

Development and Socio-Economic backwardness of Balochistan

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Abstract:

Development is a complex term. It has been defined by Stiglitz, Sen and Coleman and Nixson as transformation, enhancing capabilities and improvement, respectively. Balochistan which is the largest Province is facing many problems in certain areas. Its population is scattered, people mostly live in small hamlets with little amenities of life. The economy of the province is agricultural and horticultural and social setup is to a great extent tribal and traditional. Education is in shambles, literacy rate is very low and teachers do not perform their duty properly. To address the myriad of problems in Balochistan, there is a dire need of investment, increasing literacy rate and quality of education, marketing and export of agricultural products, tax incentives for industry, judicious use of mineral. Tackling these problems is a Herculean task, however some suggestions have been highlighted in the paper which could help in further study in alleviating some of the problems.

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Development and Socio-Economic backwardness of Balochistan

Development is a buzz word but there is no simple definition for the jargon of development. Many economists emphasize that economic development relates to economic growth while recent economists argue that it is more than that. For example, Stiglitz (2002) defines development in terms of changing societies, improving the lives of the downtrodden, enabling everyone to have a chance at success and access to health care and education (p-252). Another Noble Laureate – Amartya Sen argues that ‘the process of economic development is best seen as an expansion of people’s “capabilities” (Cowen & Shenton, 1996, p- 449). According to Coleman and Nixon (1986) Development can be considered as a process of improvement with respect to set of values. (p-2). The French Sociologist – Emily Durkheim (1858-1917) in his book

‘The Division of labor in Society’ states that “there are two kinds of society – the ‘traditional and modern ‘ which have very different forms of social cohesion between their members . The people of the traditional society perform the limited work of simple agrarian community, based on group of families or clans in village settlements” (p-44). Durkheim further states that the basic mechanism that undermines the traditional way of life is the ever increasing number and density of population (Webster, 1990).

The society in Balochistan to a great extent is the classic example of Durkheim’s traditional society. The economy is mostly agrarian and horticultural and people are mostly farmers, small traders, herdsman and fisherman in coastal areas. Agriculture sector employs 67 percent of Balochistan’s total work force (Haider, p-77). The herdsman or nomadic people (though their number is decreasing) migrate from place to place in

Abdul Qadir et al

search of pastureland for their flock. The fishermen of Balochistan often follow the old and outdated methods for fishing. The small traders are mostly shopkeepers. However, in bordering areas of the province some people are involved in smuggling of small scale items such as petrol, electric gadgets, food etc. A very small segment of population is also engaged in smuggling of contraband items/narcotics in bordering areas.

Durkheim's other identification for traditional society is 'group of families or clans in village settlement'. If we translate this statement into the context of Balochistan, we find that a good portion of the people of Balochistan live in far flung areas with their clans and kins in small hamlets. In these remote areas we find that people live in harshly cold or extremely hot conditions with bare minimum. Modern amenities of life such as electricity, roads, schools, health facilities are almost non-existent or exist in rudimentary form. Clan and tribal setup is the dominant feature in most parts of Balochistan.

Durkheim's third contention is that the density of population undermines the traditional way of life and leads to division of labor. In Balochistan we can see that competition for scarce resources and strains and stresses of ever increasing population leave little opportunity for the people of villages and rural areas. Therefore, they are forced to migrate to big towns and urban centers to seek specialized jobs in offices, schools, workshops and factories. This phenomenon is called by Durkheim as division of labor.

Development and Socio-Economic backwardness of Balochistan

Obstacles and critical aspects in the Development of Balochistan.

The area of the province is vast and terrain is tough while a good section of the population lives in isolation in small villages and mountains. Therefore, extending amenities of life like roads, electricity, schools, health centers is costly and difficult. Managing the existing schools and health centers is also difficult as the teachers, dispensers/doctors seldom remain at the spot and perform their duty. It is a big challenge for the government and local community at large.

There is acute scarcity of arable water and in some places drinking water. Rainfall is very low with an average of about 155 mm – 350mm annually. Climatic change, unpredictable rains and dry spell have played havoc with water resources, agriculture, livestock and flora and fauna of the province. Many springs, karezes and perennial water sources have dried up and many orchards and trees have been cut. On top of all the natural calamities, there has been mushroom growth of tubewells which has led to depletion of underground water. Water shortage has created an existential problem.

Most of the people in the province cannot meet the basic necessities like food, safe drinking water, sanitation and health care, basic shelter and clothing, etc. Since unemployment is rampant therefore majority of the people survive on family support or in some cases on the support of relatives. Safety nets and support from the government side is almost non-existent and has led to acute deprivation amongst the lower strata of society.

One big menace which people are facing is the tribal feuds where precious lives are lost. Business, jobs and education is badly affected and

Abdul Qadir et al

vendetta and killings run for years amongst clans and tribes. This is a big menace and creates a great law and order situation. Successive governments have failed to address the problem and the matter is not abating even in these modern days. Socially accepted ways are needed to tackling the tribal conflicts.

Both quantity and quality of education in the province is dismal. The best and undoubtedly inflated estimates put literacy at barely 26 % with female literacy barely 15 % of population. “According to an estimate there are a total of 1500 settlements in Balochistan and out of these settlements, 7000 are equipped with schools of formal education sector.” (Haider, 2004). In short we can say that schools in Balochistan are scarce, attendance is low, teachers most of the time remain absent from duty and teachers are not intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to serve. The quality of college and university education is also precarious.

The wild-life, indigenous birds, tress and bushes, flora and fauna and eco-system (community of plants and animals) have suffered much in Balochistan due to indiscriminate hunting, droughts and increase in human population. Birds like Partridges, Quails, Si-Si, Hubara are diminishing miserably. Hubara is a rare bird which Arab Sheikhs hunt with falcons in winter in the deserts and, plains of Balochistan. The beautiful ‘gazelle’ (deer) is going to be extinct. Guan(Shinay) tree which has a long life, grows at an altitude of 5000 Sq.feet and above is being ruthlessly cut down for fuel. The game and forest Department are weak and do not implement the protective law.

Development and Socio-Economic backwardness of Balochistan

Policy Dilemma and Way Forward

Siddiq (2011) points out that since the creation of Pakistan no meaningful effort was made for the devolution of authority and involving the people in the decision making process. Gradually delivery systems in the social sectors started falling and the benefits of new program hardly ever reached the target groups. Development programs showed weakness at all the three levels i.e conceptualization, implementation and maintenance. With the State's failure in providing housing, public transport, drinking water, primary health care and basic education, the role of informal sector and NGOs has increased. The failure of Balochistan government can be attributed to ill-conceived plans, mis-management, corruption, casual and indifferent attitude towards duty and lack of accountability. What is needed is right kind of policy decision and co-ordination among NGOs, communities and local government for the implementation of the projects ins social sector.

The Noble Laureate Economist Amartya Sen emphasizes that our economic opportunities and employment prospects depend greatly on our educational achievements and cultivated skills (Sen, p-105). Sen pays particular attention to the expansion of people's "Capabilities", as mentioned earlier in the definition of development. Most of the present day jobs are knowledge based therefore there could be job opportunities in the market for only skilled and especially trained professionals. Balochistan province is a glaring example of teeming unemployed youth both for illiterate as well as educated. To be unemployed and jobless is a malaise which cerates frustration, undermines self confidence, leads to depression and in some cases to crime. There is no complete solution to the unemployment problem,

Abdul Qadir et al

however its effects could be redressed by arranging proper job training programs. There is a dire need to revitalize the existing Technical Training Centers and open new ones. One possible solution may be apprenticeship programs like those found in Germany and Switzerland. High School age students spend part of their time in classes and part on the job. Many students later get hired by the companies/ government where they have been apprenticed. Young people can also be encouraged to start their own business.

In education, health and family planning the present government in Balochistan has allocated much funds and there is no paucity of finances. However, in case of shortage, financial support can come from donor agencies/countries. The basic problem in the social sector is of management and how we use funds. The delivery system is poor and no special attention is paid to low-income target groups. What is needed is that the social activists in the community and local government should be involved in decision making. However, such a venture before implementation should be studied and tested.

Both metallic and non-metallic minerals are found in Balochistan in abundance. The province is rich in minerals and its tapped minerals resources are coal, gas, barite, gypsum, chromite, iron-ore, limestone, copper and gold, zinc, lead, granite, onyx, fluorite, Sulphur, etc. What is required in mining sector is the change of policy by the government for exploitation of mineral for the people of Balochistan. A case in point is the agreement between the government of Pakistan and MCC (China) regarding Saindak Copper and Gold Project. Despite all the infrastructure facilities provided by the Government of Pakistan, MCC pays only 2 percent of generated revenue to the Government of Balochistan.

Development and Socio-Economic backwardness of Balochistan

In the book ‘Globalization and its Discontents’, the Noble Laureate Joseph E. Stiglitz states “*The foreign direct investment comes only at the price of undermining democratic processes. This is particularly true for investments in mining oil, and other natural resources, where foreigners have a real incentive to obtain the concessions at low prices.*

Moreover, such investments have other adverse effects – and often do not promote growth. The income that mining concessions brings can be invaluable but development is transformation of society. An investment in a mine – say in a remote region of a country – does little to assist the development transformation, beyond the resources that it generates”.

Therefore, before making a mining concession like Reko diq and signing the contract with a company, the Pros and Cons of the deal should be thoroughly looked into. The greater interest of the people should be kept in view and the income received should be used in the spirit of the welfare and transformation of the society.

Industries in Balochistan are concentrated at ‘Hub’ which is in close proximity to Karachi. In Quetta, except Merk Marker, Pharmaceutical Company there is no worth mentioning factory. However, we can find small scale Flour Mills, Ghee Mills and one or two small scale steel units. In Nasirabad Division, there are some small rice husking units. As a matter of fact, there is lack of investors and entrepreneurs in Balochistan. Therefore for large scale industries, we have to depend on direct foreign investment or investors from other parts of the country. However, for attracting the investors, incentives in the shape of tax holiday and exemption from custom

duty for the imported machinery could be provided by the Federal Government.

In fact, the dynamics of small scale industrial development suits the society and environment in Balochistan. For example, food/fruit processing, cold storage repair workshop, work metal, marble tile processing units etc, could be easily established. The small industries have many advantages like personal attention to customers, resilience and flexibility, appropriate technology and often no complex machinery is used. Agro-based, Fish preservation and carpet industries can perform well as they are area specific and resources/ raw material for these industries is available.

Except in the Nasirabad Division there is no worth mentioning perennial system of irrigation in Balochistan. Therefore agriculture of the Province is mostly dependent on springs, Karezes and now on widespread tubewells. The concomitant decline in ground-water has been significant, and many Karezes have dried up or their discharge has fallen below levels that justify major rehabilitations (Steenberger, p-266). The Construction of delay action dams at appropriate places are seen as the possible solution for keeping Karezat (underground water channels) alive (Haider, p-146). The dominant crops of Balochistan are : Wheat, Potato and Onion. A recent trend has seen the market for Potato and Onion drop at the lowest and throw away price while it could be managed to export these items to neighboring countries.

Development and Socio-Economic backwardness of Balochistan

Conclusion:-

E.F.Schumacher in his book 'Small is Beautiful' states that "Development does not start with goods; it starts with people and their education, organization and discipline. Without these three, all resources remain latent untapped, potential". (P-164). Stiglitz and Sen also emphasize on transformation of society and enhancing the capabilities respectively. Therefore, education should be the continuous and foremost priority of the successive Governments in Balochistan. There is dire need that existing 'technical training centers' should be revitalized and new ones should be opened in almost all the Districts of the Province. Transformation is about change and scientific way of thinking thereby societies and cultures evolve. In Balochistan too the society would gradually evolve from simple to complex and the traditional customs and habits will be challenged. There is likely to be stresses and strains which need to be managed and addressed.

Since the water shortage (due to mushroom growth of tube wells) is reaching a cataclysmic stage therefore the very foundation of economic and social-fabric in the province is threatened. It should be a matter of great concern for the government and the society at large and no slackness should be shown in tackling this grave situation.

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