

## **Perspectives on Development**

**Development as a concept can be discussed from various perspectives. They are:**

- ‘Development’ as a long term process of structural societal transformation.
- ‘Development’ as a short-to-medium term outcome of desirable targets.
- ‘Development’ as a dominant ‘discourse’ of western modernity

### **‘Development’ as a long term process of structural societal transformation**

The first conceptualization is that ‘development’ is a process of structural societal change. Thomas (2000, 2004) refers to this meaning of development as ‘a process of historical change’. This view, of ‘structural transformation’ and ‘long-term transformations of economies and societies’, as Gore noted, is one that predominated in the 1950s and 1960s in particular. The key characteristics of this perspective are that

- It is focused on processes of structural societal change.
- It is historical.
- It has a long-term outlook.

In this conceptualization development relates to a wide view of diverse socio-economic changes. The change in one structural element of the society has the propensity to bring changes in other institutions and elements. For example, when there is development in the economy, there is a change in the social institutions like family, marriage, education, system of stratification in the society.

### **‘Development’ as a short-to-medium term outcome of desirable targets-**

A second perspective on ‘development’ can be seen in the light of some targeted

goals and their degree of achievements. Thomas (2000, 2004) characterizes this second approach as 'a vision or measure of progressive change' and Gore (2000) relates it to 'performance assessment'. At its most basic level it is simply concerned with development as occurring in terms of a set of short- to medium-term 'performance indicators' – goals or outcomes – which can be measured and compared with targets. For example change in the level of education, increase in income, poverty reduction etc. is the short or medium term outcomes used to indicate development. It is a practitioner accepted model of development very much used by the development agencies like the UNDP (the United Nations Development Programme), OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), The World Bank etc. The key feature of this second perspective is that it is focused on the outcomes of change so that it has a relatively short-term outlook. But it becomes easy to measure development in terms of some pre fixed objectives and the level of their attainment.

**'Development' as a dominant 'discourse' of western modernity:** This is the 'post-modern' conceptualization of development. It is also referred to as the 'post-development', 'post-colonial' or 'post-structuralism' development perspective. This third perspective emerged as a reaction to the deliberate efforts at progress made in the name of development since World War II and was triggered in particular by the 1949 Declaration by the US President Truman that: "We must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas." Michel Foucault (1966, 1969) is a strong advocate of this post modern approach to development.

The post modern theorists are vocal against the development maladies created in the Third World countries. To the post modern development theorists development created a neo colonial regime in the Third World countries. Instead of creating abundance promised by theorists and politicians in the 1950s, the discourse and strategy of development produced its opposite: massive underdevelopment and impoverishment, untold exploitation and oppression. The western development model was super imposed on the Third world countries with a top down, ethnocentric, and technocratic approach. It ne