream development thinking.

'We cannot hope to formulate adequate development theory and policy for the majority of the world's population who suffer from underdevelopment without first learning how

their past and social history give rise to their present underdevelopment" (Frank, 1996:17)

Keith Griffin also succinctly discussed the issue as follows:

"The automatic functioning of the international economy, which Europe dominated, first created underdevelopment and then hindered efforts to escape from it. In summary, underdevelopment is a product of historical process" (Griffin, 1979: 78).

Griffin further says:

"Underdevelopment is not original or traditional, and that neither the past nor the present of the underdeveloped countries. The now developed countries were never underdeveloped though they may have been undeveloped" (p. 104).

We argue, therefore, that development ideas that have been evolved over the past several decades is rooted in certain misconceptions that denied the history and culture of the so-called underdeveloped countries. A consideration of past history and culture would have been useful in evolving a more effective discourse of development for these countries. In the conventional thinking, it was always expected that development would happen as a result of divine plan or as the working of the mindless natural laws. Man in this thinking is reduced to a powerless entity among others, unable to effect the course of history.

Development industry as viewed by mainstream proponents undermines the role of people, their ability, and power of humans. Development is not treated as economic, social, cultural and human relation rather as a technological relation of capital and output. The universal applicability of Western Economic models in all countries and in all situations are either, implicitly or explicitly, assumed. The growth of GNP, per-capita income, industrialization, urbanization, etc., are used as some universal material indicators of development. Major human indicators are either ignored or given less emphasis. We present below the main features of mainstream development ideas:

- Basically a Western discourse
- Unifocal single discipline-oriented discourse
- Conviction regarding universal applicability of models:
- Normally don't accept development as historical process:
- Development is considered as technical and non-human issue:

- Performance is measured through income and other material indicators:
- Marginal consideration of power and initiative of people:
- NO important steps for human development:
- Social mobilization and people's participation is absent: and
- Planning is still top-down process.

5. ALTERNATIVE THINKING: HOW DOES ANTHROPOLOGY CONSIDER DEVELOPMENT?

Anthropologists' role in the debate of development discourse can be dated back from early 1970s and their entry is not always looked upon with applause and appreciation by mainstream development thinkers. We present below one quotation from the writing of one prominent economist, which clearly shows the attitude of mainstream development proponents.

“Place any economist in the capital city of an underdeveloped country and give him the necessary assistance, and he will in no time make a plan. In this regard we are unique among social scientists. No sociologists, psychologists or anthropologists would ever think of trying to do such a thing”(Myrdal, 1971,20).

However, there is a different view and appreciation of anthropologists' role in development. For example, David H. Penny, an economist, writes:

“From certain point of view, social anthropologists appear, from their training, to be well qualified to study the development process they learn the language of the people they are studying, they stay long enough in the field to get to know at least some people well, and to see development in process, and they know that they must study a society in all its aspects” (1972, 5).

5.1 Anthropology Accused

The different views of economists regarding the role of anthropology and anthropologists in the contemporary development industry have been well-stated in the two quotations above. Before focusing how does anthropology consider development, let me present below the different grounds of attack of anthropological study of development by economists.

“Anthropologists are accused of methodological fuzziness and statistical

imprecision: of manifesting negative attitudes towards change and of supporting traditional practices. Rather than identifying tradition as an obstacle to be overcome; of insisting on unreasonably long field research unduly delaying the project design and implementation cycle; of being arcane, esoteric and academic. Anthropologists were accused for being too protective of the people and too resisting of change” (Horowitz, 1994).

The economists' attack of anthropologists' position can be seen as a defense of their territory and the recent challenge that anthropologists pose over economists' monopoly in development.

5.2 Development as Cultural Constructs

Development in anthropology has been always looked upon a cultural construct. Every case of development is unique, in the sense that every culture is different and represents adaptation in specific eco-environmental niche. Therefore, there is need for cultural construction of development discourse, where people of each and every culture will be able to design, formulate and implement programs and projects commensurate with their need and expectation.

In this sense, development discourse as viewed in anthropology is different from mainstream discourse, which emphasizes universal applicability of development models. Development in anthropology is treated as a holistic concept where socio-cultural (non-economic) and economic factors interact with one another to produce change.

Anthropology is a humanistic discipline and the study of humans forms the crux of anthropological study and research. Development programs that are undertaken with the objectives of overall development of the society and the economy has a human dimension. Development thus becomes more a human problem than economic and technical problem, which the mainstream development thinkers have ignored in the literature. This issue has been put into development terms by Inkeles and Smith.

“Development requires a transformation in the very nature of man, a transformation that is both a means to greater growth and at the same time one of the greater ends of the development process” (Inkeles and Smith, 1974,289).

And other alternative form of anthropological view has been expressed in Stohr's statement;

“Development to be based principally on

maximum mobilization of each area's natural, human, and institutional resources with the primary objective being the satisfaction of the basic needs of the inhabitants of the area. In order to serve the bulk of the population broadly categorized as 'poor' or those regions described as disadvantaged, development policies must be oriented directly towards the problems of poverty, and must be motivated and initially controlled from the bottom. There is an inherent distrust of the 'trickle down' or 'spread effect' expectations of past development policies. Development from below strategies are basic-needs oriented, labor intensive, small scale, regional –resource-based, often rural-centered, and argue for the use of 'appropriate' rather than highest technology”(Stohr, 1981,1-2).

5.3 Cultural Construction of Behavior: Some Examples

Since inception, anthropology has developed the concept of culture to a point of great analytic utility and explanatory power (Niholas, 1973) which has been useful in explaining the behavior and various norms in particular societal context. In the Western economic interpretation, many behavior and norms in a traditional and undeveloped society, which appear irrational, unrealistic, illogical may indeed reveal very intricate cultural meaning from a very close look. An anthropologist is able to reveal cultural meaning of many activities of individuals, which may at the first instance appear irrational.

Let us take few examples from the social context of, what is called underdeveloped by mainstream development thinkers, Bangladesh. A cultivator in Bangladesh whether he is an owner or tenant farmer, cultivates his lands in spite of the fact that in most cases he is a loser in the strict cost-return analysis of economics. Cultivators resisted use of chemical fertilizer when it was introduced in the mid 1960s. A cultivator borrows money to throw a feast (*jeafat*) after his father's death or pay dowry for his daughter's marriage. Many villagers resisted the adoption of family planning measures to have limited number of children, though they realize that they don't have the capacity to support a large number of children. How do we explain all these acts and behavior? Do all these represent acts of bunch of illiterate, irrational human beings of Bangladesh? From the perspective of Western thinking the answer is, perhaps, yes.

In anthropology, all the acts and events that are cited above have a cultural component and cannot be judged in strict economic sense from outsider's point of view. One may call this 'cultural rationality'. Therefore, in designing development strategies and programs, anthropologists may provide feedback in explicating and understanding certain intricate issues that may

otherwise hinder attainment of development objectives of developing countries.

In anthropology a form alist-substantivist debate regarding the question of applicability of Western economic theories and models in the traditional and underdeveloped societies has been going on for quite a long time. In this debate, economy is regarded as "instituted process" and every human society is faced with a great variety of institutions other than markets, in which man's livelihood was embedded (polanyi, 1968). A large number of anthropologists subscribe to the substantivists' view that every economy is unique and should be treated as instituted process. This is, perhaps, the most accepted and dominant trend in contemporary development thinking in anthropology.

Due to humanistic bias, the field of anthropology always takes humans as the principal focus of all development. In recent years, it is heard a lot about new development paradigm involving people in various activities for socio-economic advancement. Human development report of 1994 clearly emphasizes the need for people's participation in development. The report states,

“A new development paradigm is needed that puts people at the center of development, regards economic growth as a means and not an end, protects the life opportunities of future generations as well as the present generations and respect the natural system on which all life depends” (quoted in Rahman, 1994).

The need for emphasis of Human issues in development by United Development Program further strengthens the position of anthropologists, who are arguing to protect the interest of people since its inception as a field of social science.

The importance of "local knowledge" or 'indigenous knowledge system' which has been otherwise termed as culturally specific knowledge is emphasized by anthropologists in their study of undeveloped societies. Recently, the question of local knowledge has gained considerable currency from anthropologists. It has been pointed out that rural people who form the majority in many low-income Third World countries, possess wealth of knowledge, which can be utilized quite effectively in the rural, socio-economic and agricultural development. The problem however, as pointed out by Chambers is that, 'Centralized urban and professional power, knowledge and values have flowed out over and often fail to recognize the knowledge of rural people themselves. An exception has been social anthropologists who have been at pains to experience cultures other than their own from inside, and to learn and understand the values and knowledge of those cultures' (Chambers, 1985:82).

It is suggested that anthropology provides ideas for

alternative thinking of development. There is no universal approach for development and every case of development is unique, therefore, strategy should be developed accordingly. Diversity and decenteredness must be placed at the top of the agenda in formulating the question of development (V. Tucker, 1999:11). Anthropology also strongly argues for a cultural construction of development discourse. In this regard, let me provide below the core features of anthropological development discourse:

- Development is cultural construct
- No universal development model
- Emphasis local knowledge
- Need of the people get importance
- Peoples' participation
- Environment friendly
- In-depth understanding of the local situation
- Stress bottom up approach
- Human development, and
- Preservation of the rights of small group and sub-culture.

6. ANTHROPOLOGICAL CONSIDERATION OF DEVELOPMENT

Some Examples from Bangladesh's Experience

In the previous section, it is already highlighted that how anthropology views development. In this section, let me present some more specific examples from the past development experience of Bangladesh and try to explain this from anthropological perspective and to say plainly these examples display more or less the similar experience of all the developing countries of the world.

In Bangladesh, development thinking and the models applied in the formulations of plans and programs have been influenced by the development thinking which are basically Western Social Constructions. This is because, Bangladesh relied heavily on foreign aid, and this always comes with preconditions and prescriptions regarding what to do with aid. The recent Structural Adjustment Reform programs of Bangladesh dictated by IFM and World Bank is such an example and represents blatant interference in the internal economic affairs of the country. Is there any way out of this? What can we do? There is really not much that we can do, given our adherence to the mainstream development rules when we already accepted the fact that, "they are at the dispensing end and we are at the receiving end".

It has been suggested that over the years, the main shortcomings of the journey towards development has been the urban-bias bureaucratic planning that almost paid no emphasis on people's participation, people's need, utilization of local knowledge and also their

expectation. The formulation and implementation of plans has always remained the exclusive domain of government economists (sometimes supported by expatriate consultants) and bureaucrats. The people who are supposed to be the principal actors and beneficiaries of the developments always remained at the periphery or totally forgotten. So the basic question that remains to be answered: Whose Development?

Poverty still remains a persistent problem in spite of the massive alleviation programs in the successive five year plans and also by private sector interventions initiated by NGOs. The definition of poverty still represents mainstream thinking and we are yet to define poverty from the view of those who experience this. The definition we know is an imposed one and in certain material indicators are used to define who is poor or not. We question that if a person thinks that he is not poor, even it does not fulfill the set criteria, can we call this person poor? Perception of poverty by those who experience this is important in any poverty alleviation programs. So here a question remains: Whose Poverty? Rahman from his fieldwork and drawing from the description of people, defined poverty as a multidimensional core of vulnerabilities (Rahman, 1994:1).

If we agree that poverty is a situation of vulnerability and insecurity, then reduction of this vulnerability and providing security to the people become *sine qua non* of any poverty alleviation program. No poverty alleviation program should be imposed from above. Mechanism should be developed so that people can participate both in the planning and implementation of poverty alleviation programs. We must have the trust on the power, capacity and initiative of the people who are only the actors but also the beneficiaries of any state intervention programs. In the last Thirty-five years, we failed to give due importance to the people, and therefore the impact of poverty alleviation programs remained minimum which contributed to the persistence of poverty in Bangladesh. From the anthropological point of view, it is essential that we undertake pro-people, culture sensitive programs.

The rural and agricultural programs suffer from the same inadequacies that we mention regarding poverty alleviation programs. From the beginning of the development journey, the main emphasis of the agricultural development program has been to increase the agricultural productivity mainly to enhance the food production. No attempt has been made to identify the major constraints of implementing such a strategy.

The role of agricultural workers has been considered critical in disseminating knowledge and information about new rice technology and other related activities. In some case agricultural extension workers have been treated as 'change agent'. Local knowledge and agricultural practices which people were following generations after generations have received scanty

attention from planners. The effects of this technology on the flora and fauna, fish production and soil productivity have been rarely considered. We have heard about 'Second Generation Problems', but nobody appears to be interested in this. We heard a lot about 'local planning' and 'participatory planning', but hardly any effective and concrete steps were taken to materialize this.

Without undermining the success of health sectors in certain areas, it can be said that much more could be achieved by relying on how people understand their health problems and how they want to solve their health problems. (Alam, 1996).

The general health situation in Bangladesh is significantly linked with the lack of awareness among the people about health care and their access to health care facilities. The average life expectancy in Bangladesh is only 62 years (Bangladesh Economic Survey, 2007). Infant and maternal mortality also remains highest in the world. The effects of morbidity and illness episodes on both quality and productivity of the life of survivors are enormous and often ignored. The consequences of anemia, heavy intestinal parasite infestation, and deficiencies of micronutrients such as vitamin A constitute public health program in the country. There are many of the diseases, the magnitude of which can be reduced by creating public awareness and by making the health services available to the public.

The crux of the problem is that a large majority of the population is either not covered by the official (or modern) health care system, or people are not interested in using those services. In the treatment of disease, an understanding of the persons' state of mind, their perception of disease, economic condition, world view, behavior pattern, vocabulary used in describing the disease and the level of confidence in the system is a *sine qua non* for a proper approach to treatment. It is critical to appreciate and understand the socio-cultural context within which people live and make decisions regarding various problems of their life. The emphasis here is on the need for cultural construction of the various issues and problems related to health.

It is critical that we should realize and appreciate that a very popular and highly developed indigenous systems of health care is prevalent parallel with the government health service. A large number of *Kabiraj*, traditional midwives (known as *dai*), herbal healers, homeopaths ayurvedic specialists and snake charmers provide the basis of local (indigenous) system of health care in the country. The important questions that remain to be answered are: Why people rely so much on the indigenous system? Anthropology emphasizes the use of indigenous health care practices that are effective and fulfill the expectation of people.

However, what is said is that there is alternative way of looking at development, and anthropology is able to provide this alternative outlook.

7. CONCLUSION

Development is not a natural process, although it has been accorded such a status in the mythology of Western beliefs. It is, rather, a set of practices and beliefs that has been woven into the fabric of Western culture and is specific to it. Development is not a transcultural concept that can claim universal validity (Rist, 1990:12). It is a specifically Western construction and many languages have no equivalent. Such construction or shared beliefs play an important role in mobilizing energies for social reproduction and in legitimizing the actions of the believers.

The myth of development constitutes part of the social imaginary of Western societies. It is for this reason that- despite the transfer of goods, gadgets, capital, technology, hospitals and roads – the economic policies and the socio-economic accomplishments of the West cannot be replicated in Third World countries. From the material point of view everything is set to go, but the symbolic engine is missing (Rist, 1990:18).

Indeed, all this underlines the inadequate treatment of culture, whether in theory or in practice. Diversity and decentredness must be placed at the top of the agenda in formulating the question of development.

Out of the domineering discourses in development thinking of Western economics and amidst opacity and prods credibility to the search of alternative 'regimes of truth', for other ways of knowing that have been marginalized, suppressed and discredited by the so-called modern development stipulators. This place of argument is a multicultural place, a place that is constantly engaged in a hermeneutics of suspicion against presumed universalisms or totalities. Multiculturalism has, however, flourished in cultural studies of development thinking, transdisciplinary configurations that converge the different social sciences as well as literary studies and where critical knowledge is steadily being produced.

In this regard, anthropological holism involves 'balanced development' in a wider and more fundamental sense, across dimensions of collective existence, from the epistemological to the practical, which may take several forms:

- A multidimensional approach, or a balance between the horizontal and vertical dimensions of collective existence. The horizontal refers to the worldly and social spheres; the vertical refers to the inner dimension of subjectivities and meanings, to the depth of the social and cultural field
- A multifaceted approach or a 'diamond' social science, which reflects or shines light upon relations and dynamics across sectors (economy, politics, the social and cultural studies), and

levels (local, microregional, national, macroregional, global) and achieves a balance between them.

- A chiaroscuro social science which abandons the assumption that society is fully transparent. The assumption of transparency is what lent the Enlightenment its totalitarian bent, as in Foucault's pan-opticism. This is a matter of modesty, a sense of contingency of knowledge, or self-limiting rationality (Kaviraj 1992).

- A distinction between and combination of objective and subjective dimensions of development. Development thinking has to increasingly anchor in people's subjectivities rather than in overarching institutions—the state or international institutions. Development thinking should have become more participatory and insider-oriented, as in the actor-oriented approach to development.

- A trend in local (and increasingly also in large-scale) development towards social partnerships across sectors, or synergies between different development actors—government, civic associations and firms. This may be referred to as a holistic approach. This is

a marked departure from times when development was seen as either state-led, or marked-led or civil-society-led.

A more complex awareness of time in development, what is needed is combining multiple time frames and a balance between 'slow knowledge' and the 'fast knowledge' of instant problem solving. 'Slow knowledge is knowledge shaped and calibrated to fit a particular ecological context' (Orr, 1996:33). Since development is concerned with the measurement of desirable change over time, it is chronocentric. The conventional time horizon of development policy—the mid-term time span of a generation (or five years or so in the case of planning, development project-based lending)—has to be changed with sustainable development and the implied notion of intergenerational equity, and 'coevolutionary'. It has been changing also a consequence of the duration of the development era and the failures of 'development decades', which gradually brings to the foreground the *longue duree* of development.

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