



# UNDERSTANDING IMPLICATIONS OF AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH- EAST REGION

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## Abstract

In the process of development, some section of the society are excluded, and are generally called the backward class, they constitute S/C, S/T, OBC etc. The regions inhabited by them are generally underdeveloped characterised by the typical features of each region. To include them in the trajectory of development process the government of India is making all-out effort, even emphasising the inclusion of them in the planning. To bring them under the mainstream of development Eleventh Five Year Plan has emphasise Inclusive Growth and many programmes and policy have been devised and implemented to uplift them. Of the backward class S/T is the most excluded section. One of the characteristics of schedule tribe is that they mostly inhabit the forest and mountain. Owing to which the development doesn't reach them, on account of which there is discontentment with the government. Whatever the government dole out financial sops through various development schemes, out there is scramble for grabbing a bigger share by the elite section of various tribes and consequence is the communal disunity amongst linguistically differentiated various tribes and class conflict intra-tribe. Although economic development by pouring in funds has increased the income for few elite section of society but consequently it has led to dwindling happiness index in general in the backward class populace.

North-East states it is mostly inhabited by the schedule tribe. Due to heterogeneous identity it is embroil by many malaise, the brunt of which is seen in its underdevelopment. The million dollar question is that is the tribal's of north east states look back and recall that they are once peace loving people. And develop a sense of humility and utilise the available resources for the greater benefit of the region in particular and nation as a whole, and consequently minimise the friction intra and inter-tribe.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyze the terms of economic development in underdeveloped region and its impact on the society.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

India being a socialist democratic republic nation, has a responsibility of steering economic development of its every sectors and region. It's been sixty seventh years of independence, no doubt it has achieved a high degree of growth rate touching double digit in 2010 i.e, 10.1%, but then the imbalances in the development of its different region is starkly appalling and persistence of underdevelopment is still prevalent in the country. Initially, public sector enterprise was assigned a vital role for developing industrial base and it was assumed that the periphery would be percolated down by the growth of industries centre. Accordingly during the period of second five year plan around 29 (List A and B, IPR 1956) basic and strategic industries are reserve for public sector. But later, in the wake of globalisation the economy was de regularised to rope in more investment in the country. As such the government are divesting all the sectors of an economy, even the retail sector was not spared, which affects the daily life of common man. There are uproars in the street, trade union and civil society objecting to the proposition of letting private multi-national companies dictating their day-to-day life. But the national bourgeois would rather stand for the neo-capitalist agenda. In the time of globalisation, with proliferation of economic development, it is obvious that each and every parts of the nation and the world becomes connected; integrated and are influenced by the neo-liberal wave of ideas and thoughts.

At present the world is in the grip of neo-liberalism, as lobbied by the powerful neo-imperial west, the strand of thoughts are eventually being inculcated in the stream of national economic policy. As such each and every country in the world are hopefully opting for liberalisation of their economy whereby the national holdings and property are ceded to private multi-national corporations.

In the nook of the country is the tribesman, their socio-economic life is unique. They live on subsistence practising conventional agriculture system for their livelihood. Their life too is affected with the globalisation of an economy; infusing funds for development but then having an asymmetrical impact on the region; they have their unique social organisation which is also going transformation at a creeping pace.

## 2. SIGNIFICANCE OF PAPER

In the process of development ,some section of the society are excluded, and are generally called the backward class, they constitute S/C,S/T,OBC etc. in order to include them in the trajectory of development process the government of India is making all out effort ,even emphasising the inclusion of them in the planning. To bring them under the mainstream of development Eleventh Five Year Plan has emphasise Inclusive Growth and many programmes and policy have been devised and implemented to uplift them. Of the backward class S/T is the most excluded section. One of their characteristic is that they mostly inhabit the forest and mountain. Owing to which the development doesn't reach them, on account

of which there is discontentment with the government. Whatever the government dole out financial sops through various development schemes, out there is scramble for grabbing a bigger share by the elite section of various tribes and consequence is the communal disunity amongst linguistically differentiated various tribes and class conflict intra-tribe .Although economic development by pouring in funds has increased the income for few elite section of society but consequently it has led to dwindling happiness index in general in the tribal populace.

Talking about North-East states it is mostly inhabited by the tribal. The million dollar question is that is the tribal's of north east states look back and realise that they are once peace loving people. And develop a sense of humility and utilise the available resources for the greater benefit of the region in particular and nation as a whole, and consequently minimise the friction intra and inter-tribe.

### 3.LITERATURE SURVEY

Many researches as well as studies have been conducted with regard to economic development in North-east region. An attempt has been made to review some of the important work having a great relevance to the present paper.

Chopfoza Catherine(2009) in her article remarked “development is thus, a major process of socio- cultural transformation and its deeper understanding is necessary to see why, in spite of substantial increase in production and growth, diversification of the economy and enormous expansion in its technological base, the benefits from economic progress did not spread to all sections of the society and a great majority of them did not experience improvement in the quality of their life”<sup>1</sup>.

“Vedaya Sanjenbam (1998) has pointed out that in Manipur the implementation of economic development programmes is not evenly carried out throughout the state which has led to disparity between different regions and sections of the society, besides decline in employment in traditional crafts and industries. She points out that in the tribal areas there is still prevalence of shifting agricultural economy marked by absence of industries and low urbanization. She further points out that the hill districts of Manipur present, scene of poverty, unemployment, economic exploitation, social deprivation, poor health, illiteracy and lack of infrastructure. According to her, it is difficult to think of the balanced development of the state without improving the lot of tribal people living in the hill districts. M. Horam's (2000) book attempts to convey something of the social values, economic condition and feelings of the hill people of the state of Manipur, of their aspirations, intense love for traditional values and their longings and frustrations”<sup>2</sup>.

Frank (1975) has compared the regional imbalance as an “internal colonialism”<sup>3</sup>. The produce/surplus of the region is taken away for investment in other region .if such is the case then there certainly will be discontentment with the currency of the policy /attitude in the neglected region .the development in tribal region in India is construed with the displacement of people leading to alienation of tribal's from their land .He remarked further that “transformation of previously viable social organisational forms into less or unviable ones”<sup>4</sup>. Likewise , environment on which tribal were dependent has gone a tremendous change leading to the change in their socio-economic setting like land and tribe relations, lifestyle, social organisation ,tradition etc which they look upon as a threat to their existence.

Debashish Neogi, "Disparity in Socio-Economic Development and Its Implications on Communal Conflicts: A Study on India's North-Eastern Region" has remarked that the rising economic disparity in north-east India has been main reason for communal confrontation. "Moreover, apart from asymmetric development and concentration of economic power, a

'dependency syndrome' has started to operate. The dependence is on central grants, which have been flooded in the region under various development schemes. But development, in its real sense, has never occurred at the desired rate"<sup>5</sup>

#### **4. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/ UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN NORTH- EAST REGION**

North-East India it is substantially populated by the tribal's, leaving a few states in where the people from mainland have settled. The policy of tribal development was spelt out by the first prime minister of the country as follows; "we cannot allow matters to drift in the tribal areas or just take interest in them.... At the same time we should avoid over administering the areas and in particular, sending too many outsiders into their territory. It is between the two extreme positions we have to function"<sup>6</sup> (Elwin1960). In conformity with this thinking, the tribal development policy in the country was formulated. The task of tribal development has been defined as social and economic development of the tribal people through integrated area development and other programmes suiting the genius and the economic situation of the people ensuring progressive elimination of all forms of exploitation and ensuring a move towards the goal of equality and social justice.

The status of tribal's is deplorable, it is still backward and anomaly of economic development is widespread and essentially the economic liberalization has plunged the people in crossroad. In the face of new economic era, they are entangled in dynamics of materialism and consumerism. On the one hand they are reluctant to embrace the modern materialistic culture; on the other hand they are confronted with vagaries of economic situation. The question is how to circumvent such economic situation? Are North-East people adapting with time and reconfiguring their culture? If they do then, is it sustainable to the tribes, without changing their cultural ethos.

At present north east region is plague by myriads of economic maladies, to mention few there are regional economic imbalances, rising economic disparity, increasing expenditure of living, degrading social values as such their life are affected to the core, changing the very fabric of society which bind them together, manifested into rivalries and confrontation inter and intra-tribe. The magnitudes aggravated by immigration of people from outside of the region, putting pressure on the available resources and changing their social milieu. As far as regional imbalance is concern, the government of India is trying to mitigate it by setting up various developmental institution specially to the region such as North Eastern Council,(NEC) Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) etc, but then the growth and development of the region is not catching up at the desired level. The imbalance in development entails myriads of maladies.

The tribal society one's considered to be an egalitarian society have now been changing gradually from the pristine culture to the specious society, resulting into frisk relationship intra- tribe as well as

inter-tribe, the scramble for the resources which was unheard in the past, now it is the rule of the day. There are communal confrontations in different part of the region due to rising economic disparity.

But if we analyse intimately, it is more than that, the economic development per se has affected a tribe's man life completely, changing their social organisation, perception and belief system. They are now wayward. The tribal who were considered to have live with nature are turning against nature and their belief on nature is fading day by day, whereas the world is reverting to the sustainable development.

There are frustrations on the part of tribal people, they are feeling the sense of exclusion from national mainstream, and their frustration is evident from the widespread network of insurgent organisation in the North-East. Further within the state, to voice their concern there are cropping up of numerous associations disrupting the smooth governance by calling a 'bandh call, hence disrupting even the civil life of common man.

## 5. IMPLICATION OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT

The implication of underdevelopment is not only an economic implication but also a social and personal implication. The economic problem such as lop sided development, disparity in income, poverty, etc, all these are contentious issues in present scenario of North-east region. The issues become more acute when it gains an ethnic traction. The economic backwardness is one of the reasons for the growth of ethno-nationalistic chauvinism. And further if we see within the state there's also a demand for autonomous council.

The social implication may be in terms of deformation of social organisation and institution. It may also create social stratification. The stratification in the society segregates society into haves and have not leading to class society.

Lastly, underdevelopment has impact on the personality of a person, it is held for depersonalizing of the people of under develop region. The depersonalizing effect may be compared with the tribal's of various states of India, who are generally stereotyped as backward and are considered less mortal. Therefore, underdevelopment leads to loss of dignity of people of under develop region.

The tribal's of north east are heterogeneous, having distinct culture, language and tradition. One of the reason for disunity amongst the people of north east is that they are rooted ethnically, and don't think of venturing beyond their original identity. The time has come for the people of north east to shed their identity politics and reconfigure their identity by articulating in a new front to a broad based or universal face, which is essential in the wake of neo-liberal conviction like look-east policy.

Insurgency is the major problem inflicting the region. It retards the development. The feeling of exclusion and of being colonized widespread. There is a constant fear in the minds of the people that their identity is being eroded due to the submergence into mainstream Indian culture. The people of the region started alienating themselves and the feeling of self-determination started to germinate. With the aim of



preserving their own identity various ethnic groups inhabiting in the region, undisturbed for centuries, began to differentiate among each other severing the local ties and affinities and started to struggle with arms. Thus, insurgency has mushroomed in the region.

The problem of insurgency has become the stumbling block in the course of development. It foundered every development strategy and hampered all the developmental works. Kidnapping, extortion, killing, bandh, strikes and curfews have become the order of the day. Therefore, prior to any policy programme to resolve the problem of insurgency in the region, the political processes that has been framed and pursued to convert a breeding ground of insurgencies must be reversed first. Simultaneously, the attitude and security obsess mindsets of the central government should also change and embrace the region with open arms so as to restore the lost confidence of the common people.

The rich natural and human resources available in the region could not be utilized to the full extent due to deficient infrastructure which in turn is due to the geo-political condition, including ever-deteriorating law and order. The apathy of the central government and due to the problems of insurgency has resulted into the gross deficiency of infrastructure in the region. This has crippled the free flow of factors as well as products. In such a situation, it would be hard for the region to reap the benefits of globalization.

The lack of infrastructure has not only spoiled the prospect of economic development but has also devoid the people of the region of fostering linkages which would have augured well for developing mutual cooperation and peaceful coexistence.

In order to reconnect the lost connectivity, trade and commerce and more importantly to foster emotional attachment among various ethnic groups inhabiting in the region infrastructures like roads, transports, communications electricity, banking etc. must be developed adequately. Such exercise would not only enlarge the base for the growth of the economy in the region but also enhance the regional cooperation-an engine of growth in this era of globalization.

Since, the state is responsible for the creation of conducive political, legal and economic environment for building individual capabilities and encouraging private initiatives. It would, however, depend on the quality of the governance. Good governance exercises its legitimate political power in a manner that is perceived as equitable, socially sensitive, participatory, transparent and accountable to the people at large. This includes not only the process of transformation of human and natural resources to a social ends but also reveals the long term vision and commitment of the state to secure human well being and sustained development of the people.

The state of governance in the region is in pathetic condition. Government machinery is on the brink of collapse. Corruption, siphoning of public funds, deteriorating law and order, lack of transparency and accountability, are quite rampant in the region. All this has eroded the individual capabilities and institutional capacities to meet the social objectives. Until and unless the quality of governance has been improved, no matter how much is the fund earmarked for whatever the policy programme initiated would not be successful and only the common people have to bear the brunt.

## 6.CONCLUSION

Considering the positive role of the state for the generation of employment, development of infrastructure and promotion of social welfare as well as eradication of poverty, the task of the state is explicit, and is equally responsible for development of different region of a country. But then the incidence of development doesn't fall equally on different region and within the same region the anomalies of resources possession persist, which itself is the symptom of underdevelopment. Therefore underdevelopment cannot be totally attributed to the features of the region but it is also caused by the system which is diffused from the proletarian base (develop region/system), which hitherto works for the promotion of underdevelopment in the particular region.

## 7. Notes

<sup>1</sup>, Chopfoza, "Tribal Development in India with Special Reference to Manipur: Trajectory and Literature". The NEHU Journal Vol.VII No. P.69.

<sup>2</sup>, ibid,p-85

<sup>3</sup>, A.G Frank(ed) 1975"On Capitalist Underdevelopment". Oxford University Press,P-4.

<sup>4</sup>, ibid, p-23

<sup>5</sup>,Neogi D,(2010) :- "Disparity in Socio-Economic Development and Its Implication on Communal Conflicts: A Study on India's North-Eastern Region". International Journal of Human and social sciences. P-304

<sup>6</sup>, Chopfoza, "Tribal Development in India with Special Reference to Manipur: Trajectory and Literature". The NEHU Journal Vol.VII No.p-70

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