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**INCONGRUOUSNESS IN DEVELOPMENT
WRITING**

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This conceptual note addresses the question why so many people in so many parts of the world appear to need to believe in the claims of development and have maintained this belief so persistently. Hence, it underscores the difficulty to think beyond the episteme or paradigm of development, as language of development is quite labyrinthine in its complexity. The invitation is to problematise one of the most taken for granted concepts that is 'development'. As development discourse is replete with figures of speech, I shall unveil them. Nevertheless, there is no attempt to make any value judgment or to come out with alternatives which are already quite abundant. The tenor of this paper is influenced by what is known as 'language turn' or 'textual turn' in Social Sciences.

Rethinking development is pertinent today as rhetoric of development is heard among the marginal peoples as well as mainstream. Development has become an inevitable hyperbole in the rhetoric—be it private, personal, public or political. I try and make the self-evident notion of development problematical because we are rethinking about development and particularly 'Kerala model' of development. Kerala's development has a long history of more than hundred and fifty years (at least in Travancore). Such a long history persuades us to rethink about it even today!

In order to rethink about development, I argue that both development process and development studies have to be situated in its broader context. The broader context is the relations among colonialism, modernity and postcolonial situation. We have to examine how development has been an indistinguishable part of these relations. One may recall the growing struggle within postcolonial thought to loosen the power of Western knowledge and reassert the value of alternative experiences and ways of knowing.

After all, the idea of "model state" was a part of the strategy of governance by the colonial masters. While talking about the all Indian Scenario the authors whom I quote below stresses that the idea of 'model state' was a ploy of the British and it was never confined to Travancore alone.

“Initiatives in the areas of health, education, infrastructure, irrigation and communication as well as in regard to representative political institutions and administrative bureaucratization are often pointed to—at times not without some anti-hegemonic pride and post-colonial vision—as indicative of ‘model’ states that realized their position as sovereign entities. Yet, the term ‘model state’ itself already gives its provenance away. The model is closely linked with the British blueprint.” (Waltraud Ernst and Biswamoy Pati (eds) 2010:7) The question is who had to pay for the progress of these model states, say Travancore?

In the seminal years of modernity, development meant development of the kingdom, thereafter it is the development of the nation. That is one of the reasons why development projects are always presented as reflecting the interest of the nation or population in general or population of the poor etc.

(1) Let me first of all make a distinction: (a) development process and (b) development studies/discourse. One is a process (material, social, symbolic and so on) which is an ‘object’ of the development discourse/studies; in this sense they are distinguishable. At the same time there are not mutually independent as there are several intersections between them. I will touch upon both of them although the emphasis is more on development discourse. Let me have few statements about both of them.

(a) In common parlance, development depicts a process in which the potentialities of an object or organism are released, until it reaches its natural, complete, full-fledged form. Hence the metaphoric use of the term to explain the natural growth of plants and animals. Besides, the development discourse is made up of a set of conceptual inputs. There is an impossibility to talk about development without referring to concepts such as poverty, production, state, environment, equality (not only equality in terms of income but includes social, gender, political etc) and so on.

(b) Development discourse is constituted and reproduced within a set of material relationships, activities and powers—social, cultural and

geopolitical. Language is fundamental to the way in which we order, understand and justify development interventions into the natural and social world. When attention is paid to the language of development, we need to resist the submersion of the world by the words of development.

(2) Texts of development are written in representational language filled with figures of speech—metaphor, metonym, image, allusion, fantasy, rhetoric and so on including oxymoron. Towards the end, I shall demonstrate how the concept of 'developmental modernity' is part of governmentality, a neologism for 'governmental rationality'.

(3) Questions concerning development cannot be formulated without reference to 'modernity'. Modernity has been defined in very many ways and by now it has become commonsense and at the same time a matter of confusion. Definitions vary substantially to the extent there is a plethora of them such that it is not possible to go about with thinking of development without getting into quagmire. Modernity has been conceived as a result of the application of Enlightenment rationality to recognize what is going on. Development required non-development and to this extent the origins of modernity were not simply located in the West. Of course, I am aware that Enlightenment rationality of the European kind cannot be found in our country/nation. However, the sense of it could be deciphered here as well with all its ramifications and specificities. That is why we also think about development even today. I would argue here that what has been going on in Kerala in the name of 'development' from the turn of nineteenth century can be termed as "developmental modernity". This phrase is coined because truth telling about development in Kerala can be credulous only in relation to modernity and modernity can be talked about only in relation to development. Besides, there is a synergetic relation between the two; if not they are simultaneous, of course with overlaps. Therefore, writing about Kerala's development cannot overlook modernity. The former can be talked about only in conjunction with the latter. That is why developmental modernity in Kerala.

(4) Development process as it took place in our country, so also in Kerala, cannot be thought after delinking it from British colonial conditions. This is quite evident to the listeners of this seminar. At the same time let me underscore the nexus between power of representation and domination engendered by the colonial apparatus set up for resource appropriation and subsequent need to exercise power over the Indian subjects. It is equally important to think about Orientalism of Edward Said's variety. One of the best sites where "natives" are represented is in what can be called as colonial anthropology, demographic and resource mapping, ethnography etc with the hegemony of British Empire since 19th century. For instance, Arturo Escobar suggests that development can be seen as an apparatus 'that links forms of knowledge about the Third World with the deployment of forms of power and intervention, resulting in the mapping and production of Third World societies.' (Arturo Escobar,1995). Development economics was one of the modules for those who were recruited as Indian Civil Service persons by the British in India. Development is about mapping and making, about the spatial reach of power and the control, distribution and management of 'Other' peoples, territories, environments, and spaces. The peculiarity of the colonial appropriation and exercise of power was such that even today we are to think about postcolonialism or post-colonial condition of existence.

(5) The specific courses of development (processes, effects, dynamics, juridico-political stipulations, party political justifications/legitimisations and counter moves to them etc) as they took place in the world and their 'models'—the 'models' discloses more than they reveal) vary significantly; possibility of replication of any one in another space/time and imitations of any one are no more credulous hopes/expectation (beyond utopia). I state this here mainly because development discourse has both tendencies of homogenisation and normalization. In Kerala, missionary, reform and political discourses and non-discursive practices have provided a well from which to draw metaphorical inspirations for development writing and talking about it. But, the notions of development have been inclined towards

economic change although economic development and social development are at the same time treated as distinct and identical. Genealogically, development had been indulging mainly in material processes.

(6) It is possible to phrase *developmentalism* as the non-self-reflexive belief/confidence in the claims and promises of the project of development and discourse of development. (Raju S., 2003) Developmentalism is a major repertoire of belief systems for speaking about the present and future of any country, class, caste, region and any conceivable social/geographic entities. We should not forget that, the very notion of 'tradition' in opposition to 'modern' is a product of modernity itself. Discourse of development in Kerala has churned out what can be called as *developmentalism* which is a conviction that development will redeem us from the yoke of what is normally and insufficiently called as 'tradition' in modernity. That is one of the reasons why I highlighted the blend: development, modernity and colonialism. Therefore, let me invite your attention to few statements about the history of development in discourses as they evolved in Travancore/Kerala. One of the best examples for the antecedents or genealogy of development as articulated in language is noticeable at least since 1874. As early as 1874 it was said that "... with a sharpened intelligence and ability to read, they can learn much that is practical and theoretical in the various industrial operations; and the knowledge so gained can be employed hand in hand with a capital which our yet **underdeveloped** country must draw to itself." (Rama Varma, 1874:11, *emphasis added*). Two things have to be reckoned with. At least from the second half of nineteenth century self-representation has been resorting to the notion of development and that even negatively—as underdeveloped. Self-representation of Kerala still employs the notion of the developing or 'catching up with the West'. Secondly, that this notion has entered into language or discourse in general such that no one in the population is left outside the coverage of change and development. Let me repeat, why I insist on language/discourse is because it is primary to the way in which natural and social world are ordered, understood, intervened and justified. Let me

elaborate a little bit: "... for all their pedantry and pretensions, the texts of development are, of necessity, also written in a representational language—a language of metaphor, image, allusion, fantasy, and rhetoric." (Jonathan Crush, 1995:4) To spot a few from Travancore, 'luxuriance of nature', 'hand of the industrious', 'progressive industry', 'bad desire', 'Neptune's encroachments', 'industrial bee-hive' and so on. (Rama Varma, 1874) These rhetorical devices make people to receive and reproduce 'development' as if it is a taken for granted reality and the surest means to freedom, redemption, and prosperity. The granary of development discourse is replete with such representations and promises. Representation is emphasized because oxymora exists in language and therefore in representation. The very coinage 'Kerala Model' is a representation enabled by rhetorical devices such as oxymoron.

(7) Development has become an indispensable term constituted and constitutive of legitimisation and delegitimisation; contestations and counter contests and so on. It has become an index for redistributing individuals, people, societies, space and time etc. By now 'development' has been made up as a comprehensive term inclusive of social mobility/transformation, ballot battle, public appeal, political affirmations and so on in the context of Kerala. Development as indispensable is like an adhesive. Development as ever pervading metaphor has already got 'normalised', therefore, one cannot but be incorporated into development discourse even for anti-developmentalists.

(8) Development as a labyrinth: once entered into the womb of developmentalism, it is difficult to wriggle out of it or get out of the entrapment. That is why rethinking about development and Kerala model often rebound after touching the pitch of fuzziness. Alternatively and figuratively it is possible to conceive development as movement from one mirage to another mirage without telos. Wanting for more never ends and is never satiated; the limit tends to infinity. In any case wanting a thing is one thing, being able to do is another thing and finally doing it is yet another thing.

(9) It has also become a parameter for arriving at judgmentative statements. Ethically, socially and politically 'development' as a concept and as a process has become indispensable; this is an entrapment. Any critique of development process as it occurs, for instance taking up the questions concerning the development-displaced, deprived, uprooted and sedentarised can be turned down euphemistically as anti-development and thus anti-social, anti-national and so on—imagine the case of Narmada dam issue in India. Any criticism leveled against the way development is taking place is considered as occluding progress of national interest. Development has become a pass word to log into public, private and personal domains of life. In this manner any challenge to legitimated discursive priorities is labeled as the other.

In ethical and 'right to difference' discourses the Other is acceptable. This acceptability is highly conditional. A long but illustrative excerpts can be provided.

Our suspicion are first aroused when we see that the apostles of ethics and of the 'right to difference' are clearly *horrified by any vigorously sustained difference*. For them, African customs are barbaric, Muslims are dreadful, the Chinese are totalitarian, and so on. As a matter of fact, this celebrated 'other' is acceptable only if he is a *good* other—which is to say what, exactly, if not the *same as us*? Respect for differences, of course! But on condition that the different be parliamentary-democratic, pro free-market economies, in favor of freedom of opinion, feminism, the environment. This is to say I respect differences, but only, of course, in so far as that which differs also respects, just as I do, the said differences. ... The problem is that the 'respect for differences' and the ethics of human rights do seem to define an *identity* And that as a result, the respect for differences applies only to those differences that are reasonably consistent with this identity (Alain Badiou, 2001:24)

This is how another gets posited and implicated into society as marginal. But then simultaneously the majority discourse proclaim that there is respect for other/differences. The mainstream considers most of the Tribes in Kerala