

Modernisation Paradigm : A Critique

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One of the significant achievements of the second phase of the discourse on development, was the initiating of modernisation paradigm. This phase emphasised more on the relationship between economic development and social change. It was realised that institutional factors hindered economic progress and technological change. As a consequence of this realisation every attempt was made to strengthen and modify institutional framework of society.

Max Weber in his writings tried to prove that capitalism which was the root of all 'development' was the result of Protestant Calvinism. Weber emphasised on profit motive. Profit was for Weber, a visible sign of one's heavenly as well as earthly success and was not to be spent on enjoyment but on further investment and productivity (Varma 1989).

Thirty years after Weber, Hoselitz chose three alternatives as suggested by Talcott Parsons relevant for economic development, namely achievement vs. ascriptions, universalism vs. particularism and specificity vs. diffusion. Followed by Hoselitz, Mclelland came out with the view that hard work which inspired the people to produce beyond their need was responsible for the success of economic development of the western societies.

Then came Hagen who divided human personalities into authoritative and innovative. He argued that social change was possible only with change in personality which would in course of time lead to development. Since the traditional societies were lacking in innovative personalities, social change was possible only under the impact of external source i.e. the west. But all these theories depended on the west for the development of modernisation paradigm. Actually, every society has to face the challenges of modernisation according to their traditional culture and history. Modernisation as a process does not have a universal form. The process of modernisation begins first with the replacement of the traditional instrumental values which are generally legitimised through customs, magic, ethos and

technology. The replacement takes place with the help of instrumental values derived from the rational system of science and technology (Singh 1989: 36-43).

The mystification of the idea of modernity which prevails in both the developing as well as developed societies assumes two forms. The first refers to its idealisation as a scientific world view based on the principles of reason, humanity, communism, logical openness through fallibility, revisability and perpetual dynamism of outlook etc.

The second form of mystification is implicit in the models of development that the third world societies adopt for modernisation. In most such countries the process of modernisation implies conscious formulation of a cultural policy and its implementation through changes in the social, political, economic, and aesthetic structures of society. Evocation of the values of tradition or its glorification in some context from organic elements of the modernisation ideology in the Third World countries not only because of natavistic stance but as an institutional necessity consequent upon their historical experience of colonialism and neo-colonialism (Singh 1989: 38). Modernisation also ensure a rapid process of change without structural breakdown which accompanies revolution.

Critique:

The most spectacular achievement of the second phase of development was the birth and continuity of modernisation paradigm. The appeal of this paradigm was so strong that it lasted for nearly two decades. But it was criticised as being based on partial and superficial historical analysis and for not taking sufficient account of colonialism as a major determinant of the retardation of the economic and societies of the third world.

The modernisation paradigm like development was Eurocentric. Third world societies were supposed to be a reflection of the good society of the West which had all the good things of life, the third world also had to have the same but at an accelerated pace.

Another difficulty with the paradigm was that it was rich in promises for a distant future, but its rewards for the proximate present and the immediate future was unconvincing.

Another lacuna was that it gave the impression of being an universal process that would usher equality all over. But in actual practice it accentuated differences between rich and poor nations, and among the poor nations between the affluent and the impoverished.

The theory overlooked the problem of energy scarcity and the demands of the environment. Excessive use of technology and growth of industrialisation were producing some good results but at a tremendous cost to the future. What soon became clear was that the developing countries appeared to be far from either being developed or modernised as poverty and illiteracy abounded in these countries.

Modern media of communication were not used in the service of the people, transport facilities continued to be backward, public health standards as well as the working condition of the people were poor. No effort seems to have been made by the leadership to bring about structural modifications or institutional changes. As such the instruments for modernisation were lacking. Under the circumstances, the decline of the paradigm of modernisation became inevitable.

Modernisation places emphasis on the increasing use of science and technology, without caring to find out whether the technology developed by the West would be of use to them, and even if of some use, would they be able to bear the financial burden of such transfers? The modernisation paradigm has made western society a model for the third world countries to build their future without an understanding of the inner crisis and threats it held out for genuine global development. It was also difficult for the people in the developing countries to forget the glorious eras of their past history when they had attained level of civilisation which could well compare with the western civilisation, if not in terms of material gains or availability of consumer goods or development of science and technology, certainly in several other respects involving the deeper recesses of human soul and mind. The emphasis in the modernisation approach, it was gradually realised was too much on material gains and very little on psychic satisfaction.

Reaction against modernisation involving endogenism led to dependency theory with its emphasis on exogenist factors. The exponents of this theory argued that the obstacles to development were not lack of capital or entrepreneurial skills but were external to underdeveloped economies, that the process of development could be analysed in terms of relationship between regions, between centre and periphery, that development in the centre implied underdevelopment in the periphery, and that there was need of dissociation from the world market and striving for self-reliance. The theory of dependency implying the above

hypothesis was now being criticised for too much concern with external factors, just as modernisation theory had been for having an obsession for internal factors.

Now the trend as it seems is that the theorists have overcome the two risks. They no longer regard development as an autonomous process and are more interested in the study of barriers to development. They now are interested in evolving strategies of development to reach a particular goal like the abolition of poverty and inequality, cultivating maximum people's participation in maximum activities at all levels. This also must be realised that development is a result of human activities and can be achieved only through human action. Development therefore has to be looked not from a metaphysical point of view but as a societal problem solving process as it is a well established truth that problems will keep on rising in the society which will need new solution, which in turn will lead to new structural problems.

Development simply in terms of industrialisation and massive updating of technology appears to be a mindless action which supports projects of human annihilation with much greater care than projects of human survival. This makes governance difficult and poses a threat to human peace and survival. Undifferentiated growth and modernisation have led to development disasters. The problem of over-development as the situation prevails, is unsustainable. Now people want development to be a process that will help return to sanity and purposeful social action.

Suggestions for Alternatives:

An alternative approach would imply that ecology has to be incorporated in any development paradigm that is evolved, as earlier development strategies were ecologically blind. There is a greater awareness of the fact that development implies a process involving both society and environment.

The alternative paradigm of development will also have to envisage greater environment consciousness and show a healthier greater environment consciousness and show a healthier respect for the outer limits of growth. Food security should be made available as also population will have to be controlled as it consumes faster whatever little the development countries produce.

The process of institutional erosion will have to be halted and the institutional framework of society vitalised. A new international economic order can correct the imbalances in the present situation. But this cannot be brought about only by the rhetorics of the Third World countries. The latter will have to work on strategies of national self-reliance and Third World collective self-reliance.

Science and technology requires a new thrust so that they address themselves meaningfully to the solution of human problems.

A development theory is basically a study of societal change of its processes, direction and appropriateness etc. a study of society implies more than a study of the state of the economy or polity or society of a country at a particular time. Processes involved in social change can therefore be studied only through an inter-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary approach. What is more important that the theory of development should not overlook the social realities.

References:

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