REVITALIZING THE KERALA MODEL OF EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT: A CALL FOR SYNERGETIC CONVERGENCE OF GROWTH AND REDISTRIBUTIONAL THEMES

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Abstract
The much celebrated Kerala developmental experience popularly dubbed as Kerala Model of Equitable Development has received lots of critical reviews as well as copious rhetoric. Such a renewed interest in the model owes amply to the Sen vs. Bhagwati debate as well as the reputation accorded to Gujarat model of Development and Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s growth oriented policy schemata. As such the debate has become the one characterized as redistribution vs. growth concerns. The developmental model of Kerala, often pictured as the Poster-child of left-democratic government as well as various socio-religious reformatory movements, has undoubtedly failed to acknowledge the dynamic themes of globalization, remaining as its abandoned child. Consequently, the model still remains as a socio-human development oriented model than accommodating economic developmental prospects of the state. Along with it, a few inefficiencies attached with the socio-economic-cultural and political scenario of the state has rendered the model quite insufficient for future growth and developmental prospects. The paper focuses on such multi-dimensional inefficiencies which elude the action premises of the model, questioning the element of inclusiveness as well as sustainability. Further the paper also delves into the contentious matter, whether a refurbishing or rejuvenation of the developmental model, which lodges the dynamic themes of globalization, is inevitable or not. Whether the model can be emulated elsewhere effectively remains as a contestable issue, and the suggested rejuvenation/refurbishing of the model conclusively points towards an arrangement that can put up both the growth and redistributioal concerns, embracing the essentials of globalization, than being hostile, out-dated developmental notion, from a primitive age. After all, cogency of every growth and developmental notion lies in its effectiveness in addressing and embracing the element of dynamism associated with economism.

I. INTRODUCTION
Kerala model of equitable development- the progeny of concerted and dedicated political activism, land reforms, poverty eradication programmes, educational access, child welfare and other wealth redistributive programmes- was in the limelight for quite a time which owes to the state’s achievement of significant improvements in material conditions of living, reflected in varied indicators of social development, in contrast to the low levels of per capita income. More accurately the Kerala Model of Equitable Development has been defined as a set of high material quality of life indicators coinciding with low per capita income both being distributed across nearly the entire population of Kerala. Despite having high standards of human development, the model of equitable development ranks low in terms of economic and industrial development, with the whole population subsisting on low levels of Per Capita Income. Even a thorough check of composite indices of HDI (Human Development Index), Infant Mortality, Literacy rate and Life Expectancy will
rather intimidate one to delve into the details to check whether these qualitative expansions in human development indices has happened at the cost of quality management of affairs. One might be left wondering whether the whole “material wellbeing backed social development” is window dressed and served well to the tastes and appetite of social and economic “think-tanks” and hence the reality being something else or, has the whole Model of Equitable Development has missed its purpose altogether and become the big white elephant in the room that signifies the reality and renders every discussion and debate on it quite a “democratic-developmental circus”. Is the model just a figurative exercise than factual? Is it a high consumption and low production based model? Does the model altogether have an ugly underbelly missed out by social and developmental economists, marred by poverty, utter social, political and economic exclusion along the coasts and hills of “God’s own Country? Is the creditable model of Equitable development fostered by high levels and standards of human development, even challenging some of the First World Countries, is letting the whole dismal state of economic affairs take its toll on social and human development? Is the whole model of equitable development is perpetuating social and regional imbalances by abandoning some and being totally exclusive for others?

In such a time when most of the celebrated neo-liberal developmental economists advocates every Third World Nation to follow the developmental strides of newly industrialized countries of East Asia like Malaysia, South Korea etc., the Kerala model of equitable development is quite an alternative. The first democratic government of the state along with the poor working and oppressed sections of the people delivered an incredible job by adopting serious wealth redistribution strategies along with poverty eradication and educational access programmes than the obvious succession debates. Rather than hopping on to the bandwagon of internal and external aid-backed development strategies the state delivered something remarkable in the form of measures aimed at fostering human development through self-activism, thereby building up human capacities. One of the defining features of the development model is this populist activism as well as bottom-up planning and action which fostered and accentuated the strides of human development in Kerala. One might consider it as a utopian state of affairs: a rare mix of Marxism and Gandhism, which builds on people participation and builds people capacities. However the LPG(Liberalisation, Privatisation and Globalisation) regime that started to dictate the economic state of affairs since 1990’s is even challenging the prospects of Equitable development model based on human empowerment, striking the right notes for disseminating concerted efforts to foster economic as well as industrial aspirations along with human developmental aspirations. Hence it is indeed amicable to introspect on the developmental strides under equitable developmental model as well as to reason out a probable alternative way for the purpose of emancipating the economy to sustainability, reliability, and sufficiency.

The element of Inclusiveness and the Developmental Model

The first democratically elected government led by E M S Namboodiripad rightly shook the world via its concerted effort along with the poor working class for human empowerment through various wealth distributional programmes and welfare schemes. The same welfare oriented strategies were continued since then by the alternate left-right governments democratically elected by the people often maximising the welfare of the society. However the debate on whether these welfare activities were effective and all inclusive can’t be addressed strategically. The lack of inclusiveness can be blamed...
on the skewed nature of the economy which is consumption oriented and lives off the gulf remittances. In addition to it the state lacks manufacturing base and service sector as such can’t be the panacea for the problem. Owing to this skewed nature of economic growth some strata’s of the society especially the fisher folks and Tribals stands out in terms of the benefits of equitable development model, since the lack of redistribution of the benefits of human and economic development only aggravated the spatial and regional differentials. None of the welfare and wealth distributional schemes of alternate governments as such has addressed the specific nature of problems faced by those living along the coastal and tribal areas and often these settlements were vulnerable to communal as well as anti-social uprisals. The recent Maoists attacks in Wayanad are nothing but such an organized manipulation to take advantage of the marginalised tribal people.

**The Developmental Model vs. Developmental Experience debate**

A debatable thought posed by the author of the “Argumentative Indian” is the segregation between Kerala Development Model and Development Experience. Sen’s reflection was that a model is nothing but a static formulation which is highly theoretical rather than something that is live. He was of the perception that the model is nothing but a celebrated developmental experience of a Third World Nation state, stretching over a period of fifty years that can be emulated elsewhere. Such a developmental experience definitely holds for a revamping in itself, embracing the themes of much dreaded globalization and foreign investments thereby manipulating the same for the purpose of fostering economic growth and developmental prospects as China did. The difference that might underscore such an effort from the nation state is that such a move will be governed by the mandate of the electorate.

The Growth vs. Redistributional model or more clearly the much hyped Sen vs. Bhagwati debate also points towards a possible revamping and re-construction of developmental aspirations. Jagdish Bhagwati who co-authored, “India’s Tryst with destiny: Debunking myths that undermine progress and addressing new challenges along with Arvind Panagariya maintains that growth can reduce poverty and that slow economic growth will hurt social development, thereby openly attacking Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen and his conceptions of human development as “anti-growth assertions”. Bhagwati compares and contradicts Kerala model of development as well as Gujarat Model of development, maintaining that the former is primarily redistribution and state driven development while Gujarat Model is primarily growth and private entrepreneurship driven development. He further argues that Kerala though has achieved superior levels of human development since independence; it turns out to be negatively gainful or beneficial for the growth and developmental experience. Hence it is growth rather than redistributive policies that have their last call with regard to economic growth and developmental aspirations. This he sums up, reflecting on track I reforms and track II reforms were the former case suggestive of reform measures aimed at accelerating and sustaining growth, while track II reforms aimed at making redistributive programs more effective.

Having marked a few strides with regard to redistributive programmes, the state government can focus on reforms aimed at accelerating and sustaining growth to be able to make a difference in the developmental and growth front than being a regular laggard.
The Question of Sustainability

The question with regard to sustainability in, sustainability of the Kerala model of development, often lends the ideational concept itself as a kind of progressive reform strategy adopted by a newly anointed democratic government within the limits charted for a federal structured nation state. Whether the progressive reform strategy has lost its charm and charisma to bring in anew the winds of another round of reforms, rather than being the abandoned child of globalization is also contentious. It can be definitely perceived as the testing ground for the sustainability question with regard to Kerala model of development. Maximization of economic growth alone for the purpose of eradication of poverty is a developmental fallacy or more clearly points towards the ideological bankruptcy of development economism. The Kerala development experience points towards a more practical situation were developmental efforts being channelized for the purpose of providing for human and social development. Kerala model of development can be, without any other alternative to rely on, perceived as an early prototype of sustainable development because, improvement in quality of life, improvements in environmental stability, improvement in relative social and economic inequality, importance accorded to social justice as a prerequisite for development of traditional communal harmony, decline in potential strife, etc. has made it into a safe alternative to be emulated elsewhere for the cause of sustainable development. However the criteria for sustainability should include not only environmental stability and improvement, but social, political and economic justice, improvements in the quality of life of vulnerable sections of the population at low cost, and an improvement in the overall status of women. The test of sustainability especially with regard to Kerala model of development lies entirely with the societies as well as people’s ability to live up to the maintenance of achieved standard of life, along with concerted efforts to improve it further, opening up avenues for fostering economic development and growth considerations as well. The sustainability question will be duly addressed as pointed out by the erstwhile E M S Namboothirippad and P K Vasudevan Nair, the former chief ministers of Kerala, when due attention is paid to the simultaneous development of agricultural and industrial sectors coupled with strategies aimed at making the development effort more inclusive via catering the needs and attending to the specific nature of problems faced by those who were left out of the initial phase of reformatory measures adopted by the first democratic government of Kerala as well as its successors.

Another important aspect of the development model that weakens the sustainability contention is the fiscal crisis shadowing the prospects of economic development, which owes much to the economic stagnation and rising social expenditures. The states superior levels of human and social development has failed to translate itself into actual achievements in the economic developmental and growth front. Along with it industrial backwardness, agricultural stagnation, massive educated unemployment, persistent poverty especially among the tribal populations, the fisher folk, Tamil and North-Eastern migrant labourers, elderly women, widows, high and still rising suicide rates, addiction to alcohol and other substances, ever increasing and persistent crime rates etc. are some of the general problems that questions the sustainability aspect of Kerala’s celebrated developmental experience. Much to trouble, ever increasing welfare expenditures coupled with lack of any other productive, income generative sources than Gulf remittances has compromised the fiscal situation, almost rendering the social and human development as quite a skewed one.
The emergence of new debates for revamping the Kerala model of development which began as early as in 1990, requires nothing but a consensual growth and development strategy than human and social development, along with a synergetic association between state government and civil society for the planned as well as sustained development and growth of the state. Only then the developmental experience can stand the test of time and change.

**Social and Human development:** - Factual/Figurative

Over emphasis and often unnecessary celebration of Kerala model of development often leads one wondering whether the figures which underscores the development strides is just figurative or factual. A thorough check of the state affairs keeping aside the figurative excesses might prompt a layman to forget about the vivacious figurative explanations and the equitable developmental model might get blown away. Reasons are several. High educated unemployment, over dependence on overseas remittances, recent rise in infant death rates particularly in the tribal areas, dependence on other south Indian states for essential food grains and vegetables, road networks with more potholes than Asphalt, halted infrastructural development projects due to exponential population density, 19 % of children being underweight and 28.6 % of general malnourishment, Price Instability due to lack of self-sufficiency in terms of agriculture and Industry, Unjustifiable levels of environmental degradation, frequent hartals and strikes, militant trade unionism etc. The developmental experience of Kerala since 1950’s dubbed as Kerala Model of Development lacks sustainability and pace. The high human and social development which the state has achieved is nothing but the fruit of socio-religious reforms initiated long back ago as well as the efforts of first democratically elected government of the state with the objective of wealth redistribution. The successive governments or communal elements of the day can’t take any credit for the effort of those visionaries and resist the winds of change for long enough, seeking asylum under the sanctuaries of religion, culture and legacies of the past. Time is up for the state as well as civil society to embrace the agents of change, reconstructing and rejuvenating the developmental aspirations to accommodate economic growth, self-sufficiency and modernization as well.

Taking further on the human developmental aspect, though the matrilineal societal arrangement that existed since ages in the state has provided amicable opportunities for the girl child on par with that of a boy in every turn of life, the rampant rise in atrocities committed against women has left one wondering whether the state is women-friendly as it is portrayed in figurative explanations. Along with it, high levels of human and social development underscored by high literacy levels, education, status of women, quality of life, etc. would naturally give way for enlightened intellectual, cultural, social as well as political mental models. However such elite/superior mental models are quite lacking as far as the day to day affairs of the state is concerned. Fear instigating alcoholic addiction symbolized by long, patient queues in front of BEVCO outlets, ever increasing crime rates both civil and criminal, where both men and women are competing fiercely for being notorious celebrities, spatial and regional segregation on the basis of affluence, religion, caste, unethical corruption cat-calling and scandal etc. are not quite indicative of the superior mental models of highly developed keralites. Though the mere citation of individual choice of right of freedom can render most of the contentions quite invalid, it is quite evident that the objectives of those socio-religious and political reforms and wealth distributive efforts weren’t quite successful if the implicit purpose of human and social development was enlightenment too.

**The Element of Over-Politicisation**
Over-politicisation of affairs is yet another factor which needs a collective reconsideration along with the developmental model itself. Though the first democratically elected government of Kerala was capable of giving a shocker to the world in terms of their efforts along with masses for human and social uplifitment, the successors coupled with religious and communal elements as well as significantly insignificant political parties were quite capable of snatching away fair amount of the savouring but never-big-enough cake of societal and economic agendas, dictating the very course of events in the state. Though the state was quite successful in initiating redistributive welfare programmes, effective manipulation by successors has dismantled the prospects for economic growth and prosperity thwarting private investments as well as entrepreneurial capabilities, and thereby implementing their own vested agendas, failing to acknowledge and learn from the world. The over-politicization and over-extension of state of affairs has often led to political as well as communal uprisals of various degrees, corruption cat-calling etc. in the state. The thought for the day is that the state as well as civic society has to learn from the world, rather than being the poster-child of vested groups and interests and their sketchy agendas. Only then it will be capable of making new strides towards the paths of growth and development.

**Responsible Civic Sense and Governance**:

The question on whether the governments that ruled the state ever since the stepping down of the first democratic government, its developmental efforts and those of social reformation, has been responsive and responsible enough to carry over the reformation and developmental efforts, the answer would mostly be negative. The reformation and developmental strategies adopted by the first democratic government and various religious factions where best suited for the requirements of those days and hence, since its inception the state as such was capable of making remarkable strides with regard to human and social development. The perception that the initial development model and experience needs a complete restructuring and revamping, emerged during the 1990’s with much thrust being bestowed on the conception of sustainable development. The resultant new Kerala model gave much significance to democratic decentralization, resulting in initiation of local self-governance and decentralized planning via the passing of Kerala Panchayat Raj Act 1994. This decentralization move gave NGO’s and civil societies a bigger responsible role giving way for participatory growth, particularly with regard to fostering sustainable development.

Though the state government has been quite successful in making genuine efforts to initiate community based sustainable developmental initiatives, utilizing synergies between state and civil societies, it failed to enact environmental policies at macro level. Another failure is that the revamped developmental strategy also failed to acknowledge and bring in public-private synergies in environmental conservation and planning. Similarly local level community participation is not just enough for sustainable development, rather it requires participatory approach at state, national and international level. The obvious challenge which the globalization-exposed model faces is sustainable environmental planning and management. Though the globalization-induced new Kerala model of development focuses on people participatory movement via people’s campaign, with priority being
accorded to sectors such as tourism, aquaculture, power production, software development etc., the environmental state of affairs is quite alarming. Ever decreasing forest cover, particularly along the catchment areas of major rivers, poaching, mining etc. endangering the lives of rare species of beings, sand mining, sedimentation, pollution of rivers and other fresh water resources has in fact passed all the limits and has become quite unaccommodative and non-tolerable. The high density of population demanding more land areas for living, and development of infrastructural facilities has in fact led to utter displacement of what little flora and fauna beyond the tolerable levels. This in fact raises doubts about the sustainability aspect of Kerala’s development model, as it is not just about socio-economic sustainability alone. Throwing in the resources to finance developmental aspirations and mismanagement of the same is the clear indication of the fact, that state and civil society is still in dark about the ecological state of affairs, rather than initiating the “people’s campaign” and local level community development programmes. After all sustainability is all about inter-generational equity in terms of resource use and developmental aspirations and intra-generational considerations are secondary. 

The Economics of Resource Economism:-

Resource economism aptly refers to nothing but the wise and judicious management of resources, whether natural, human or man-made, evidencing the need/requirement of sustainability attitude. Kerala though blessed with both efficient human and natural capital since ages, the developmental strides of the nation state is marred with the tales of mismanagement of these resources. Economic resources include infrastructural facilities, manmade resources and assets, human capital, natural endowments etc. which collectively contribute to the economic resource pool, calling for the effective management of these for fostering growth and developmental aspirations. The state as such blessed with such wide and varied natural endowments is still struggling in the dark, incapable of enacting environmental policies/frameworks, which will align the utilization of these endowments. Making people and government collaborate, plan and work for a sustainable and all inclusive development agenda, requires something statutory and solid of nature which will render such resource use quite efficient. Failure to enforce environmental policies, insufficient monitoring of environmental standards and use of environmental impact assessment, failure to introduce environmental taxes, community failure in environmental protection, failure to create public-private partnership synergies for conservation, failure of the state framework itself to regulate and control environmental mismanagement itself points towards the lack of political will and civil society commitment towards the same.

Yet another pressing theme is the dismal state of affairs with the infrastructural facilities and assets. High population density of state often necessitates development of new infrastructural facilities, and services, however one may wonder whether the existing ones are properly managed and serviced which includes roads, public utilities, electricity, water supply, and other essential services which accommodates those provided by and owned by the state government itself. Every single resource, if characterized as state owned will eventually become no-man-zone/area/commodity, with neither the government nor civil society with the slightest of slightest responsibility for managing and preserving the same. Time to timeservicing of the same will obviously be/can remain as the impossibly impossible day dream. And if one blindly stands for the model of development, with its substance being human and social development alone, the scene and script won’t change. The state as such is totally incapable of accommodating millions of educated and skilled
labourers to such an extent that they have to go elsewhere to find a job and livelihood for themselves. Agricultural and industrial growth performances and prospects are still lagging behind with service sector being the sole productive game maker. Another yet pressing issue is the deteriorating standards of school and collegiate education, which makes any “Tom and Harry” eligible for higher education, skilled prospective labour force. This has eventually resulted in the rolling out of new junk of so called “educated/skilled labour force”, sans any quality, with flying colours. Another drawback of having a hyped social and human development far away from reality side lines the economic growth and development aspirations of the state as the central government and other statutory authorities focuses much on the upliftment of relatively poorer and disadvantaged states with less attention and governmental effort being paid to the darker shades of so called Kerala model of development. The result is total cornering of the state when it comes to fund allocation under budgetary process for various developmental purposes, formulation of central government aided projects/schemes etc. The need of the hour is nothing but concerted efforts on the part of the state and civil society framework to address the contentious issues related to growth and development prospects of the state, rather than being famed for high human development and a laggard in economic growth and development.

Per concludere, the Kerala model of equitable economic development is much more than just a development model, which in most cases renders itself as static. The apt explanation is nothing but, developmental experience of Kerala since the 1950’s, consequent of social reformation and wealth redistributional programmes initiated concertedly by various religious as well as the first democratically elected government, transcending itself into present day superior levels of social and human development. It was replicated in a set of high material quality of indicators, with low levels of per capita incomes, a set of wealth and resource redistribution programmes that brought about high quality of life indicators, high levels of political participation and mass activism etc. Though the model as such was subjected to a minor reconceptualization in 1990’s to season itself to the changing winds of globalization, by making it more participatory and decentralized as well as sustainable, it failed on one or two counts to accept and alter itself to the themes of globalization. The state as such has achieved a reasonable level of human development, as depicted in Table.I given below.

II. CONCLUSION

Organizations today are increasingly dependent on employee engagement as a powerful source of sustainable competitive advantage. In the present competitive environment, engagement of the employees is an important mechanism to drive the organisation towards success. The present study is an attempt to find the level of employee engagement in insurance industry. The survey conducted with 219 employees both from public and private insurance companies which are operating in Mysuru district. The employees who are working in public insurance companies are more engaged than the private insurance company employees. A company can have the best reward system, training and development and human resource policies. Top management support is expected to be integral to encourage the practices and behaviors that lead to employee engagement throughout the company.

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<tr>
<th>Indicators Of Development</th>
<th>Current Statistics</th>
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<tr>
<td>HDI(Human Development Index)</td>
<td>0.712(as in 2015-16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life Expectancy at Birth</td>
<td>74(as in 2015-16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infant Mortality Rate</td>
<td>6 per 1000 live births(as in 2015-16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maternal Mortality Rate</td>
<td>61 per 100000 live births (as in 2011-13)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex Ratio</td>
<td>1084 females for 1000</td>
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Quite contrast to these spirited figurative developmental achievements, the PCI figures of Kerala for the year of 2011-12 was estimated at Rs. 68491, much lesser than comparatively least developed counterparts. This is a clear indication of the fact that the developmental experience of Kerala though considered as an important alternative that can be replicated elsewhere, is lagging particularly with regard to the economic growth and developmental objectives. In the absence of constructive economic growth and development, successive welfare schemes and activities aimed at furthering of human and social development become a dead weight particularly with regard to the financial capabilities and prospects of the state.

III. SUMMARY

The social reformation and wealth redistributional drive initiated in the 1950’s was aptly suited for the socio-political and economic scenarios of those times and hence the consequence, superior levels of development transcended through generations, making the southernmost state with 3.3 crores of people, a distinguished one, though many considers the same developmental experience as quite a special case. Though some rejuvenating measures were initiated sooner after the initiation of LPG regime, including participatory decentralized planning as well as people’s campaigning, which was solely introduced for the purpose bringing in the ideals of inclusiveness and sustainability in development, nothing has worked well for keeping up the so called “Model of development”, syncing it with the changing course of economic events, especially globalization. The state, it’s developmental as well as growth aspirations were cornered, like an abandoned child of globalization. The government as well as the civil society failed to acknowledge the need to revamp, reconstruct and rejuvenate the developmental experience into one which embraces the dynamic themes of globalization, accommodating the core need of economic growth and developmental requirements. The need of the hour is nothing but such a revamping of whole developmental experience, as the state has achieved reasonable levels of human development, accommodating the economic growth and developmental interests. Economic growth and development will only become meaningful when it addresses both the developmental as well as growth concerns. Only then such growth and developmental strides become quite inclusive and sustainable.

“I should perhaps underline here the fact that I am referring to “the Kerala experience” rather than what is often called “the Kerala model.” …………To think of a “Kerala model” does have its merits, but it is, I believe, ultimately counterproductive, especially for Kerala itself. …………To call something a model is to hint some alleged unimprovability. That is not the case with Kerala’s experience”.

- Amartya Sen (2001: 2)

IV. REFERENCE


