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GANDHI AND DEVELOPMENT: AN ALTERNATIVE TO EXPLOITATIVE STRATEGIES

Seema Mallik

Since the 1990s, with the liberalization of the economy, India has achieved phenomenal growth rates which have pushed her as the second fastest growing economy in the world. However, this growth has been unbalanced, unsustainable and excluded large sections of the society particularly the vulnerable groups like the indigenous communities, small farmers, landless laborers and also women. Further, despite being a rising global economic power and an important player in world economy, India, trails behind other South Asian countries in significant indicators of human development like life expectancy, literacy, education, health and standard of living. She continues to be home to a third of the world's poor. Therefore the present western, capitalist development strategies in India are being contested and there is a call for 'alternative development'. This paper is an attempt to explore alternative development strategies in the light of growing inequitable development. The Gandhian vision is therefore re-examined in this context. It argues that the capital and profit driven exploitative development strategies have failed to achieve well-being of all sections of society. Therefore the Gandhian ideas are seen as a beacon of hope to bring about sustainable and inclusive development not only in India but also globally. Keywords ; alternative development, global south, sustainable, inclusive, Gandhian.

*"In the light of globalization, humankind is witnessing widespread prosperity on one hand accompanied by "intense poverty, unemployment and social exclusion on the other hand."*¹

As highlighted by the above report, globalization has brought in sweeping changes across the globe. Widespread development in science and technology have revolutionized human life. Increased production, trade and commerce have improved the material well-being of mankind. Nations have progressed in their gross domestic products (GDP) rates but questions are being raised on the human face of progress as this well-being is limited. Extensive literature since 1990s, have criticized the western notion of modernization and development (Aborro, 2008)². Decades of development on the western expectations have not shown the consequences particularly in countries of Asia, Africa and South America. The "post development" critiques have challenged the reductionism and universalism of the Western concepts and the structuralist perspectives of capitalism³. The structuralist perspectives refers to the structural imperatives of a hegemonic capitalism in which non-capitalist alternatives are destroyed or subsumed in a dependent re-

lationship with capitalism⁴ Therefore, post-development thinking have emerged particularly in the Global South to go 'beyond development' and to make development more inclusive and sustainable.

Inclusiveness and shared prosperity have emerged as core aspirations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁵. In 2000, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) gave a blueprint to Governments and other stakeholders to commit themselves to the eight measurable goals towards achieving new sustainable and universal growth. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, giving momentum to the MDG have emphasized that countries need to now act urgently to achieve the seventeen sustainable goals for a better future in the next fifteen years. These goals try to balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental. It aims at ensuring that the benefits of development should reach all. It reflects a shared vision of global leaders to leave no one behind.⁶

The historic and ambitious new global development agenda recognizes that development