

# Human Attitude and Development

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**A**cademics and policymakers sometimes find it difficult to restrain themselves from slipping into the restrictive straitjacket of theory. As a result, their analysis of the impact of human attitude on the process of state-induced development from a practical perspective remains somewhat infirm and indirect. Their difficulty clearly underscores the ease with which subtleties of this ticklish relationship between human attitude and development get foregrounded. This apparent intricacy or messiness in the connection does not indicate its lack of importance or tenuousness. Rather, even at the risk of being branded as a prisoner of platitude, I would prefer to stick my neck out and state in unequivocal terms that both, to a large extent, are inextricably intertwined. At least, many watershed historical events of human civilization from time immemorial go a long way in buttressing that fact. The relationship between people's attitude and developmental

process spanned over millennia as well as across the continents.

Any dispassionate observer of human behaviour would agree that the positive or negative effect of human attitude on development is increasingly getting sharpened with the passage of time. As a result, in modern times, no one, either directly or remotely connected with development can afford to undermine the importance of an attitude of the people, for whom those developmental initiatives have been undertaken. Needless to say, if those development initiatives pertain to rural areas, different attitudinal responses of the people can make that pendulum of performance oscillate more vigorously between the two extremities of spectacular success and disquieting defeat. As life can't be described only in black and white due to the preponderance of shades of grey in between, similarly, the developmental process gets stuck in the midst of success and failure most of the time. Of late, in the Indian context, it has turned out to be a colossal challenge for scholars,

academics, politicians, government officials, bankers and social activists to tilt that pendulum towards the common goal of public welfare. As far as the results of many developmental initiatives are concerned, the writing on the wall as well as on the consciousness of the educated and enlightened class is loud and clear. It is mixed, to say the least.

Although the mixed nature of results is due to several commonly known factors bedeviling the whole process of development, our efforts here would be limited to the study of the attitude of the common people towards different developmental endeavours of the State. In any democratic welfare state, the government plays the most important role in ushering in various developmental programmes with the ultimate objective of ensuring the livelihood security of its disadvantaged and



marginalised citizens. Moreover, other agencies of the State like the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), District Industries & Commerce Centre (DI & CC) and financing banks also play their roles in bringing about development in the lives of the people at the district level. But one must try to observe it from the perspective of the rural people to be able to objectively analyse their responses towards different developmental initiatives. At the same time, one has to be extremely careful not to be swept off the feet by the obvious overtones of shrill demands emanating from the have-nots in all the cases. But this challenge of being firmly grounded and impartial in examining the whole issue is easier said than done.

It is quite natural that people have huge expectations from the State. Although the degree varies widely across the regions in the country or across the districts in any state, the role of the State as the giver of some benefits for the betterment of the people has remained singularly unassailable so far. Even the liberalized economic regime of the country with a strong emphasis on the interplay of market forces has not been able to undermine the prime importance of the State in the minds of the people. On the other hand, owing to the regular announcement of a plethora of new poverty alleviation schemes and other welfare measures often with a hidden political motive, its importance has increased exponentially in recent times. In the backdrop of this phenomenon, it is becoming increasingly

difficult for the government to satisfy the aspirations of the people. It is extremely interesting to note that the aspiration of the people is directly proportional to the number of schemes announced by the government.

Ironically, nowadays, people's aspirations have reached such a level that it has become extremely tough for any government to adequately address their genuine and perceived needs. The extraordinarily inflated domain of the perceived needs of people has brought in so much emotional rhetoric in the whole process of development that genuine analysis has often proved to be either elusive or ephemeral. Another disheartening fact is the growing disconnect between people's rights with their bounden duties. The majority of the rural people are so bogged down by the 'rights' syndrome that any serious attempt to talk about their duties is either summarily dismissed or disdainfully dislodged to the periphery. Various rights groups have successfully usurped this powerful feeling to unite the people in order to fight for their rights. There is no denying the fact that in any democracy, the fight for people's rights is a legitimate way of finding a way out for addressing their

needs. But those fights or agitations should not degenerate to an extent, where it may raise doubt about their very necessity in the minds of sensible and educated citizens. Unfortunately, some movements in the country have taken such a shape, due to which, the actual objectives of many government schemes have turned out to be a mirage for a sizeable section of the population.

Today, anyone going to a village for a programme is invariably greeted with a common question. What can you offer to us? It is quite natural for people to give vent their pent-up feelings by asking such questions which apparently seem to be rude and crude. In some cases, the non-delivery of earlier promises makes people cynical and they prefer to ask direct questions about what they can expect to get from the programmes. But in many other cases, people irrespective of their previous experiences, either positive or negative, prefer to extract maximum to satisfy their own vested interests without trying to have



 Women working in a wheat field



a holistic view of the programme for its overall success. For example, it is a common sight when people clamour for early payment of their wages in MGNREGA schemes with absolute unconcern for the success of the scheme in which they are working. Various agencies of the State should also try to go an extra mile in clarifying the doubts so that a judicious synthesis between the rights and duties of the people can be ensured. We have come across some occasions when a section of the educated people of a rural area itself is somewhat sceptical about the efficacy of this kind of initiative, as it leads to a feeling of complacency among the common masses. It is more or less a common human tendency that when the incidence of anything is a *fait accompli*, complacency takes a sinister turn and ultimately results in laziness and idleness. Whenever someone visits a rural area, the laziness of our people involved in some common physical work is too palpable to miss. Of course, there are a few good examples here and there where people accomplish their jobs with discipline, diligence and dignity. But the challenge lies for everyone to translate those isolated instances into a more common phenomenon in the larger interest of the success of the schemes.

However, while trying to have a critical look at the attitudinal role of the rural people regarding the whole paradigm of development, other important challenges hindering the process must also be addressed simultaneously in order to have the desired effect.

In the absence of that, there is a danger that the whole process of critical analysis of people's role in the development process may be branded as a blatantly disingenuous exercise. It has been observed that people have broadly two delivery channels from the State's side. One of them is directly from the government departments and very often, it takes the shape of some assistance or subsidy. The other delivery channel is from the financial institutions, which have an obligation as well as a sense of duty to help any project by way of providing credit at the right time subject to the fulfilment of certain terms and conditions. People often have a feeling that there is great room for improvement in respect of both the channels. Due to the presence of a large number of poor people in rural areas, the process of doling out subsidies tends to get slightly off the mark. Moreover, the credit delivery channel appears to be somewhat more susceptible to get clogged in certain parts of the country because of many bad experiences of the past in that region, which also adversely affects any project with room for bank credit. So 'the tyranny of geography' matters substantially in the development sector also.

All said and done, if we can bring about the much-needed synergy between various government departments and banks on the one hand and sincerity and dedication of the common people, on the other hand, the process of development would have fewer obstacles in its road ahead. The more obstacles we can successfully overcome, the more sustainable smiles can be ensured on the face of rural India. The task ahead is undoubtedly tough, but not insurmountable. ■

## An Ethiopian Maze

Varsha Valsan

Something of a massive enormity is happening in Ethiopia. Something which has accumulated over time has finally burst out. Ethiopia is now at war with its own territory of Tigray unleashing a malevolent phase. Since the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis happening there is inescapable, the predicament never loses its significance.

### The Genesis of Conflict

Ethiopia is situated in the horn of the African region and its strategic importance is more or less neglected in the international community. By annexing neighbouring territories, Ethiopia, whose administration was done by the Amhara people, got away from the colonization process. But this resulted in present-day Ethiopia with its extensive diversity. Ethiopia is a mosaic of ethnicities and diverse languages. Since the Amhara people dominated the demography, the other minorities were never at the forefront. In this scenario, the neighbouring region of Eritrea was absorbed and the Eritreans became inferior citizens just like the Ethiopian minorities. This created tensions and for liberating the Eritrean people Eritrean people's Liberation Front (EPLF) was found. Then