

Need for Redefining Development in Kerala

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Abstract: Kerala is splendid with its flora and fauna which gained it the title of Gods own country. It is gifted with human and natural resources which bring 'development' in the state. The high density of population and high rate of literacy influences the life of the people in Kerala very much. After the gaining of independence from the colonizers and the suffocation of the caste system, Kerala people followed the new path towards 'development'. The political leaders and executive proclaims that they had brought development to the land. But in the name of development Kerala people are facing so many problems. Since it is a densely populated state, development spits out the displaced people from their land and they are left without rehabilitation and proper compensation. The paradox in the allocation of land in the name of development remains in the state with all its manifestations. While the corporate and the rich are given acres of valuable land for cheap rate, the poor landless people are forced to struggle and protest for a piece of land and against the atrocities of the rulers. The word development thus creates restlessness and anxiety among the people of Kerala.

Key words: development, Kerala, corporate, corruption, land distribution.

Kerala is bestowed with lush greenery and elegant natural beauty. The flora and fauna attracts everyone and it gained the title of 'Gods Own Country'. The natural resources supply to the needs of the people. The surplus water resources help the people to depend on agriculture for their livelihood. It is evident that majority of the common men own agricultural land, as a result of the land reforms of the first government of Kerala under the leadership of EMS Namboothirippad.

In spite of the surplus natural and human resources, the number of poor and displaced is increasing in the state. Though the political parties and rulers boast of development and prosperity, poverty remain unchanged. The political parties and bureaucrats count the development projects and industrial firms that they had brought to the state, the number of people who strive to make both ends meet, displaced from their own land are increasing. In the name of development and investment people are uprooted from their own lands. Though there are proclamations and offers for rehabilitation and compensation, it is either entangled in the red tape of bureaucrats or sucked by the ever pervasive corruption. The word 'development' which must bring ecstasy to the people generates fear among them. Public awareness and high rate of literacy enabled the people to realize the hazards hidden under the title of development. So even at the declaration of development projects people arouse to protests and strikes and fears that the projects will shatter their lives.

The illicit relationship between the bureaucrats or the rulers with the industrial giants increases corruption and spoils the soul and soil of Kerala. The picture of development is nested in huge buildings and shopping malls on either side of express ways with huge factories emanating products and pollution to the market. Since the poverty and the miseries of the people are mounting along with the erection of industrial firms and more number of people is uprooted from their lands, there is a need for redefining the concept of development in Kerala. It must not generate fear among the people.

Since Kerala is one of the densely populated states in India, care must be taken to bring development which must not disturb the natural harmony of the state. The paradox in the allocation of land is evident when the history of Kerala is analyzed. The lands in the hearts of the cities having high price is given for the corporate on lease or through illegal means and the cries of the poor and the landless is ignored and the protests for shelter and agricultural land never trembles the eardrums of the rulers. The case of the Smartcity to be established in the city of Kochi can be analyzed for the elucidation of the paradox.

The Smartcity project, initiated by the IT minister of Antony government, K. Kunjalikutty, promised to give the Dubai based IT company 246 acres of land in the heart of the city for lease of 99 years. The intention of the rulers was to change the state to an IT hub of India. The intention is nice. But the plight is that the people of Chengera were in hovels and huts fighting against the adverse whether to gain the piece of cultivable land to earn their living. While the corporate were given acres of land for cheap rates, the need for land of the people in Chengera was ignored or suppressed. About 5000 families in the Harrison

Malayalam Estate fought with all possible means to attain their goal. The interest of the authorities was towards The Smartcity, as it will benefit both the rulers and the higher strata of the society. Even the time period of the Harrison Estate was expired and they were clinging on the land through illegal means. The rulers and the authorities played a major role to attract the interest of the corporate giant from Dubai and ignored the life of 20000 people in Chengera. Though late, land was allotted to the poor people in Chengera, with the backing of social activists and wide protests, they were scattered in many places and the human bond of families and relationships were broken.

The protests and shrieks of the people of the poor for a piece of land for shelter in the remote areas were neglected in the name of numerous reasons but the real estate mafia and the rich bagged acres of land through illegal means. The red tape and corruption plays a major role in the process and in blocking the rights of the poor people. "Much of the funds from the 'Tribal Sub Plans' are drained by the bureaucracy and even diverted to neo-liberal projects that often prove deleterious to *adivasi* interests"(Raman 116). The controversy in the allocation of land is evident when we investigate the encroachment the industrial giants like the TATA in the high range areas.

The forest land in Munnar was encroached by the rich and the private institutions with the support of the political parties. But the Adivasies and the Dalits were forcefully pulled out from their land labeling them as trespassers. The incident in the tribal village of Muthanga is a black mark in the history of Kerala. The plea for a piece of land was suppressed with iron hands. The fight for land was labeled as terrorist activity and the authorities excavated the relation between the protesters and the LTTE in Srilanka. The atrocities of the police along with goondas pierced the Adivasies and the area was declared as restricted area after wiping out the Adivasies from there .While the illicit collaboration of the political parties and the corporate build resorts and five star hotels for the elite class, the poor were forced to bury their relatives in the kitchens and inside their huts. Most of the Adivasies, who hold land, is having plots of a cent i.e. 1/100th of an acre, which is less than the UN Habitat Estimate for healthy living in the urban environment. Thus even after the development projects the rich grows richer and the poor turns poorer. "And the issues pertaining to economic problems like agriculture, animal husbandry, infrastructure development and also the problems of the weaker sections do not get any attention"(Gupta 166).

The question remains even after the visit of foreign leaders to the state: what is the benefit for the common men with the visit? The leaders and officials sign pacts, treaties, and memorandum, to erect buildings and factories in the name of development. The condition of the poor remains as it is. The trade unions and the associations undermine every project and try to exploit the workers and the villagers. The concept of development must not confine to mere erection of buildings and factories. Though the rulers boast of their development ventures and industrial firms, the income of the state remains void. Even after every Budget the public debt attains new heights. "The public debt of Kerala is increasing steadily since 1971-1972. It has grown 17 times from 2824 crores to 20176 crores in 1999-2000" (Varatharajan 341). The fact is that the benefit of development is not flowing to the people but it is looted by the private companies and firms. When the political colonization vanished with the independence, economic and cultural colonization remained unchanged, with all its manifestations. The slavery of the rulers to the West is evident as they are trying to make profit for the Western companies and firms in every new development in the state. The dependence of the World Bank and ADB for every steps and the indebtedness to the IMF model of development prove that still we are under the clasp of colonization. "Kerala had recently sought financial assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB)" (Indian Planning Commission 60) .The money which must be used for the welfare of the people is spent for the rich companies to gain from the state. This controversy in development must be changed. Or else the public money will be swept by the foreign firms. The condition in the time of colonization remains even today as the foreign companies loot the natural resources from our state and is marketed for us for higher cost. Our government is making them the way to rob us in the day light. Thus with the establishment of huge factories and industries the number of huts and hovels also increase in the streets and suburbs. The establishment of the airports in the rural areas made many displaced along with many water-mark offers.

When we analyze the education sector of Kerala, the number of colleges and universities is not sufficient to allocate the students. This compels the students to migrate to the neighboring states like Tamilnadu, Andrapradesh and Karnataka. The higher education sector is polluted with the politics as the universities and the colleges are ruled by the dirty hands of politicians. This generates corruption and nepotism in the institutions. Exploiting the minority label the minority rich grabs the institution from the

changing governments. But the minority is made to witness all this atrocities and private managements are making money from all these institutions changing education to a lucrative business.

The price of vegetables and other essential goods are rocketing high. Though the government puts forth some remedial measures, they are not sufficient for the proper treatment of the price rise. It forces Kerala to depend on other states like Tamilnadu and Andrapradesh for essential goods like rice, vegetables, milk etc. The agricultural land is decreasing with construction and filling. The real estate is allowed to fill acres of agricultural land, while the common men are allowed to fill only 5 cent of land for a house. It takes much time and money to allocate the permission while the corporate are given permission in lightning speed. The high rate of filling and construction blocks the flow of water and spoils the remaining land and turns it barren.

Even after every development projects the government offers thousands of job opportunities that the firm will bring to the state. But the number of educated young men who migrate to foreign countries to earn their living is mounting. The number of educated unemployed persons in the state is very high. Unemployment and under-employment makes ripples in the mental and manual well being of the youth, which leads them to suicide and other immoral activities. The terrorist groups aim at unemployed young men and women for their violent activities. The other reason is that the qualifications of the youth are not valued much in the state. The wages in the state is insufficient for their living. The workers from the Northern states are flowing to the state as the number of native workers is retreating from the field. Political parties are trying to make all the development ventures to their own credit. The opposition undermines all the projects and numbers the defects of the projects to arouse the people against them.

THE DEVELOPMENTAL POLICY OF KERALA MUST BE REBUILT FOR THE PROPER DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE. IT MUST TAKE IN TO CONSIDERATION THE UNDISTURBED LIFE OF THE COMMON MEN WITHOUT SPOILING THE NATURAL RESOURCES. DEVELOPMENT MUST BRING BENEFIT FOR THE COMMON MEN BLOCKING THE FLOW OF MONEY TO THE PRIVATE COMPANIES AND CORPORATE. THE SPLENDID COMBINATION OF EDUCATED TALENT, FERTILE LAND AND VAST HUMAN CAPITAL MUST BE TAKEN IN TO ACCOUNT FOR PROPER DEVELOPMENT. THUS THE DEVELOPMENT MUST BE AIMED AT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOWEST STRATA OF THE SOCIETY.

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