

worldly Parashurama holding the improvised axe, the axe of the labouring subjects which cut substances rather than thin air.

This radical positioning of Man and Nature in an annihilative attitude was not confined to the second version of developmental discourse, but it was a normalised idea irrespective of differences in the object, agent and unit of the discourses. Variants of utilitarianism were entrenched in the sites of transmission of such ideas, for instance, 'modern education' which was popular in Kerala was one of the main sites. Nature was reductively viewed as only 'land' and a 'resource' subjected to Man's free play; thus the reduction and separation of nature into 'landed property' and 'waste land' was a smooth sequel. That is, the habit of classifying everything into 'good and bad', as it is in monotheism and essentialism, entered into the classification of Nature also. Whatever grow naturally was thought to be waiting for the axe; once made barren it could be ploughed, once touched by labour, Nature realises the essence of its fecundity; such were the imaginations.

There was a strong contest against such a radical attitude to nature; it got formulated during the second half of the nineteen eighties.¹⁵ There was anxiety about environmental-catastrophe; there was anxiety about energy crisis, vagaries of the weather was disordering life, forest cover was disappearing at an alarming rate; several such events conditioned the formulation. Whatever these events were, there emerged a strong version of anti-developmental discourse and it prioritised environment over production. The idea of ever increasing material accumulation was countered by concern for environmental sustainability. Instead of the beauty of the big catching increasing number of eyes and ears, as it used to be, the beauty of the small attracted them, that is, those who participated in this version of environmentalism. The state was the main accused for the environmental degradation and some types of development projects that were thought to be

environmental disasters were challenged. In such environmental discourse, the negative externalities of development, particularly deforestation, pollution, land alienation, rehabilitation, specie extinction etc, and shortfalls of development were highlighted. On the pedestal of Man, Nature was consecrated; environmentalism was posed against radical humanism; what is mirrored is no more production but conservation.

This discourse intersected with those versions of developmental discourse in which gender biases, marginalisation of subaltern communities etc., conceived to be the result of development, were projected. These intersecting discourses gained legitimacy and popularity since 1980's and in the ongoing discussions they are still gaining repeatable materiality in different ways. In the present day parlance, they are generally referred as 'new social movements'.

The terms such as sustainable development, alternative development etc., which were part of the environmental discourse, were imported into the production centred mainstream development discourse by the turn of the twentieth century (Franke W.R and Chasin, B. H (1999). No more could environment be omitted from the set of keywords of the discussions of development. Ecological considerations became indispensable to its legitimacy (Parayil, G. 2000). Environment and economy, although incommensurable, are contained in such a way that environmental sustainability becomes identical to economic sustainability. (Franke W.R and Chasin, B. H (1999:118-119). For instance, when the concept 'sustainability' is defined, it is defined strictly as a problem of *Homo Economicus*, not even as a problem of the sustainability of human specie in this world.¹⁶ In the

¹⁵ For instance, the protest against the destruction of a sizeable area of forest, known as Silent Valley, for constructing dam for hydro-electric project gained public approval the project was not executed. Moreover the area was declared as National Park.

¹⁶ Although conscious of the problem of environmental preservation, when sustainability is defined, category displacement occurs and therefore the definition is a tool in the kit bag of the mechanic who tries to repair mechanical snags of the development project. For details See, Franke and Chasin 1999:119.

process of defining it, by splitting the definition into several points, environment and many things that influence it are put at the margin of margins. The definition 'challenges' Nature in the sense that in it Nature is merely "productive resource" which Man tries to optimise as a *homo economicus*. This blatant reductionism affirms the humanism of developmentalism. What is valued in ecology is conveniently contained through such textual strategy. Within production/consumption bound development discourse, ecological concepts remain like mercury on glass and emit unmediated confusion.

Such developmental discourse was effectively brought into the 'local' level during 1990s. This localisation of development refocused its objects: instead of nation or working class, individual became the direct unit of developmental discourse. The political-economic tone of development economics is such that it underscores never-ending consumption/production to be human destiny and the source of identity, and blissfully bypasses its incommensurability with ecological values.

Two versions of developmental discourse can be discerned that commonly conceived every individual as the participant in development projects and redefined their unit at more micro-levels than the existing projects. One version is popularly known as 'decentralised planning/local-level development'; the other prefixes the term development with 'Eco'; the emblem of this version is Ecodevelopment. Both insist on local/individual level participation in devising and effecting development.¹⁷ The subject of development is no more state or labour but 'local people' of a world consisting of newly found activists. In this version, those who were marginal to the project of development so far were anticipated to become the direct

¹⁷ The idea of 'self-help' has come back to the development discourse/project, which was popular during the second quarter of twentieth century, in the name of user-group-participation/local-participation and in the roles of 'self help groups', 'user-group', beneficiary and 'stakeholders' etc. For more information about the notion of 'self help' of the early twentieth century, See, Hatch, S. 1932.

executors, as if they have the free choice to become both subject and object of the discourse and the project. I shall explicate the arguments using few exemplary statements.

Let us first look at the version of peoples planning/local level development and examine how the concept of development works in it. "A radical transformation of the development culture of the state is a necessary prerequisite for successful participatory decentralization. It also requires basic attitudinal changes towards the development process among all the key players involved: the elected representatives, officials, experts and the public at large. (Isaac, T. M, Thomas and Franke, R. W: 2000:11)". This statement perpetuates the key theme of development discourse that is more than a century old development discourse. Development is drawn out to its maximum possible extent, that is, to 'public at large', by congregating lower strata of the population also in the sites of development. Increasing number of people are imagined as possible agents of the development project, as bearers of developmental discourse and as missionaries of developmentalism. Ever-more networks of agency relations, nodes, strategic meeting points and grids of power relations were expected to influence ever-more aspects of life, and dreams with universal-localisation/globalisation of development and governance of individuals.

The concept of development is projected here as a necessity. Such projections are parodies of the western notion of 'progress' and it is such parodies that are inserted into the economy of desire and the futures anticipated by people. The concept of development is employed non-self-reflexively in this version and such normalised conviction foregrounds the following statement.

To sum up, we consider decentralization as instrument to widen and deepen democracy. Development has been viewed as freedom. Not only is freedom the end of the development process but its means as well (Sen 1999) (Thomas Isaac and Franke W. R: 2000:6)

The basic promise of development project has been 'freedom'; we have also noted that it was a key term, sometimes embellished with other terms such as poverty, employment etc., within developmental discourse. Since the beginning of development discourse in Kerala, this coupling between development and freedom has been an affective jargon of authenticity. This western concept of 'freedom' is well discussed in social sciences for more than half a century, particularly in the literature that critically re-examines 'modernity'. The ways in which the metaphysics of 'freedom' have wrecked social-tensions and conflicts and how the centres of power in their strategies of coercion deployed it are well known today. Its capacity to conceal exercise of power and its metaphysical foundation are well deconstructed and reconstructed. The elusive nature of development, the false claims and promises of development and what the project does are widely discussed now; there are many studies that disclose the "anti-political" effects of development. (Ferguson, J, 1990, Escobar, A. 1995, Gupta, A, From the Margins, 2001) Still, the conceptual coupling continues to remain dominant—it think for us. The reduction of freedom to development and the placement of freedom within the means-end material causality are the enabling conditions of the statement. The normalisation of the concept of development is such that it compels to resort to it uncritically.

Conceptually, the statement seeks to answer, 'what development is' and finds it as freedom. Freedom, reduced to development, is cast in the double role of means and end. The problem of essentialism supplements the determinism of the statement. Freedom is conceived as both 'means' and 'end'-- if freedom is the viable means, how is that it becomes an end to be achieved in future? This statement stands up as an example of instrumental reductionism par excellence. Thinking through means and ends or cause and effect also blissfully undermines the recognition that both these are constructed in and through development discourse. What is desired as an end is never unrelated to discourses or neutral or correct in itself. Self-reflexivity on 'how the concept of development is given to us' and 'what it does',

questions that have already gained academic credibility, have hardly influenced the statement. The statement is guided by the essentialist question, 'what is it'; that is why freedom collapses into means-end rationality and development. Freedom has always been present in the development discourse but as one of the attributes or as an end. One good example is the statement that declares the Communist party's commitment. The year was 1946.

In short, a new Kerala will begin to emerge where there will be complete equality and freedom, and poverty and unemployment are absent. Our exclusive imagination of '*Maavelinade*' will be a reality of the twentieth century. (Nambutiripad, E.M.S, 1946, 1999:346, *translation mine*.).

Freedom, as it used to be articulated in 1874, is an effect or result of development process; it was something to be achieved, not something that we possess and use as a means. But reduction of freedom into 'development', however packaged, is acceptance of its Other; that is, there is freedom in the so-called 'developed' economies/countries; but such a conclusion seems either incredulous or sadly ironical.

Let us move on to the second example drawn from the Ecodevelopment version. It is a version of development discourse in which Man-Nature relation is reconstituted.

In response to pressures on protected areas, the Government is now beginning to address the special issues regarding participatory management of protected areas through a strategy of Ecodevelopment. The strategy aims to conserve biodiversity by addressing both the impact of *local people* on the protected area and the impact of the protected area on local people. Ecodevelopment thus has two main thrusts. Improvement of protected area management and involvement of local people. In doing so it seeks to improve the capacity of protected area management to conserve biodiversity effectively, to

involve local people in protected area planning and protection, to develop incentives for conservation, and to support sustainable alternatives to harmful use of resources. It supports collaboration between the state forest departments and local communities in and around ecologically valuable areas. Ecodevelopment addresses the welfare and behaviour of local people and integrates these concerns into management of protected area. (World Bank:1991:3, emphasis added)

In Ecodevelopment, instead of treating forests as plantations, the basic premise has become protection of ecologically sensitive areas. As it is in the local level development discourse, here also the main agent of development is the state; a state which is about to withdraw from such agency functions. Although not the same, there are several similarities between the concepts of development retained in these two versions. The key words such as development, incentives, strategy etc. are shared by both. Participation of local people in the project is central to both the versions. In both instances, the attitudes and desires of people are taken as absolutely true and slips away from the point that 'people' are discursively constituted. The objects of the discourses are different; in the former case it is the local level 'governmental bodies' but in the latter each and every individual who is a dweller of the area marked as 'local', defined as stake-holder, is the object. In the former case the objects are already the bearers of developmental discourse, but in the latter case they are novices. What is glaringly common between the two is the emphasis of people's/local-level participation.

People's participation is a janus faced operation. Once the amorphous set of 'the people' decide and execute developmental activities, it is tantamount to affirming that the major responsibility for the success of developmental projects rest on 'people'. They may be seen to be responsible for its success and failure. No more is government/state can be represented as the 'provider', no more can it be accused, no more its obligation and

responsibility can be referred to. The 'provider' function of the state, which was central to welfarism, is erased. Along with this the distinction between those who are the participants and non-participant also vanishes. As people at large—classified as stake holders, beneficiaries, user groups, self-help groups etc. and conceived as unified individual entities—are supposed to be the participants. If any one refrains from participation, then, this can be pointed to as a contemptuous abstention from 'responsibility'.

What is equally glaringly uncommon between Eco-development type of projects and development with people's participation is the relation between Man and Nature in these two versions. If humanism defines the relation between them in the latter type of developmental discourse, it is the combination of environmentalism and developmentalism that governs the former.

Ecodevelopment leaves perturbations in the development discourse. In almost all other versions, humanism is conspicuous even at a glance. In all of them Nature is for Man; the separation between them is evident. But in the Ecodevelopment the natural nature is prioritised over the *homo-economicus* although in both Man is primarily conceived as *homo-economicus*. Yet there is an emphasis for the concern for the Other, i.e. in this particular instance nature. In distinction to humanism, it is environmentalism that defines the ecodevelopment models.

All these versions of developmental discourse coexist today, sometimes independently and quite often as hybrids or as amorphous. A clear understanding of the complexity of the discursive formation may enrich understanding and interpreting the attitude of people towards development, the history and structures immanent in the project of development and what development does. This is primarily because although global-reorientation has a space for something other than 'humanism', say environmentalism, the idea of humanity/society also gave way to the idea of 'Individual' who is prioritised and made independent from Nation/society and nature.

Individuation has gone to the extent that Kerala's development has given her an undesirable position in terms of the negative effects of development which influence and affect the individual's everyday life and existential experiences such as suicide, mental illness, dependence on clinic and medicine, consumerism, alcoholism, divorce etc. These essentialisation of Nation, class, community etc. gives way to the essentialisation of household and individual. In Developmental modernity, the autonomous rational individual as the real 'stakeholder', 'player', 'performer', 'local participant' etc is no surrealism.

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