UNIT 6: CONTEMPORARY IDEOLOGIES- II

UNIT STRUCTURE

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6.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to :

- define sustainable development;
- describe the ideology of sustainable development;
- understand the significance of the civil society;
- critically analyze the role of NGOs and the ideology's significance in social work.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we have discussed the ideologies of social work. In this unit, let us discuss the ideologies relating to development that is sustainable and role of civil society and NGOs. After the Industrial Revolution, industrialism has come to dominate all thoughts of development. The present mode of development is therefore heavily industrial based and growth-oriented. The concept of human development attempts to give the development paradigm a direction from economic growth towards human beings, yet industrialism remains dominant. In the past few decades, a new concept - sustainable development - has emerged. Just as human development poses the question of human beings vis-à-vis economic



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growth, the concept of sustainable development attempts to pose the question of nature, environment and ecology vis-à-vis the growth-driven model of development by raising the issue of sustainability. This is done on two grounds: resource depletion and environmental pollution. Since economic development means speedy use of earth's resources for ever rising production, how long can earth's resources sustain such depletion of finite resources is the main question. Besides, the large-scale pollution of air, water and soil, increase in green house gases, ozone layer depletion, global warming etc. which are byproducts of resource use for industrial production and consumption-oriented lifestyles, threaten the environment and life bearing systems with an ultimate collapse. This has brought the danger to survival of humankind closer than anyone had ever imagined. In his critique of modern civilization, Mahatma Gandhi, a pioneering philosopher of a socially just and ecologically sustainable form of development, had warned of this situation when he said "the earth has enough for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed."

6.3 CONCEPT AND MEANING OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The concept of sustainability is defined differently in different contexts. In context of development and environment, the first official definition of sustainable development has been given by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WECD) in its report titled Our Common Future (1987). This is popularly referred to as the Brundtland Commission Report, named after its Chairperson Gro Harlem Brundtland, a former Prime Minister of Norway, and now a Special Envoy on Climate Change for UN Secretary General. This Report was adopted as a resolution in the UN General Assembly in the same year. The Commission defines:

"Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

- the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's

poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and

- the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs."

This definition focuses on two things- meeting the needs of the poor through development, and the destructive impact of today's technology and development on earth's resources which endanger the survival of future generations. It tries to reconcile two seemingly irreconcilable entities - environment and development. It recognizes that the humankind has to depend on nature to meet its 'needs', and development must go on to address the needs of the poor people who are untouched by development till now. But at the same time, earth's resources like land, forests, water, air, minerals, fuel etc. are limited. If the rate of resource extraction is maintained at the current rate, there would be nothing left for the future generations. Hence, development must be a balance between these two ends so as to become sustainable.



You can see that the concept is a shift in the growth-oriented ment thinking which emphasizes ever higher growth and ever rising consumption of material goods as highly desirable. Sustainable development warns that such model is destructive to itself and that only is sustainable which does not bring irreparable damage to earth's capacity. It thus brings in a notion of limits to development.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 1

1. What is sustainable development?
2. State the objectives of sustainable dvelepment.

6.4 IDEOLOGIES OF SUSTAINABLE AND PEOPLE CENTERED DEVELOPMENT

The Brundtland Commission Report which defined sustainable development comprehensively and spells out policy objectives to achieve

it. Capra (1996) promoted the ideology that the world is not a collective of isolated objects, but a network of phenomenon that are fundamental, interconnected and interdependent. In nature, there is no 'above' or 'below' and there are no hierarchies. There are only networks nesting within other networks. Ultimately, such deep ecological awareness is spiritual or religious. According to Capra, the principles of the planets ecosystems organize themselves to maximize sustainability through interdependence, recycling, partnership, flexibility and diversity. The same principles can be used as guidelines to build sustainable human communities.



Sustainable development : is a process in which economic, fiscal, trade, energy, agricultural, industrial and all other policies are designed to bring about development that is economically, socially and ecologically sustainable.

Sustainable development is a process in which economic, fiscal, trade, energy, agricultural, industrial and all other policies are designed to bring about development that is economically, socially and ecologically sustainable. This means the current consumption cannot be financed for long by incurring economic debts that others must repay. It also means that enough must be invested in the education and health of today's generation to avoid creating a social debt for future generations. Moreover, it means that natural resources must be used in ways that do not create ecological debts by overexploiting the earths carrying and productive capacity. All postponed debts ---whether economic, social or ecological--- mortage sustainability (Haq, 1998).

People centered development is a vision that is an expression of people's awareness, aspiration and struggles and therefore sustainable. This vision accepts that people are knowledgeable about their situation and how to manage them, given the necessary resources. It acknowledges that people have a right to plan their own destinies and determine their own lifestyles. It appreciates that local solutions must be congruent with local realities at the time, both geographical and human (Cox, 1993).

6.5 RESURGENCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The relative autonomy of the civil society, that is various communities and collectives of people, often informal and inarticulate, is being perceptibly eroded by the advancing process of overbearing economic, political and cultural influences of remote forces (Roy,1997). According to Srinivasan

(1994), the growing pre-eminence of the state as an agency of centralized social and political control, led to homogenization and unification of society and the state. He noted that as an alien system of rational control, centralized state government was imposed on the complex and heterogenous elites of Indian society. All other forms of solidarity---linguistic, regional and communal---were defined in advance as representing a rudimentary polity, which is doomed historically. As the indigenous tradition is neither a fossil nor an empty sentiment, but a conscious structure of knowledge and experience, nation building is a coercive logic of indigenous institutional and ideological replacement. It is responsible for the cultural diversities to raise their heads as 'problems' of casteism, communalism and regionalism (Srinivasan, 1994).

According to Vandana Shiva (1997), the centralized nation state is anti-democratic and the representative democracy is inadequate to protect people's interest in a period of globalization. The ideology of democratic pluralism recognizes that diverse communities have diverse interests and they all have legitimate democratic rights of decision making and self determination in matters that affect their lives, according to her. According to Capra, the ethnic and cultural diversities contribute to the viability of the human society.

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The Manifesto of People's Global Action (1998) states the following aims of joint actions against WTO, 'free trade' and corporate rule:

- Taking back control of the means of production from the hands of both transnational and national capital, in order to create free sustainable and community controlled livelihoods based on solidarity and people's need and not on exploitation and greed.
- Accepting only those technologies which can be managed and operated by local people.
- Rejecting the principles of competitiveness as a solution of people's problems.
- Respecting the right of indigenous people to territorial autonomy.
- A decentralized economy and polity based on communities rights to natural resources and to plan their own development with equality

and self reliance as the basic values.

- Respecting traditional knowledge and cultures consonant with the values of equality, justice and sustainability, evolving creative ways to use and fairly distribute natural resources.
- Taking control over culture, out of corporate hands and reclaiming it by communities.
- Celebrating diversity of cultures and communities and place none above the other.

6.6 IDEOLOGIES OF NON GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

As the limitations of state-sponsored, project based, top-down development become apparent, the 1980s and the 1990s saw increasing attention focused on private, professional development organizations called non-government organizations (NGOs). NGO is a United Nations term coined mainly to indicate the difference between the organizations of the states, which are its direct members, and the organizations that do not belong to the state. Privatization and Globalization catapulted the NGO into the centre stage, often according them a major role in dealing with the new social, economic, political and environmental concerns (Voluntary Action Network India, nd). The founding members of the NGOs that came up in the 1980s and 1990s were still the middle class or lower middle class professionals and quasi-professionals.

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The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-1990) granted formal recognition to NGOs. The 1980s and 1990s also saw growth in the size and the number of NGOs, and diversification of its role into three types:

- The NGOs that concentrate on development while acting as intermediaries between doner agencies (including the government and foreign) and the poor.
- NGOs that concentrate on empowerment, which take initiatives to form community based organizations (CBOs), help the poor obtain their rights from the state, organize them around issues that adversely affect them, and lobby for them at various levels of the

state, from networks around popular issues and campaigns around issues such as energy, environment, housing or women's rights.

- NGOs as development consultants which provide training to smaller NGOs and CBOs, consulting services to government and foreign agencies and conduct documentation and research.

Many radical scholars believe that funds from imperialistic countries proliferate voluntary groups, primarily to influence the course of development of the respective societies in which they operate, to systematically counter and weaken the potential of the Left Movement in these countries. It has shifted the main course of people's movement from 'Liberation' to 'Development' (Dhanagare,1988).

Samuel (1998) criticizes the term NGO as a blanket term that appropriates the diverse ideological, cultural ethical and institutional initiatives under an all encompassing stereotype. It exemplifies the homogenizing tendency of globalization. It homogenizes the whole social change spectrum. It sucked up various shades of experience into a dominant discourse dictated by a handful of multilateral developmental institutions in a handful of rich countries. Secondly, government is the reference point for the term. In the Indian historical context, voluntary organizations or social change initiatives have always treated people rather than government, as the major reference point (Samuel, 1998).

According to Sethi (1998), the NGOs with specialized skills attempt to reach out both to the grassroots and the policy makers. Most of these new efforts depend strongly on an external infusion of funding, often international. Everyone, from the donor government, the social commentator and the middle class para-professional now find it lucrative to enter the 'grassroot business' in the process hegemonising the voice of the grassroots. Rajni Kothari (1989) has noted that there has taken place a striking growth of individualism and egotism among activists and professionals and the draw of material incentives.

We also traced the origin and development of the idea of sustainable development. We have examined sustainable development through some critical views. We also discussed the critiques regarding the politics of the

concept. Lastly, we looked at how globalization would affect sustainable development by reworking of development-resource relationship, mainly to the detriment of nature.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS 2

3. What is colonizing of nature?
4. Define the term 'NGO'.



6.7 LET US SUM UP

- The present mode of development is therefore heavily industrial based and growth-oriented. The concept of human development attempts to give the development paradigm a direction from economic growth towards human beings, yet industrialism remains dominant.
- Sustainable Development implies meeting the needs of the poor through development, and the destructive impact of today's technology and development on earth's resources which endanger the survival of future generations. It tries to reconcile two seemingly irreconcilable entities - environment and development.

  People centered development is a vision that is an expression of people's awareness, aspiration and struggles and therefore sustainable. This vision accepts that people are knowledgeable about their situation and how to manage them, given the necessary resources. It acknowledges that people have a right to plan their own destinies and determine their own lifestyles. It appreciates that local solutions must be congruent with local realities at the time, both geographical and human.
- The indigenous tradition is a conscious structure of knowledge and experience, nation building is a coercive logic of indigenous institutional and ideological replacement. It is responsible for the

cultural diversities to raise their heads as 'problems' of casteism, communalism and regionalism

- Privatization and Globalization catapulted the NGO into the centre stage, often according them a major role in dealing with the new social, economic, political and environmental concerns (Voluntary Action Network India, nd). The founding members of the NGOs that came up in the 1980s and 1990s were still the middle class or lower middle class professionals and quasi-professionals.



6.8 FURTHER READING

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6.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

Answer 1. Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it

two key concepts: the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given.

Answer 2. Objectives of sustainable development are: reviving growth,changing quality of growth, meeting essential needs for jobs, foods, energy, water and sanitation, ensuring a sustainable level of population, conserving and enhancing the resource base and others.

Answer 3. Economic globalization fosters a new colonization of nature. The patent regime allows monopoly control to corporations over biotic species like seeds and plants excluding their use by others. Genetic engineering can play havoc on the biodiversity in the agriculture of the developing countries.

Answer 4. NGO is a United Nations term coined mainly to indicate the difference between the organizations of the states, which are its direct members, and the organizations that do not belong to the state. Privatization and Globalization catapulted the NGO into the centre stage, often according them a major role in dealing with the new social, economic, political and environmental concerns.



6.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

1. Describe the concept of sustainable development.
2. Discuss the ideology of people-centred development.
3. On what grounds are functioning of NGOs criticized?
4. Explain in brief the idea of democratic pluralism.
5. Analyze to rise of civil society and its significance.

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