Development and Communication for the Deprived

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Abstract

The contribution deprived people make to the social, spiritual and material advancement of their nations, communities, families and the next generation sets the scene for the redefining and reconceptualising of the model of development which propels the focus from the generalized concept of development, to the development of the deprived. Certain creative individuals and communities reject traditional values and prefer / pave a new innovative path.

In South Asian countries the women, religious minorities, those coming from exploited classes and castes suffering at the hands of institutionalized oppressive structures are retaliating with affirmative action to the structural oppression and developmental discontent. The development models/ paradigms that have emerged from practical life situation are innovations of the deprived and have grown mostly out of people's participation and people's thirst for satisfaction.

The ingredients of the above models are – a sense of emotional satisfaction to have actively participated, a sense of pride evolving solutions to the problems on hand and a sense of mental and physical achievement. Development here is assumed as a popular participatory process of sustainable social, spiritual and material advancement for emancipation and empowerment.

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In South Asian countries which is home to half the world's multi-dimensionally poor population, or about 844 million people, the struggle of the deprived is against the imperialistic dominance that is executed through different monopolies including - science-technology monopoly, global finance market monopoly, media and communication monopoly, monopoly over destructive weapons, monopoly over natural resources and monopoly over the power structures. The economic and cultural expansionism and imperialism of modernization continue to dominate the state and media policies in South Asia. Overall the communication (despite being soft social science) is considered as a field for experts where strategies are planned and implemented keeping the people out of the loop. Media ownership is now concentrated in the hands of a few groups and individuals who have massive economic capacity to invest and for whom media is product, and communication is sellable commodity. With mainstream media denying them space and place, the deprived people have opted for evolutionary sustainable development communication and media for themselves.

Introduction

Notwithstanding the fact that the Western paradigms and models of development failed to yield expected results and have become redundant in the Western world, the decolonized nations especially in South Asia continue to pursue the 'West' in search of ' development'.

The South Asian Association For Regional Co-operation, popularly known as SAARC nations including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indian, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are home to nearly 1.5 billion people or about 22% of the world's population. (1). The 'development' models and paradigms imitated blindly by the South Asian nations have failed to serve the purpose to uplift the lower 50 per cent people reeling under unemployment, poverty, hunger, lack of health, education, basic amenities and dignity. Nobel laureate Mohammed Yunus who successfully initiated the indigenous self development model of micro credit in Bangladesh to eliminate poverty aptly defines development as development of the bottom 50 percent of a country. Despite all efforts by the nation states in South Asia to 'develop' and compete with the West, the grim fact of lack stares one in the face.

The Human Development Report 2010, commissioned annually by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) since 1990 which focuses on the Human Development Index (HDI), a composite measure of human development covering health and education as well as income, has introduced three new indices that capture multidimensional poverty, inequality and gender disparities. As per the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) —which identifies serious overlapping deprivations in health, education and income at the household levels, South Asia is home to half of the world's multi-dimensionally poor population, or about 844 million people. Eight Indian states(Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, UP and West Bengal), with poverty as acute as the 26 poorest African countries measured, are home to 421 million multi-dimensionally poor people, more

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than the 410 million multidimensional poor people living in those African countries combined.(2)

(This information is culled from UNDP (2010) *Human Development Report* [online] available from http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2010/chapters/en/ [Accessed on 14 January 2011]

Nevertheless, India wants to move to the status of a super power with the endorsement of United States of America (USA). As per the report, in 2005-2007, the proportion of undernourished people in South Asia had increased above levels last seen in 1990. The prevalence of hunger had increased from 20% in 2000-2002 to 21% in 2005-2007. The regional average was 21% in 1990-92, indicating that no progress had been made in the last two decades in reducing hunger levels. According to UN figures, the employment to population ratio in South Asia fell to 56% in 2008 from 57% in 1998. The 2009 estimates put it even lower at 55%. Food prices spikes in 2008 and falling income due to the financial crisis further worsened the situation. United Nation's Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) estimates that globally, the number of people who were undernourished in 2008 could have been as high as 915 million and exceeded one billion in 2009'. (3)

(This information is culled from   Himanshi Dhawan (2010) *Hunger back to 1990 levels in South Asia: UN report*. 23 June 2010. times of india.com [online] Available from http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Hunger-back-to-1990-levels-in-South-Asia-UN-report/articleshow/6080627.cms#ixzz1AVxF1KvA [Accessed on 10 January 2011])

However ignoring the fact that the basic premise of the development is based on the wrong notion of development, the nation states continue the race for the growth rate, infrastructure, industrialisation, modernisation, urbanisation, global market etc which are signs and symbols of 'development'. This has resulted in the nation's dichotomy. The 'development' gaps within nations have created nations of deprived within nation states. The nations of deprived are left far behind in the race of 'development' and the nation states want to put out of sight this 'poor ugly' face with cosmetic development. And hence the governments in the nation states are announcing programmes after programmes for poverty elimination; provision of funds are being made and even the global bodies like United Nations and World Bank continue to provide 'aid' for 'development' of the deprived . However nothing has worked on the ground and the survival struggle of the deprived is intensifying with the structures of oppression in nation states and global bodies tightening the noose in the name of development and globalisation.

The answer to underdevelopment and poverty should be traced back to the oppressive and exploitative structures. Oppression is prolonged cruel or unjust treatment, or exercise of authority while exploitation is the action or fact of treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work. Oppression is not an isolated or temporary phenomenon, but a continuous and evolving process. Structure of oppression exploits the oppressed and reaps

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benefits from the structural system. For example, the caste and class structures in India have always enjoyed the power they derived from socio-religious-economic-political oppressive structures. In these structures the development was decided and defined by those holding power. Not surprisingly, for centuries the development concept in India was enveloped by graded inequality. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar rightly said that the Indian (Hindu) social order could have vanished if it was based on inequality, but it continues to flourish in various forms as it is based on 'graded inequality' where everyone wants to pull the others to their levels, but do not allow the lower to become equal. This graded inequality has found new faces and forms in the new world and social orders. The powerful oppressors toil to maintain the oppressive structure as any challenge to oppression and exploitation is a direct challenge to the power structure. These structures continue to function through ages, operating overtly and covertly with changing forms and faces. A sutra of oppression and exploitation runs common in world civilisation structures. The literal meaning of sutra is thread or lineage that holds things together.

The Indian freedom struggle and majority of its proponents revolted against the oppressive and exploitative British Raj, but failed to find the antidote to the oppressive and exploitative structure within Indian society. In fact, for thousands of deprived in India, the freedom struggle and its outcome was just a replacement of the oppressors (exploiters) as the sutra of oppression and exploitation continues with new Indian sutradhar's (carriers of sutra). The structural sutra of oppression runs diagonal, it spreads, trickle downs and flourishes to exploit the lowest in hierarchy.

The sutra of oppression could be traced in male dominated patriarchal fundamentalist system which replaced the matriarchal system in South Asian countries and women were given subordinate status and deprived from basic human rights. Even the new global world order where 'developed' nations are trying to dominate the 'underdeveloped', 'developing' and 'poor' nations has sparked conflicts the world over. The authoritarian structure – be it nations or communities try their best to impose monolithic cultures in all walks of life. Also the oligarchies within the nation states spread their tentacles into local governance and global governing bodies to reap the benefit of the structural system and try to dominate and take over the power structure. The oppressive structures work dialogical and dialectical to maintain the power. RAWA, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan which was established in Kabul, in 1977 by Afghan women for human rights social justice in Afghanistan is of the view that the 'US war on terrorism' against the Taliban has not yielded any results for the women, as the sutra of oppression continues with replacement of one oppressor by another.' RAWA believes that freedom and democracy can't be donated; it is the duty of the people of a country to fight and achieve these values. Under the US-supported government, the sworn enemies of human rights, democracy and secularism have gripped their claws over our country and attempt to restore their religious fascism on our people' states RAWA. (4) The dominant nation states want to decide and define democracy and

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development for others on their own terms. Those holding power and yearning for power in 'developing, underdeveloped and poor' nations are happily ready to play to their tunes.

Samir Amin one of the most important neo-Marxist thinkers says that neo imperialistic dominance is executed through five different monopolies including - science-technology monopoly, global finance market monopoly, media and communication monopoly, monopoly over destructive weapons and monopoly over natural resources. (5) In September 2000, at the United Nations Millennium Summit, the 191 member countries in the United Nations agreed to a set of eight Millennium Development Goals for the world's poor nations. These goals, targeted for fulfilment by 2015, have since become the fulcrum for public policy discussions and actions concerning economic and social development.

Amin systematically analyses the 'Official Millennium Development Goals'. The accomplishment of each of the targets that specifically define them is based on measurable indicators, generally altogether acceptable in themselves. First goal set was to reduce poverty and hunger. 'This is nothing but an empty incantation as long as the policies that generate poverty are not analysed and denounced and alternatives proposed' says Amin. On achieving universal primary education Amin says that progress was made during the two decades after the UNESCO devoted itself to achieve this goal, but since then it has lost ground. 'The almost obvious relationship between this lost ground, the reduction in public expenditures, and the privatisation of education is not examined in fact nor in theory' he says. (6)

Many post-developmentalists such as Esteva question the terms of the development discourse. The claim is not that gross global inequalities do not exist—indeed it is argued that levels of inequality are growing and are in part the outcome of centuries of colonialism. The very notion of 'development' was derived from the West and mainly referred to economic growth. Simultaneously, terms such as First, Second and Third Worlds began to be used. Originally, these were political categories: the First World was the Western capitalist nations, the Second World was the socialist states under the umbrella of the USSR and the Third World implied 'positive neutralism' in the context of the Cold War. However, Alan Thomas, development academician writes, well before the collapse of…the Soviet Union, the main connotation of the term Third World had become underdeveloped or simply poor. The Third World became a geographically discontinuous region covering a disparate group of countries. Similarly, terms such as 'North' and 'South', originally hemispheric, became synonymous with the 'developed' and the 'developing/underdeveloped' world or with the First and Third Worlds. (7)

In the hullabaloo to become 'super power' and ' developed', the 'Third world' nation states are pushing the deprived to 'develop' with the government or the world organisation playing a central role to sponsor the 'development'. Hence the government of India found an easy way out of loan-waiver as answer to the agrarian crisis resulting in farmers' suicide. The loan waiver was announced in union budget 2008. However the loan waiver proved a temporary relief and the farmer's suicide wave continues. The only difference is that

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government and media have closed the farmer's suicide chapter. The six districts of Buldana, Akola, Washim, Amravati, Yavatmal and Wardha in Maharashtra have seen massive agrarian distress. 'The government's massive loan-waiver scheme does not seem to have had the desired impact in Vidarbha's suicide belt. Figures available with the Vasantrao Naik Sheti Swawalamban Mission, the authority implementing the loan-waiver package, show 1,139 farmers killed themselves in Vidarbha's six most suicide-prone districts in 2008 — a mere 107 less than in 2007, when 1,246 farmers committed suicide' (8)

Development Discontent and Alternative

The discontent over 'development' in South Asian countries is palpable. The deprived masses are ventilating their development discontent through silent endurance, violent resistance and affirmative participatory sustainable alternatives, which is the focus of this paper. Be it Dalits, Advivasi's and/or minorities in India, women in Pakistan or Afghanistan, or the destitute in Bangladegh, who strive for alternative development cannot be ignored. Though development has assumed new meanings and overtones over the years, for the South Asian countries, where even basic needs and human rights is a distant dream for the majority, development means something different from what is being propagated and imbibed by 'developed' nations and classes across nations. The notion of development has evolved through ages and has criss-crossed many roads enveloping material progress, modernisation, industrialisation, urbanisation, colonisation, westernisation, anti-development, beyond development, post development to the latest notions of alternative and parallel development. Despite 'development' efforts across the 'developing' and 'less developed' world to get rid of poverty and oppression, the numbers of the poor and the gravity of poverty are on the rise and so is oppression and exploitation of the deprived.

Everett Hagen, an economic historian, demonstrated that 80% of the innovators that brought about the industrial revolution in England came from members of dissident religious groups, not Church of England. This innovative class came from among the minority population, the Quakers, etc. According to him certain creative individuals reject traditional values and prefer / pave a new innovative path. The women, religious minorities, those coming from exploited caste, class and creed suffering at the hands of exploitative socio-economic, religious, cultural and political structures are putting forth efforts to uplift themselves to find their own development paths. For 50 per cent of the deprived, development means the use of full human potential for the betterment of life. To develop is to enjoy the equal benefits of social, economic, religious and political power; to develop is to fulfil the human needs – social, spiritual and material without any discrimination and degradation of environment; to develop is to live life with dignity; to develop is to combat oppression and exploitation. Overall development could be defined as the popular participatory process of sustainable social-spiritual and material advancement for emancipation and empowerment.

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The primary objective of the alternative affirmative development should be to guarantee or secure livelihood for the deprived. The development model woven around this objective could be called as 'pro-deprived' development model. The meaning of livelihood taken here is not to earn livelihood and satisfy minimum needs to live. Instead the it is 'livelihood meaning a secure, satisfied and esteemed life'. What would be the picture of a secure, satisfied and esteemed life? It would have sufficient and nutritious food, clothes, clean drinking water, accommodation that would provide shelter and protection in all seasons, proper, sufficient and timely medical health and education for all the children in a house. Satisfaction of all these needs means the fulfilment of livelihood. (9)

M K Gandhi strongly supported the pro-deprived development. Though the Gandhian model of development was gradually set aside by the planners in independent India, the failure of dominant development paradigm and its implications in 'developing' countries have forced development planners in the world to re-consider the Gandhian model. 'My idea of society is that while we are born equal, meaning that we have a right to equal opportunities, all have not the same capacity. It is, in the nature of things, impossible. For instance, all cannot have the same height, or color or degree of intelligence, etc.; therefore, in the nature of things, some will have ability to earn more and others less' said Gandhi. People with talents will have more, and they will utilise their talents for this purpose. If they utilise their talents kindly, they will be performing the work of the state. Such people exist as trustees, on no other terms. 'I would allow a man of intellect to earn more; I would not cramp his talent. But the bulk of his greater earnings must be used for the good of the State, just as the income of all earning sons of the father goes to the common family fund. They would have their earning only as trustees' Gandhi said. (10)

Economic equality of Gandhi's conception didn't mean that everyone will literally have the same amount. It simply meant that everybody should have enough for his or her needs. The real meaning of economic equality according to Gandhi was 'To each according to his need.' If a single man demands as much as a man with wife and four children that will be a violation of economic equality. 'Under my plan the state will be there to carry out the will of the people, not to dictate them or force them to do its will. I shall bring about economic equality through non-violence, by converting the people to my point of view, by harnessing the forces of love as against hatred. I will not wait till I have converted the whole society to my view, but will straightaway make a beginning with myself. It goes without saying that I cannot hope to bring about economic equality of my conception if I am the owner of fifty motor cars or even of ten bighas of land. For that I have to reduce myself to the level of the poorest of the poor' said Gandhi. (11) He had foreseen the consequences of industrialisation based development programmes. 'Industrialism is, I am afraid, going to be a curse for mankind. Exploitation of one nation by another cannot go on for all time. Industrialism depends entirely on your capacity to exploit, on foreign markets being open to you, and on the absence of competitors….' he said in Young India issue. (12)

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Gandhi endorses the proposition that any plan, which exploits the raw materials of a country and neglects the potentially more powerful manpower, is 'lopsided' and can never tend to establish human equality. 'Real planning consists of the best utilisation of the whole man-power of India and the distribution of the raw products of India in her numerous villages instead of sending them outside and re-buying finished articles at fabulous prices' Gandhi said. (13) 'I must confess that I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and, therefore, sinful. Thus the economics that permit one country to prey upon another are immoral. It is sinful to buy and use articles made by sweated labour' said Gandhi (14) according to whom the economic constitution of India and, for that matter, the world should be such that no one should suffer from want of food and clothing. In other words, everybody should be able to get sufficient work to enable him/her to make the two ends meet.

'When social disparity is considered in the development – of those socially deprived, Dalit, Adivasi's, women etc. should get priority in the development for the deprived. These groups should also be protected by law and not only the state but also sections of society should be active in demanding the implementation of this law. Another priority objective of the development should be the control of the deprived and common masses on the state and development process. Nature and environment friendly objective should also be kept in mind. In the view of rising cultural intolerance, freedom of protecting cultural identity especially of minorities should also be the priority objective of development'. (15) 'It is often said that higher growth earns a poor nation greater international respect and on that count it must be considered desirable. This is a sort of wrong-headed nationalistic view of the rich. A country that cannot feed, clothe and educate its poor majority can hardly expect to earn international respect.'

Amit Bhaduri says in his 'Development with Dignity - A Case for Full Employment' (16) 'Since the time of industrial revolution some nations have grown faster than others. But this is not the whole truth. Over the years the gap between the rich and poor nations, instead of narrowing has actually widened. This is known as the problem of widening gap. During the 1980's and early 1990's, the income gap between rich and poor nations widened at the fastest pace in more than three decades'. (17) Bhaduri insists on the idea of 'development with dignity' and says that 'development has to be viewed from a different perspective altogether in which growth and distribution are integrated into the very same process, while breaking systematically the social barriers of discrimination and prejudices based on gender, caste, language, religion or ethnicity. This is what development with dignity must mean to India.' (18) 'The process of development is much more complex then growth. Economic development has to be explained in terms of economic shocks, changes and refinements over periods of at least a century length, since development cannot occur instantaneously. Development ought not to be viewed as a monotonic, stylised path, ever onward and upward, historically established and invariably repeated'. (19)

Towards Popular Participatory Sustainable Development

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The deprived across nations are putting forth efforts to change their lives. The development models and paradigms that have emerged from practical life situation are innovations of the deprived and have grown mostly out of people's participation and people's satisfaction. The ingredients of the above factor are – a sense of satisfaction to have actively participated and a sense of pride for bringing about solutions to the problems on hand and a sense of mental and physical achievements.

The 73rd Amendment Act of 1993 of the Indian constitution introduced a three-tier system of local governance from the village to district level. This legislation has the potential of enabling women to transform state structure within and was the first step of an emerging new grass roots level leadership of women. This step has proved crucial for building the confidence of the women in rural parts of India. It was a thorny trail for rural women who became village heads and worked independently. Many women who contested elections had stepped out of the house for the first time in their lives. Some of them got a chance to becaome village heads, thanks to the reservation policy. Hundreds of stories about how these women heads were puppets in the hands of male family members, made headlines in newspapers. There where instances where women village heads were not even allowed to enter the office to occupy the chair. Instead their husbands and fathers-in-law who had established themselves in politics made decisions, while the women heads were mere rubber stamps. Situation was worse for Dalit (lower untouchable castes in Indian socio-religious system) women sarpanches (village heads) who were discriminated against as women and as Dalits. It was said that reservation for women would not make any change as women were incapable of taking responsibilities in public life. However the picture that emerged from rural India was altogether different.

Farm labourer Chaya Kamble from Malwadi in India got a chance to become a village head because of the reservation policy and she initiated the first sanitation campaign in her village since independence and despite all odds succeeded to ensure that every household had a toilet. She suffered humiliation and was pressurised by male politicians who said that toilets for women was not an important issue. Following her footsteps other women initiated sanitation campaigns in their villages and today the open defecation free campaign has taken momentum in Maharashtra. But beyond solving basic problems these women village heads played a pivotal role in evolving sustainable development paradigms for their villages. Rain water harvesting systems, waste water management, land use patterns, natural fertilisers, plantation, small business and cottage industries started by self help groups, use of solar energy are some of the schemes on which women leaders are working.

Thousands of rural women collectively came forward to protect the trees in India when the government and contractors conspired to cut down the forest trees in the locality. Himalayan women boast the story of a girl Amrita Devi, who died while trying to save the trees in her village. The local king wanted to build a palace for which a massive quantity of wood was required. Following his order the army went to the forest to cut the trees but were opposed by the women led by Amrita. She was killed as she refused to move away from the site and

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hugged a tree tight. The words which she said before she fell are still recited by local women 'seir santhe runkh raheb, to bhee sastojan' (my head is a small price if a tree is saved). For rural women in Himachal Pradesh saving the tree was something crucial for their lives. For them forests are sources of food, fuel, and fodder for their animals. The era of Maharajas ended and the *netas* (leaders) have replaced them. The government policy to permit more and more felling of trees for economic gains, have resulted in landslides, floods and silting in the rivers. Women opt for the same resistance to save the trees whenever government wants to cut them. But these hundreds of women leaders, innovators have never been highlighted or even mentioned as the leaders who pioneered a leadership technique for human development. Village head from Kolhapur Bharati Redekar with the help of other women in that village decided to stop the use of chemical fertilizers which ultimately made farmland barren. Instead they promoted natural compost fertilizers and traditional methods like using turmeric were adopted to save crops from diseases. They had to put immense efforts to convince male farmers to opt for the change, but with the help of government officers, non government organisation and support from progressive male farmers they achieved the goal.

There are three major premises of the sustainable development model implemented by rural women leaders - 1) local resources are used for development, 2) the resources are sustainable for development on a long term basis, and 3) the resources are recycled and environment. friendly. Societal force, manpower, monetary and technological local resources are used on priority. The sustainable development perspective assumes that maintaining the biological diversity is essential to the survival of humanity. Self-development and self-reliance are the key in this approach. People should decide what type of development they need and they should plan accordingly with available resources. Instead of following or imitating development models, every village, city and nation can develop their own.

In Bangladesh, Muhammad Yunus, the economist and his bank, who shared the Noble prize for their efforts to help 'create economic and social development from below' by using innovative economic programmes such as micro credit lending, could pave a new way for development in South Asian countries. 'Every single individual on earth has both the potential and the right to live a decent life, across cultures and civilisations, Yunus and Grameen Bank have shown that even the poorest of the poor can work to bring about their own development,' the Nobel Committee said in its citation. The micro credit movement is spreading in other parts of South Asia. In Khalpara (Siliguri) in India, sex workers started a co-operative society -- Usha Multipurpose Co-operative Society under the West Bengal Co-operative Society Act of 1983. Also such societies have come up in Murshidabad, Nadia, North and South 24-Parganas, Howrah and Calcutta.

The work of Tarun Bharat Sangh, and it's founder Rajendra Singh in the districts of Rajasthan is not just about water-shed management, but it is the local development model for drought prone areas. From Bhikampura in Alwar district, this people-centred development model is spreading all over Rajasthan and other parts of India. Today one can see the river Arvari, dead for 40 years flowing again. Other rivers Ruparel, Jahjajwali and numerous other rivulets

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are also flowing. TBS' 'people-centred' approach to development is based on popular participation of people who want to change their lives. Discussions, debates, consensus, local resources and final implementation are the key elements in this model.

Maldives with a population of just above 250,000, attracts hundreds of tourists across world. People here whose livelihood is dependent on the environment are creating ecologically bearable, viable and equitable development models. The nation has 1,190 islands and 26 atoll formations enclosing azure lagoons, a stupendous variety of marine life and pristine beaches. Atolls are the tops of submerged mountains which is unique in Maldives. Uncontrolled tourism could have devastated the fragile lagoons and coral reefs. It is because of the local people the environment is protected here.

profit organisations. The movement was founded by a high school teacher, A.T. Ariyaratne. Sarvodaya activities involve people in the development movement rooted firmly in Buddhist and Gandhian principles. This is one of the biggest people centred development initiative in South Asia where people themselves are deciding development priorities and implementing them.

Bhutan -- the east Himalayan Buddhist monarchy of approximately 800,000 people has a forest cover of 72.5% to date, and is one of the 'Biodiversity hot spots' of the world. Transmigration of souls leads to all creation being part of the re-birth process, and this moves most adherents to Buddhism support the conservation of nature as a central tenet of their religion. This has encouraged the Royal Government to incorporate forest conservation in its national agenda for sustainable development. Community forestry in Bhutan includes sustainable development through participation and reciprocity of the users and the developers. It includes forestry management in forest patches with 50% degraded vegetation and low regeneration rates, as well as plantation and afforestation in depleted areas. The management team comprises of the local users who address problems through participatory learning and action.

The wireless technology project by Magsaysay award winner Mahabir Pun in Nepal has brought revolution in villages in the Himalayan foothills of Nepal. Using Pun's 'tele-teaching' network where teachers now instruct students using internet. Internet is used for marketing village goods and efforts are being made to use this technology in the health sector.

Spirituality and Development

In the South Asian nations' religion, spirituality and culture are key to the process of development. After initially denying spirituality a role in the development, now there is greater acceptance of the fact that spirituality is here to stay, and it has a role to play in the development process. Some of the researchers are now engaged in locating the link that binds spirituality and development. Scientists from the American National Development and Research Institutes have explored the role of social supports, spirituality, religiousness, life

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meaning, and 12-step participation in the process of recovery from alcohol addiction. Dr. Alexandre Laudet, director of the Center for the Study of Addictions and Recovery, principal investigator and the lead author of the study focused on the long-term recovery process in her research concludes that spirituality can play an important role as a buffer against the pressures and stresses of drug use and attempts to recover. (20)

'Within every major religion there are branches with intellectual and spiritual leaders making a strong theological argument for development as a process of liberation from injustice, discrimination and prejudice wherever they occur, including religious organisations' (21). The type of theology that actively supports development for personal and collective empowerment often is called liberation theology. The recent example where spirituality and development were blended is Sant Gadge Baba Village Sanitation Campaign launched by the government of Mahahrashtra. The Maharashtra village structure is typically made of various components like caste, creed, religion, interest groups, and links. The Maharashtra government which decided to launch the competition for cleanliness, chose to name the campaign after Sant Gadge Baba so that rural masses could identify themselves with the campaign. A spiritual person becomes less interested in material things - this was the basis of Mahatma Gandhi's theory on sustainability, and Gadge Baba epitomised this theory. Contrasting with the images of some of the spiritual leaders today, Gadge Baba was a social worker who rejected the saffron robe, preferred to live in a slum, slept under the tree and accepted food for work. The campaign triggered a phenomenal change in rural Maharashtra and turned out to be the biggest campaign propagating environmental sanitation, personal hygiene and health measures, ever undertaken among the rural masses. This campaign led to mobilisation of rural population to clean their houses, neighbourhoods and the entire village without any financial support from the government. It is estimated that in response to the campaign, in its first year itself, the total investment mobilised by communities was worth Rs. 200 crores with a Rs. 6 crore state investment.

If the religions of the world can recognise poverty and oppression as a common problem, if they share a common commitment to fight these evils, it would be much easier to convince common people to join the development efforts. Paolo Freir successfully applied liberation theology in education and communication. He preached the theory that every individual wants to get free from internal and external oppression and the central purpose of development should be freedom from oppression. Freir ideated development communication as emancipatory dialogue. One of the examples in South Asia where spirituality is embedded with development is the Sarvodaya. 'Philosophy of Sarvodaya is based on Buddhist-Gandhian philosophy and its work is spread across all ethnic and religious communities. The sustainable empowerment of people through self-help and collective support, to non-violence and peace is the motto of the movement which is clearly rooted in Gandhian and Buddhist traditions, but actively engages people of all religions and ethnic backgrounds. Events at the village, district and national levels often begin with non-denominational meditation and invocations from the perspectives of all religions represented. Sarvodaya builds houses side

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by side for Christians, Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus. Peace Secretariat teams are led by Muslim, Christian and Hindu Sarvodaya personnel. The movement consciously directs its efforts to people of all religious persuasions. Its purpose is not to proselytise, but to help participants see their common humanity'. (22)

In India there is need to study Mahatma Jotirao Phule's Sarvajanik Satyadharma and Dr. B R Ambedkar's Navyana Buddhism on these lines.

People's Communication for Development of the Deprived

The Western media experts who were hired by the South Asian nations to infuse mass media culture insisted on the media proliferation as pre-condition to development. However, the media and its communication hardly made any substantial changes on the ground. Not surprisingly, Antonio Gramsci an Italian writer, politician, political theorist, linguist and philosopher viewed mass media as instrument to spread and reinforce hegemony where the dominant group in the society maintain dominance with the consent of subordinates.

While discussing the role of media and communication in the sutra theory of oppression and exploitation, the media ownership is an important factor. Diversity of ownership, various sources of information and citizen's access to various voices and opinions are a must in plural society. Pluralism is the premise of democracy. Plural media ensures that diversity within society is reflected in media. Media pluralism consists of diversity of ownership and output in the form of content. The Press Council report on print media states that monopoly over information whether of private individuals and institutions, or of the government is detrimental to democracy, for it may disseminate one sided information and endanger fairness and objectivity. The corporate sector has entered the press mainly to do business like any other business, and to earn profits. Further, the corporate sector has invariably its other businesses to safeguard and promote, and it has entered the media business to use its power to further its other business interests. Media ownership across the world is now concentrated in the hands of a few groups and individuals who have massive economic capacity to invest. Survival of small and medium media houses, especially newspapers has become more and more difficult.

Expansion or growth within a single media sector is referred to as monomedia expansion. In cross section media expansion the media owner spreads his/her monopoly over more than one sub-sector. The expansion of media either ways has created new power structures where owners with concentrated power in their hands influence the politics, governance and society. 'Many Voices One World' report states that concentration of ownership in fewer hands has resulted in anxiety. Industrialisation has tended to stimulate a concentration in the communication sector through formation of oligopolies and monopolies in the gathering, storing and disseminating information. This concentration operates in three directions – the horizontal and vertical integration of enterprises connected with information and entertainment, the involvement of enterprise operating in different branches with the media

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expansion (hotel, restaurant chains and other manufacturers are in the media business) and merging and intermeshing of various information industries into large scale multi-media conglomerates. The media owners and contractual journalists serve the media power structure and do not espouse the cause to uplift and develop the deprived. The content, language, frames and discourse of mass media is directed by the power structures where the poor have little or no voice and space.

People's Communication

With the main stream media not interested in deprived people and their development efforts, people's communication is the only option left for the deprived. People's communication emerges out of the need to communicate as other mediums of communication deny them required space and place. People develop their own medium to communicate as they want to express, share, participate and reciprocate. Mass media is now a major business where communication has become commodity. The massive advertisement revenue dominates the content and controllers of media who have an agenda of priorities. In this scenario the people's communication which is controlled by people themselves becomes a vital part of development communication. Popular participation and sustainability of message are imperative in people's development communication. Overall the communication (despite being soft social science) is considered as a field of experts where strategies are planned and implemented by the elite. Exact opposite is the people's communication which could be defined as -- 'evolutionary sustainable communication by the people for themselves'. The people's communication places people and their media at the core of the entire communication process. People chose their medium and message and various factors contribute in making this choice. And to take an alien idea as message to the people, or even to motivate, persuade and conceptualise, people's medium is the most appropriate way to achieve successful and sustainable communication. Other forms of communication including mass communication can play the role of facilitator in this process. People communicate within their families, groups, friends, society and communities. People's communication takes many forms in various media, right from traditional folk arts to the use of chatting, face books, blogs, twitters etc. In the South Asian nations the strong presence of traditional people's medium to communicate never became part of the mainstream communication strategies. But still at the grassroots levels people's media remain the main tool of effective communication. The need is to identify the people's medium of communication which they have chosen for themselves to communicate. This will facilitate the development communication process which intends to emancipate and empower people to facilitate popular participation in the process of sustainable development.

The new age media that have an integrated character of interpersonal and mass media has emerged as new people's communication medium. It has become popular because of its communicative format. People are able to vent their feelings and can communicate through this medium. Popularisation of this new age media has forced other forms of media, especially broadcast and print media to become more communicative and allow people their

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space in communication. Newspapers and television channels are now on websites, chatting zones, face books, twitters, e-paper with feedback, blogs and the concept of citizen journalist has become popular. Communication is not just a technical process; it involves social-cultural, economic dimensions and is a participatory process. And this needs to be emphasized in communication planning for development of the deprived.

Conclusion

Development, communication and innovation are not prerogatives of a selected few. Every human being strives for development and communication, and every individual has a creative mind to answer posers. The development discontent in South Asia and across the world is breaking open mostly in violent forms. On this backdrop it becomes mandatory for the development strategists and planners to take notice and recognise the affirmative sustainable and participatory development models, paradigms emerging from the lower 50 per cent. To evolve the sustainable local development models there is need to take a comprehensive review of such development initiatives in South Asia. Rooted deep in the local culture and tradition and based on local needs, the deprived in developing countries especially from oppressed marginal communities, castes and tribes are engaged in developing indigenous development paradigms and models that have emerged as alternative to dominant development paradigm. This self-motivated movement not only helps to reduce the gender based inequalities but also stimulates radical changes in government and civil societies' approach towards development. Development paradigms emerging from deprived people's initiatives have succeeded to communicate a sense of involvement, have spread the realization that one could achieve development with self efforts, and development cannot be donated or gifted. There is need to study how the deprived have combated caste-gender discrimination, political pressure, physical violence and oppression to perform their duties and innovated paths of inclusive development. Also there is need to study development communication model that is woven around local situation, and is historically grounded, culturally sensitive and multi-faceted.

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