



**BALANCING NORTH AND SOUTH FOR A HARMONIOUS GLOBE**

by

**Debendra Manandhar**  
**Rural Community Infrastructure Words Program**  
**Kathmandu, Nepal**

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**Constructing Theories for a coming Age**  
**North South Issues, Including Equalization of Technologies**

**Balancing North and South for a Harmonious Globe**

**Debendra Manandhar**  
Rural Community Infrastructure Works Programme  
Kathmandu, Nepal

## **1. Introduction**

Generally the term "North" and "South" are mainly understood in their geographic context meaning Northern and Southern hemispheres of the Globe. In the world of Development, these terms are more used to mean Developed and Developing countries, believing in an inherent assumption that the countries in the north are more "developed" than those in the south. When we say developed countries, it means that they are economically rich, technically sophisticated and materially advanced. All these imply that the North is more powerful than the South.

As it shows that North means richer, developed, advanced and powerful than the South, we can also say that these terms are not limited in development context. They rather are meant to reflect the power structure in the world today. In broader sense, North is meant to represent the Powerful section of the globe and South represent the Less Powerful section of the same. In this way, there is both North in the South and South in the North. There are always people who have more and there are also people who possess less in terms of wealth, knowledge, status and power in all parts of the globe.

It is also apparent that there is a big gap between the North and South in any given context, between Developed countries and Developing ones, between rich and poor, between men and women, between rural and urban, between majorities and minorities, between educated and uneducated, between higher castes and lower castes and so on.

With this big gap and contrast among countries, societies, people, we perhaps cannot even dream of a world which is peaceful and harmonious. Moreover, in the given power structure many people today cannot even think of living a decent life with their very basic minimum requirements met. The situation is socially unjust and morally wrong. Such imbalances and extremes always create tensions, conflicts and instability in the whole system affecting all.

## **2. North South Redefined**

In the world of development, North would mean the developed countries with more economic power and the South would mean the less developed countries with less economic power. The 'North South' variation can even be found in the Northern countries as well as in the Southern countries, since there are differences and gap in terms of wealth, power, knowledge, access to opportunities and resources in both the hemispheres within different societies. We can find these differences between rich and poor, between men and women, between educated and uneducated, between ruling and ruled, between urban and rural, between upper castes and lower castes and so on.

Economy today seems to play a very powerful role in the world. Economy is being a powerful tool to influence and even dominate other countries, societies, cultures etc. Thus economically developed and rich countries, the North, are in position to influence and dominate other countries, the south.

Rich countries are obviously more powerful and are in a position to direct and dictate the whole development trend of the world according to their interests and benefit. They are obviously the ones who define 'Development', 'North', 'South', 'power' etc.

Basically, there are distinct North and South everywhere in the world at all levels, including between developed and developing countries. There are power differences at all strata of the global population. This power gap starts from the family and then perpetuates itself to societies, communities, countries, and then to the whole world.

The gap manifests itself in a family in terms of economically active and inactive, educated and uneducated, men and women, young and old etc. The same very system then goes upto the global level. In society, there are power gaps between the rich and poor, men and women, different castes etc. In the same way at the global level, there are rich countries and poorer countries.

### 3. The Journey to Development

There can be many different meaning of development and many different arguments on who are developed and who are not developed. Today, in general, Development is measured in economic and physical terms and development is meant to be economic growth.

After the world wars, there have been many efforts from the developed countries to provide development aid to developing countries. Today, many countries and international institutions are providing development aid and loans to developing countries.

Development Aid has positive as well as negative impacts. The positive aspect is that a lot of improvements have been made in physical condition and physical quality of human life.

In this process of development, we have made we have made some basic mistakes too. There is so much emphasis put on economic growth at present that means to it is considered not so important. As a result, we have lost many of our traditional values of caring, sharing, cooperation, community, mutual respect, personal integrity and so on. To have and to own more have become as if the goal of life. 'How' is not seen to be any important. What happened is that those who have and who can became richer and richer and those who do not have and who can not became poorer and poorer. The gap is becoming bigger and bigger. Those who have are forgetting to care for those who don't have and give it back to the system by sharing and caring for each other.

The Human Development Report 1997, published by World Bank reports :

**The uneven progress has given rise to disparities among regions, not only globally but also within countries - between poor and rich, women and rich and rural and urban and between ethnic groups.**

**In 1994 the ratio of the richest 20% of the world to that of the poorest 20% was 78 to 1, up from 30 to 1 in 1960.**

### 4. Equalization of Technology

The world today has made a tremendous advancement in the field of science and technology. Technology has many wonders in human life and at the same time it has also brought many disasters. It has helped us to make better and most effective use of resources, human, natural, economic etc. for the improvement of quality of human life.

Use of technology with shortsighted vision and self-interest has and is still affecting our life in many devastating ways.

In the present world technology essentially is power. And, there is a big gap in terms of technology, as the word is understood today, between the North and South. This inequity and inequality in technology has an impact on power structure between the two.

Many efforts have been made since decades to lesson the gap between developed and developing countries. Technology transfer from North to south is one of the attempts. Some of this technology transfer has helped improve quality of people's life and some have not only failed to do so but also instead worsened the situation and made the gap wider.

### **Technology Transfer: A Step towards Equalization?**

In the fifties, when Northern countries started extending development aid to the less developed countries, the south, technology transfer from North to South was considered to be the means towards developing the 'undeveloped' countries. At least this was the assumption made by the North. The need and interest of the recipient countries were not assessed, existing socio-cultural condition, existing knowledge and wisdom and existing capacity at local level were not considered. In many cases such technology transfer took place because of economic interest of the donor countries too. As a result of which very sophisticated technologies like big dams, big irrigation schemes, big hydropower projects, agricultural inputs etc. was transferred to the south.

Experiences have shown that impacts of such inappropriate technology transfer are reverse to what was anticipated. People in South became more dependent on the north. Local knowledge, technologies disappeared. Local people are not capable of maintaining and managing such projects.

In the whole process, technological and economic development seems to be the sole goal. The focus was on the technology itself rather than on to the people for whom all these development are meant for. People became as if only a means to economic growth and technological advancement. This loss of focus on to people and especially to those who are lagging behind changed the whole purpose of development aid and technology transfer.

There are more than sufficient examples of big projects in terms of technology, which were meant to improve living condition of people, but ended up by even worsening the situation. For example, where many small farmers' households were shifted in order to construct big irrigation/hydro power schemes, which then benefited big farmers/urban people. It is said that many such projects eradicated poor instead of poverty from the areas.

Introduction of chemical fertilizers : there is no doubt that with use of chemical fertilizers agricultural production has increased tremendously. In return farmers are compelled to use more and more fertilizers every year. And, in many developing countries, chemical fertilizers are imported from abroad and are expensive. The farmers have no choice but to increasingly use it.

Inappropriate technology transfer contributed in making people even more dependent than supporting them towards their empowerment.

With advancement of technology, the Northern people, whether they are from developed or developing countries, are the one being most marginalized.

There are many other evidences that technology transfer, the way it is taking place now is not perhaps a right way towards equalization, bridging the gap and creating a balance between developed and developing countries.

There was a time when today's the so-called south used to be far ahead in terms of civilization and perhaps essentially also in the then relevant technology in the given context till the present north made its advancement in science and technologies, including arms and weapons, and economy. Since then the gap in terms of technology and power also widened and continue to do so till today and perhaps will continue if people like us do not take care to make a balance.

In present development of technology and transfer of technology, people are not being placed at the center. Technologies are moving away from being humane. It is contributing to widen the power gap between south and north, between haves and have-nots. It is not contributing to social justice and social equity. As a result we can see that societies are disintegrating, there are growing tensions and conflicts. In such a situation we can not dream of social harmony and peace.

However, it does not mean that technology transfer has led only towards negative end. There are also many evidences of positive impacts of technology transfer. Especially in the field of health and medicine, a lot of progress has been made in these regards.

## **5. The State of the World Today**

Some of the facts regarding the state of the world today :

- **More than a quarter of the developing world's people still live in poverty as measured by the Human Poverty Index (World Bank, 1997).**

- **Nearly a third of world's population, 1.3 billion, live on income of less than 1 \$ 1.00 a day.**
- **Within these broad groups, some people suffer more than others, particularly children, women and aged.**
- **More than 800 million people do not get enough food to eat.**
- **More than half million people are chronically malnourished.**
- **More than 840 million adults are still illiterate.**
- **About 800 million people lack access to health services.**
- **More than 1.2 billion people lack access to safe drinking water.**
- **Nearly 160 million children under age 5 are malnourished.**
- **More than 110 million children are still out of school**

Within the North, developed countries too, there are gap and inequalities. Followings are some of the facts in developed countries

- **More than 100 million people still live below the income poverty line.**
- **More than 5 million people are homeless.**
- **More than a third of adults do not complete secondary education.**

## **6. Balancing North and South : The Challenge for the Coming Age**

As it is so obvious that there is a big gap between the North and the South, the challenge for us today is to bridge the gap and bring a balance between the two extremes so that there is a holistic development bringing peace and harmony to all.

Whenever there is imbalances in any given system, there arise tensions, conflicts and instability in the whole system. There cannot be harmony and there cannot be peace and happiness. When there is no harmony in the whole system, every one in the system is affected by it. No one can be in lasting peace and happiness.

In the same way, when there is a big gap between North and South, let it be countries, societies or people, there cannot be harmony in the globe, societies or in communities. There will be tensions and conflicts. To bring harmony in the global system, the gap must be bridged by holistic development.

A Holistic development is possible by balanced growth of all countries, societies, communities and people. The North shall contribute by offering and sharing what they already have with the south and by empowering the South to come forward.

**For a just and balanced society requires as its foundation a more just and balanced relation between all section of humanity.**

### **Need for Action**

As the world and its population is divided into the Powerful and the Powerless or the disempowered and as the gap between those two are getting ever increasing over the time, it is not a healthy situation for anyone. It is socially not just and morally not correct. Both the groups should make their part of efforts to improve this situation. But the kick off obviously has to come from the powerful, the north.

The time has come that the north people whether they belong to developed or developing countries, give a serious thought about creating a socially just, morally correct societies which then will contribute to create peaceful and harmonious globe.

The Human Development Report, 1997 says:

**Eradicating poverty everywhere is more than a moral imperative and a commitment to human solidarity. It is a practical possibility. The time has come to eradicate the worst aspect of human poverty within a decade or two - to create a world that is more humane, more stable, more just.**

**Commitments and success many countries have had in reducing poverty rapidly make inaction immoral. But accelerated action will be spurred only if all countries develop a vision of the possibility of poverty eradication and a stronger sense of how they will gain from it - through greater security, greater stability and greater prosperity.**

**The cost of eradicating poverty are less than people imagine - about 1% of global income and no more than 2-3% of national income in all but poorest countries. Further cuts in military spending, with the saving channeled to poverty reduction and pro-poor growth, would go far towards providing the resources required.**



## **Need for Change in Paradigms**

In development /technology transfer context, there is need to change whole focus and paradigms to make development more social and humane, to make it socially just and morally correct and to bring about peace and harmony by bridging the gap between developed and developing ones.

### **People Centered Approach**

The whole focus has to be on people. There is a need of people-centered, People-first and the Last first principles and attitude. Believing that everyone has capacity to choose, decide and act for their well being. What they need is empowerment.

Development cooperation is all about providing people with choices and opportunities and not dictating. Empowering them and building on their own experiences and know-how.

Appropriate and relevant technology transfer aiming towards improving quality of people's life and bringing about social justice and equity at all level are pre-requisite for balanced development.

### **Power to the people**

Human development is of the people, for the people and by the people. Human development of the people means investing in human capabilities: in their education, skills, health so that they can be more confident and capable to work for their own development. Human development for the people means ensuring that the fruits of development are shared by all widely and fairly. Human development by the people means making people directly involved in the whole development process.

The will of the people has to be the central to any development effort. Development means people's choice, to allow the people to participate and decide what is best for them. It is because only the empowered people can protect their cultures, values, economics and ways of life.

People ingrained in a particular social setting must invent their own concept of development. This means development policy must identify, nurture and sustain indigenous potential, means, resources and institutions to express the diverse needs of the

society. External resources and advice can only complement, not substitute the process. Only then, the process of development can contain the options for the poor and overcome their powerlessness. Exclusion of people from technology, knowledge and resources will defeat the whole purpose.

### **Technology Transfer as a Co-evolutionary Process**

Equalization in real sense can only be achieved by building on what already exists with them rather than imposing totally new technology. This would mean that North should rather assist the south through a co-evolutionary process in their efforts to improve their quality of life. That essentially necessitates understanding of the societies in the south, understanding of their perceived needs and interests, their capabilities, respecting their values and wisdom and collaborating with them.

### **Building on the Existing Knowledge**

It is also to be taken into account that there are also technologies in the south which perhaps are even more relevant in the given context and situation. But they are mostly not in written or documented forms. It rather passes down from one generation to the other. But that does not mean that they do not exist. The challenge for us is actually to recognize that wisdom is locally available and that all efforts to improve the quality of the lives of the people should be based on the existing knowledge which surely suit the given context more than the imposed or imported ones.

### **Technology Transfer In Both Ways**

When one discusses about technology transfer, it mostly implies that the transfer occurs from north to south. But the fact is that, there are technologies available also in south, which may as well be transferred to north as well as other parts of south. In most cases, northern technologies are too technical, whereas southern technologies may be more humane, social and in harmony with other people and nature. When we talk about equalization of technologies, then perhaps the transfer needs essentially to be both ways.

### **Reintroduction of Values and Ethics in Development**

There is also the need to re-introduce and regenerate in development approaches the values/attitude of:

- Cooperation
- Caring and sharing

- Attitude of service
- Interdependence
- Compassion
- Ethical, humane, social

## **7. Moral Responsibilities of Religious Communities**

Religious communities have a very important responsibility to play, to come forward with actions to bridge the gap and to create balance and harmony between north and south. This is a challenge for us to put the teachings of our religious/spiritual masters into practical actions.

For this, the journey starts at personal level. Harmony begins at self first. Without harmony within ourselves we can not contribute for harmony around us. Thus first of all we begin to create harmony within ourselves.

Harmony at personal level comes with personal integrity and dignity. Personal integrity comes out of adherence to values and principles.

We all believe in equity and justice. And we all have a kind, compassionate and loving heart. We all rejoice when we see we are following our deeper most values. For this we need to regenerate an attitude of caring and sharing and practice giving a part of what we have to those who don't have. we practice to put it back into the system.

Realize that sharing and giving is not only necessary for the sake of the takers but that it is equally important for the giver too. Thus, give/share with an attitude of respect and appreciation for the taker.

It is time now that religious communities might initiate actions to make people aware of the existing situation, encourage people to take actions at first not to contribute in widening the gap and then to bridge the gap in what ever small steps possible. Besides, such initiatives might be introduced :

- in educational system,

- by focusing on Youth,
- by initiating and encouraging popular movements,
- by joining together with similar movements/groups,
- by actually implementing development projects.