

10. Development

Q1. What do you understand by the term development? Would all sections of society benefit from such a definition of development?

Answer:

The concept of development gained importance after the second half of the 20th century. This was the time when a large number of countries in Asia and Africa gained political independence. The term development can be understood better in both the broader and narrower sense.

(a) In a broader sense, development conveys the idea of improvement, progress, well being and aspiration for better life to constitute the vision for society as a whole and how to achieve it.

(b) In a narrower sense, it refers to more limited goals as increasing the rate of economic growth, etc. Benefits to different sections of society

(a) Development has been identified with completing projects like factories, dams, hospitals, national highways rather than to uphold the broader vision of development.

(b) Some sections like industrialists have been benefited while others like up-rooted families and landless people, etc. have lost their homes or lands without any compensatory gain.

(c) Though, issues regarding the benefits and burdens of development either have been justly distributed or not, have been a main concern for development priorities in a democratic set-up. The issue has invited lot of debate as to which model should be adopted to serve as a standard by which the development of a country can be examined.

Q2. Discuss some of the social and ecological costs of the kind of development which has been pursued in most countries.

Answer:

1. Social cost of Development:

(a) Displacement resulted in the loss of livelihood and increased impoverishment.

(b) Many have been displaced from their homes and localities due to urbanization and industrialization, etc.

(c) If rural agricultural communities are displaced to end up at the margins of society.

(d) It results in a loss of culture due to loss of community life because traditional skills acquired over a long period are also lost.

(e) Displacement has led to struggles in many countries like Narmada Bachao Andolan against Sardar Sarovar Dam on the river Narmada.

(f) The supporters of this dam claimed to generate electricity, irrigate large areas of land and to provide drinking water to the desert areas of Kutch and Saurashtra whereas the opponents of the dam claim to lose the land through construction by almost one million people.

Ecological costs of development:

(a) Environmental degradation took place, i.e. Tsunami created damage to a greater extent on South and South East Asia coasts in 2005.

(b) Global warming is also taking place due to emissions of greenhouse gases into the environment, i.e. ice melting in Arctic and Antarctic regions has the potential to cause floods and submerge low lying areas like Bangladesh and Maldives.

(c) The ecological crisis will adversely affect us, like air pollution.

(d) Deforestations also affect the forest resources, i.e. medical herbs, firewood or timber, etc.

Q3. What are some of the new claims for rights which the process of development has generated?

Answer:

(a) In reality, the benefits of development have been concerned by powerful and costs of development have been borne by the poorest and vulnerable section due to ecological degradation, displacement and loss of livelihood.

(b) Another claim is to have a right to be consulted in decision directly which affects lives of people.

(c) The people can claim if an activity or law sanctioned by the government threatens the lives of the people.

(d) Another issue is regarding rights to natural resources. Can communities claim traditional rights to the use of natural resources? This is related to tribal and aboriginal communities who have a specific way of community life and relationship to the environment.

(e) Democracies focus to achieve a balance between the claims of present and future.

Q4. What would be the advantages of democracy over other forms of government for ensuring that decisions regarding development are made to promote the common good?

Answer:

(a) Democracy is the best form of government because the conflicts are resolved through

debates with the involvement of formulating the goals of development and in devising way of implementing it.

(b) Democracy makes a clear distinction between a plan made by others and sharing in the formulation of the plans because the others may plan with the best intentions but may be less aware of specific needs and the sharing shows the empowerment in decision making process.

(c) Democracy and development are interrelated to ensure participation and allow local decision making bodies to take decisions about development projects in the local area.

(d) The project may be consulted on the issues to affect the people most and to reject them if it affects adversely to the community.

(e) Direct involvement of people in planning and formulating policies allow people to direct resources towards their needs.

(f) A decentralized approach to development makes it possible to use different types of technologies traditional and modern in a creative manner.

Q5. In your view how successful have popular struggles like been in making the state responsive to the social and environmental costs of development? Discuss with examples.

Answer:

People affected by the government policies have not always accepted their fate passively. They have raised their concerns. This has led to some of the popular struggles we have heard. Popular struggles have got a great success in making state responsible to the social and environmental cost of development.

(a) The concept of 'development' gained importance after the second half of 20th century when a large number of countries in Asia and Africa got political freedom from colonialism.

(b) In the beginning years, the focus was on catching up with west in terms of economic growth and modernization of societies.

(c) Earlier the state was the only agency capable of initiating that type of social and economic change and several nations embarked upon ambitious projects of development, generally with the assistance of loans and aid from the developed countries, i.e. five years plans in India since 1950s.

(d) The model of development adopted by India and other countries has come under a great deal of criticism over the years.

(e) This led to some re-thinking about the objectives and processes of development today.

(f) Construction of Sardar Sarovar project was challenged on the ground that it will displace the tribal people and local inhabitants living near the areas of this dam and initiatives were taken by by Medha Patekar under the banner of Narmada Bachao Andolan.

(g) Some well-known environmental groups include Green Peace and World Wildlife Fund, etc.

(h) In India, Chipko Movement was initiated under the leadership of Sunder Lal Bahuguna to protect the Himalayan forests to pressurize the government to modify industrial and development policies of government.