

Devolution Plan: New Insights for Actualizing Local Level Empowerment

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Abstract

This paper is written with aim to point out the local level hurdles and socio-cultural factors responsible for malfunctioning of Devolution Plan. The authors have their professional impression on the basis of empirical data from local level community interactions that development of any nation or region is only possible when there is a distinct demarcation between development activities and interventions to be managed by top developmental intelligentsia or by just enhancing local level participation and sense of ownership. Historically, the province of Punjab witnessed a local level selfreliant approach to manage its livelihoods. The same if revitalized could help bring people realize that they have control over their resources (both social and natural) and they are capable enough to plan for the improvements in their livelihoods according to the ever-changing socioenvironmental conditions. The local government concept is not new to the land rather it has a long history; devolution plan is merely a new approach into it. The barriers described in current papers debar realization of true and effective local level development, self reliance and social empowerment through meaningful decentralization.

Index terms— devolution, decentralization, empowerment, caste.

1 Introduction

he idea of local government was not new in Pakistan as the historical evidences 1 1 Local Government is not new to Pakistan or South Asian perspective rather it dates back to pre-Mughal times. The ancient rulers basically established this system to control the masses and devise an organized system of revenue collection. The British reached India in 1609 with commercial objectives. The East India Company established the institution of local government in the year 1688, when it setup a municipal committee in Madras. In 1765, the Company virtually gained both the rights of collecting revenues, and running the civil administration. At that time, the company introduced a modern system in urban areas of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa since it s activities were restricted to these towns. As a part of their administrative policy for both revenue and civil affairs, the British tried to maintain the Punchayat system, particularly the villages' assemblies. As the system in various part of the subcontinent was highly diversified, a uniform system of local government institutions could not be introduced. So, the British has to accept different systems of local government in various regions of India. The British followed the Mughals' strategy of not disturbing the existing system too much, especially in rural areas, where they ruled indirectly.

2 suggest that local government concept has been featuring

Indian sub continent since Mughal reign. Later, British colonial rule also retained it with bringing major alterations and making it according to the requirements that suited British rule. 2 Local Government plan focused on five fundamental objectives. It included devolution of Since partition, various military setups used this important institution for their vested interests. The innovation of Musharraf reign was in theory a promise

ensuring local empowerment of people through decentralization but in practice it also turned out to be vehicle of enhancing military-bureaucracy's rule over masses of Pakistan. It was not different from the previous local governments (Basic Democracies by Ayub Khan and Local Governments in Zia period) that were experienced in Pakistan after partition. 2 The historical record shows that the most significant phase in the development of local government in India began with Lord Ripon's resolution of 18 May 1882. Ripon realized that the following political and social changes had developed as a result of western education: the emergence of western educated class familiar with democratic norms; the emergence of demand for democratic institutions to grant basic rights to Indians; the emergence of political parties and sociocultural organizations; the emergence of a class in cities eager to participate in political institutions. In response to Lord Ripon's resolution, the Punjab District Board Act was passed in October, 1883 in 1904, Lord Curzon, a staunch believer in centralization, set aside all the local institutions in the name of administrative efficiency. On 20 August 1917, a policy decision was made by the British government to ensure the participation of Indians in all branches of Administration. The government of India took certain crucial and significant decisions for the development of local self-government. In this respect, the following suggestions were made: a) People should be trained to manage their local affairs thought local government. b) Substantial elected majorities should prevail in both municipal and rural boards. c) Chairman of local bodies should be elected, although nonofficials can be appointed where necessary. d) Franchise rule should be liberalized. e) Nominations should be retained only to ensure representation of minorities and f) Panchayat should not be integrated with District Boards; instead, a corporate village life should develop in the length and breadth of the entire country. Under the Montague Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, the local government was transferred to the Provinces through an Act passed in 1920 with the hope of speedy local development through the involvement of the local population. With the advent of provincial autonomy under the government of India Act of 1935, popular ministers succeeded in the provinces and brought an increased measure of self government.

Essentially, the new system is aimed at creating an enabling environment in which not only the people participate in the community welfare but also own their decisions and become the masters of their own destiny. This system as a matter of fact, functions within the provincial framework and without any interference from the centre.

The two main features of local government ordinance were treated as the hallmarks of devolution of power stated by National Reconstruction Bureau. Among these were the empowerment of people and decentralization of authority to the local tiers. Before launch of this mega developmental shift, to bring more transparency, all previous political parties were banned to nominate their candidates (the same move was done by Zia in 1985 national and provincial level elections). The aim of empowerment of people was planned to be actualized through a head of district, Tehsil and union councils through an elected public representative to whom all public offices at district level were made accountable. The head of district government was formally declared as a head of all public offices. This shift embraced heavy criticism on behalf of technocrats and even bureaucracy (which was evident due to the fear of loss of power and authority).

3 II.

Review of Literature a) Local Government System: Historical Background If the case of local government system is studied in historical perspective few important scholastic works can be of prime importance to connect the current local government system of Pakistan with historical forces that influenced this system in one way or the other. Importantly, Richard W. Gable as cited by Inayatullah (1972) commented on the negative functions that have been produced by the local government in the South Asian scenario especially in India and Pakistan. He states further: Traditional local government in the sub continent was either destroyed or allowed to decay by the British colonial rulers (Inayatullah, 1972).

Inayatullah further quoted the scholastic contribution of Gable who also worked on the local government system in British India due to mal-functions performed by local government institution in British India. He says:

Local government declined in British India and district administration was established and strengthened (Ibid: 1972).

It was replaced by an administrative pattern designed to aid and abet colonial rule. So long as the basic objective of collection of revenue and economic exploitation was met, the administrative machinery was considered efficient. To this end, the British strengthened district administration in the sub-continent because it was the best means of ruling imperial India through a handful of men. The British officers in each district became absolute rulers with unlimited powers and control over revenue, police and judicial functions. The attitude of the British government has been captured in the following statement regarding the colonizers view of local government. Harold F. Alderfer (1964) referred that colonial power incubated the provincial administrative structure in the disguise of merely to increase their colonial powers and control over the people. He states that colonial powers therefore deliberately undermined the local leadership which was a genuine and culturally accepted phenomenon. He is of the view:

As a general rule, colonizing powers upon gaining sovereign rights in foreign places have concentrated upon establishing national and top provincial administration to carry out their political, economic and social objectives. They have either neglected the local field, being satisfied to accept local leadership if found to be cooperative, or have half-heartedly tried to remake local institutions in their own image. As a result, these colonial governments,

even when ultimately independent and manned by native officials and personnel, tend to be centralized in the national colonial and provincial capitals (Alderfer, 1964).

Gable as cited by Inayatullah (1972) states:

Not only was the colonial administration authoritarian and centralized but it was also not interested in getting nearer to the people. Unfamiliar and cumbersome procedures were introduced by the British district officers when they took to dealing with revenue and criminal cases instead of the village officials. This made it almost impossible for a poor rural citizen to get justice (Inayatullah, 1972).

4 He adds further:

In short, the years of colonial rule in the subcontinent were marked by the complete suffocation of local government because from this time onward a villager could never be sure of success of bad cases made the new arrangement very popular particularly with those seeking injustice". All administrative activity became crystallized at the district level, where the Queen's representative could exercise central control (Ibid: 1972).

5 b) Devolution of Power: A Local Empowerment and Decentralization Pledge

The Devolution Plan was launched in March 2000 by the then Federal Government to serve as the focal point for local governance and development (Asian Development Bank: 2004). An item wise detailed version was presented in the month of May 2000 for in-depth Pakistan: 2000). The Devolution Plan advocated decentralization of the government structure and service management, improving effectiveness and efficiency of main public services by bringing their management closer to the people, creating potential for participatory monitoring, and enabling it to better address to social needs and impartial accountability to the public (World Bank: 2004).

The then president of Pakistan (Mr. Musharraf) unveiled his government's 'Local Government Plan' intended to build genuine democratic institutions and empower the people at the grassroots. Chaudhry and Chaudhry (2011) stated that: Empowerment of the people through the introduction of district governments commonly referred to as devolution of power has undoubtedly been the most significant and sensitive initiative of the present regime. Significant in the sense that it brought about the biggest restructuring of the public sector organizations in Pakistan through a paradigm shift in favour of the directly elected local government institutions. It is sensitive, as this initiative has perhaps triggered more controversies than any other policy of Musharraf government. Indeed, the Local Government plan presents a great opportunity for decentralizing the Government structure and service management by enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of key public services. (Chaudhry & Chaudhry, 2011).

The main objectives were political devolution, administrative decentralization, and the redistribution of resources to local governments. In Musharraf's words:

The basic issue is to empower the impoverished and make the people the master of their own destiny. We want to introduce essence of democracy and not sham democracy, which promotes the privileged. Devolution will bring farreaching consequences and will change [the] fate of the country. Chaudhry and Chaudhry (2011) further describe that:

In the devolution plan, following justifications have been given as the basis for the Local Government structure: non-use, misuse, and abuse of political and administrative system which led to institutional crisis resulting in collapse of political and administrative systems; corruption in political and administrative system; political system has been hijacked by political families, as it has not functioned under the political parties; administrative set-up was control-oriented rather than service-oriented. The government this time around has indeed changed Pakistan's decades' old colonial system of running political and administrative affairs based on a colonial ethos of control rather than service by devolving powers at the local level. Pakistan did witness local bodies' elections in the past but each time, unstable national political system amongst other factors led to its collapse. Under the devolution plan, Local Government elections were held in five phases covering all districts of the four Provinces from December 2000 to June 2001.

With its focus on individual rights and freedom, the principle of devolution of power was of an important liberal value as it promised local populations to get hold over what they thought of development. It included local planning, strategizing their developmental priorities and launching it in their desired and preferred manner. The task of 'devolution of power' was assigned to National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB). 3 1. District coordination: Coordination, human resource management and civil defence;

The NRB proposed devolution of power to three local tiers, these were, District, Tehsil, and Union Council.

The head of District, Tehsil or union council was termed as Nazim and the deputy was termed as naib Nazim. The vision of decentralization was devolved to district Nazim under his jurisdiction. 3 NRB collected information, conducted workshops and seminars, and evolved a new structure with some revolutionary changes. The major emphasis of the policy makers and planners was on: devolution of power; reduction of influence of the bureaucrats; improvement of police departments and an end to misuse of power by the police force and functionaries; guarantee of participation of the people in the decision making process; guarantee of civil provisions (services) to the common man.

12. Work and services: Spatial planning and development, districts roads, and building, energy and transport.

163 III.

164 **6 Materials and Methods**

165 Methodology refers to the structure of procedures and transformational rules whereby the scientist shifts
166 information up and down this ladder of abstraction in order to produce and organize increased knowledge.
167 Thus defined "methodology" can be distinguished from research techniques in that the latter term is useful for
168 referring to the pragmatics of primary data collection, whereas methodology denotes the "logic-in-use" involved in
169 selecting particular observational techniques, assessing their yield of data, and relating these data to theoretical
170 propositions. In practice, the practical problems of using particular techniques of data gathering cannot be
171 entirely separated from the examination of their logic-in-use. Any methodological discussion then must include
172 some reference to techniques.

173 **7 a) Locale**

174 The current study was conducted in Union Council of Sacha Soda in Tehsil and district of Sheikhpura district
175 of the Punjab province. The life of this Union Council is characterised by big political players who acted as
176 middlemen in the local power structure. Sheikhpura District lies roughly between North latitudes 31.0 degree
177 and 32.5 degree and East longitudes 73.5 and 74.42 degree. Its shape is roughly that of trapezoid with a triangular
178 off-shoot to the west from the Southwest corner. The village Sacha Soda is 18 km from Sheikhpura city towards
179 North West.

180 **8 b) Methods**

181 Data collection was done through the exploratory method while using main techniques of participant observation,
182 in-depth interviews, and key informants.

183 **9 c) Observational Method**

184 To collect information from the respondents, the research team was properly trained and was especially asked to
185 be vigilant in the field during the phase of data collection. It was also done to with a perspective to take notes
186 of the observations made during the data collection.

187 **10 d) Focused Group Discussions**

188 The research team conducted one FGD per district that involved stakeholders from both public and private sector
189 also including the NGOs staff. This method was helpful in a way that I used to get loads of information in short
190 span of time as compared to other techniques. The importance of Focus Group Discussion is also stated by Dick
191 (1998) in the lines below: "Focus groups are a method particularly suited to preliminary research where some
192 timeeconomy is a need, and where a more structured approach may be premature. It is common for the group
193 session to be audio-taped (or sometimes videotaped) for later analysis, though that is not my preferred option.
194 Focus groups are a method of group interviewing for obtaining qualitative data. It is not so much a research
195 design as a data collection method" (Dick, 1998).

196 The way of conducting focused group discussion was very interactive in which members were very keen to
197 participate. In a sense, it also provided a forum to the senior representatives to speak up and share their
198 experiences. This method served four important functions which were as under:

199 1. Firstly identification of the respondents who had been involved in similar activities; 2. Secondly, the
200 preference was given to respondents, who were somehow involved in skills trainings or knowing the importance
201 of the process; 3. Thirdly, the necessity of knowledge about development and community organization in their
202 local terms; and, 4. Fourthly, their willingness to share their experiences was the basic condition during core
203 group operation.

204 IV.

205 **11 Results**206 **12 a) Devolution in Sacha Soda and Main Hurdles**

207 In my personal view, national level picture is often reflected at the local level. If corruption and injustice prevails
208 at higher level same is diffused to the local level automatically.

209 **13 b) Caste Based Politics**

210 The local government elections 4 4 The elections in 2005 were eye witnessed by me in three different places;
211 firstly, Lahore (as invited by an NGO who was monitoring the electoral process), Secondly, Sheikhpura district
212 level and thirdly, village Sacha Soda. In fact the city represents typical Punjabi culture that surrounds by the
213 caste and determined by the local power holders in line with the national level politicians. really mobilized the
214 public especially the politicians in order to bring forth the candidates of their own choice (mostly their sons and

nephews) who were supposed to strengthen the influence of these already powerful politicians. The prevailing myth among the power holders was:

It is foolish to vacate any position for your opponents. If you want to survive then fix your opponents so that they may not be able to raise their heads even in hundred years.

Although this view might be understood as a proverbial while reading but when it was actually operationalized in the village life, it brought horrible results and consequences for the village life. As mentioned in lines, above that the village local power holders were very much concerned about supporting their candidates to come in the scenes as the elected candidates later on add strength and indispensability in the village life. According to the view of the general public, the local level elections are always very violent and bloody. It is because the public overtly support and oppose their candidates. This support and opposition is very much evident in their daily life. In village, one has to clearly distinguish the dhara with which one affiliates, otherwise, the issues of a person's group affiliation remains in question. Local level elections were also bone of contention because one could see divisions even in the biradari and extended families. The local level power holders very artistically used the mutual misunderstanding of village community for their purposes. It was essential for the villagers that with whatever dera they were affiliated, they had to accept its supported candidate in oncoming elections.

The major force that decided supported candidate was the person from one's own caste or the caste with which there were relations based on reciprocity basis. It was observed that during national and provincial elections, the two most powerful groups of village (Ranas and Gujjars) worked for success of their respective candidates. For instance Ranas canvassed for candidate who was from Rajput origin and manipulated elections in strengthening the position of their candidate in village. Similarly, Gujjars worked for the candidate from their caste and also managed to get the desired results. The exercise of both groups was successful as they got their candidates won from village. The strategy opted by candidates contesting election for National Assembly or Provincial Assembly was also to a greater extent taking benefits from existing sense of affiliations among villagers and thus molding into their favour. Many villagers also knew that it was always difficult to meet their candidates after winning elections for their problems but it was again a psychological satisfaction that lied with villagers as somebody from their own caste was occupying seat. The same caste bond was very much functional during 2005 local elections as Dogars worked for their candidate throughout district to get their candidates elected. The case was different in local elections as electoral votes for positions of district Nazim and Naib Nazim were casted by elected members of local bodies but it was taken as a matter of prestige as one's own candidate was elected. Therefore, Dogars worked for promotion of their candidate as district Naib Nazim. The Ranas were very active during elections for the seat of district Nazim.

As a token of District Nazim's support, Rana group reciprocated and voted for him. The Rana group manipulated the local elections as they managed their candidate to get elected as Nazim and their supported candidate on the seat of Naib Nazim in the Union Council of Sacha Soda.

Similarly, Virak group was also active in local level elections as they worked for the Tehsil level and remained successful in electing both their supported candidates on the premier seats of Tehsil from their own caste. The sitting Nazim for Tehsil Sheikhpura and the Naib Nazim were from same caste group as that of Viraks. In fact, it was important to note that the situation in village was not only replicated at union, Tehsil, and district councils but also at National and Provincial assemblies. The villagers compared a case within the village and outside the village in a very interesting way by stating that 'Kam Howey na Howey, Member Saada Ay' 5 c) Disharmonized Pace of District Assemblies . It was imperative for the villagers that somebody whom they knew personally was representing them and may be approached for help in time of need especially during any inter caste conflict within the village.

The villagers reported that no considerable developmental work was carried out at the Union Council level. The villagers had accepted that nobody after election fulfils the promises often made during the elections under many excuses. The community viewed that it was always the influential land owners who demanded support from the lay men in the village as recognition of their services during the daily life. The question that why the villagers usually casted their votes after their deraydars was simply because villagers easily approached them during their problems and thus used their influence in fixing their issues. The deraydars on the other hand, acted as middlemen between the contesting candidate during elections and voter community to cash their vested interests.

In the lines to follow, I have worked out few important case studies that highlight the main hurdles that were hindering smooth pace of newly evolved concept of district government. While describing the case studies, it may seem beyond the scope of local bodies and its issues in the village but for sure having an indirect effect on working of this new system to benefit lay men residing in the village.

The seats for the women representation in the new system were thirty three percent of the total seats. The purpose of doing the same was to empower women at local level by participating in the local decision making process. It is observed that the women representatives usually remain absent from the sessions as their role was only to help winning the women seats. These female candidates usually refrained from attending the session, unless, there was something very important and crucial going on in the session like no confidence or budgetary session. Another hurdle observed in the district assembly session, that it introduced various committees 6 d) Citizen Community Boards (CCBs) whose functions were to make sure the smooth sailing of different chapters under the district assembly's jurisdiction. The idea of all proposed committees was to make sure that the

business of the district government was progressing in progressive way and direction. The situation on ground was desperate as majority of the committees after being formulated have not met once whereas the Zila Monitoring committees (ZMCs) were not finalized. If one looks at the functions of ZMCs, clear understanding is received that the functions are very much important and they play as back bone in the new devolution setup. The vested interests of groups occupying seats in district assembly clashed with various committees and its functions due to constitution of those committees were delayed. The interest groups attempted to make sure that required quorum for the business of committee remains incomplete so that no work progress could be made. I tried my utmost to see the names of 'Farm Produce Market Committee' but I was told that it was confidential. I also talked to the personnel from local government department who were also emphasizing that developmental work was not done according to the requirements as laid down in the law but in such pressure scenario one had to keep silent to save the bread and butter of his kids and family.

The new Local Government System also provided for setting up of Citizen Community Boards i) Constitute Farm Produce Market Committee under the relevant law; 7 A CCB may raise funds through voluntary contributions, gifts, donations, grants and endowments for its declared purposes without compromising the larger interest of the community. It may also receive project-based cost sharing support from any local government. A CCB will be a non-profit organization and its income and assets are allowed to be used solely for the attainment of its objectives and no portion of (CCBs) in every local area to boost participatory development. The purpose was energizing the community for development and improvement in service delivery through voluntary, proactive and self help initiatives and to take up the welfare of the handicapped, destitute, widows and families in extreme poverty. CCBs were conceived to be vehicles of promoting participatory development among the public in the local areas through groups of non elected citizens may, through voluntary, proactive and self help initiatives under the new system. On the basis of empirical information 8 e) Bottom Up Planning and Ownership Incentive System , it can be said with confidence that this was the most affected area where the whole devolution concept was made dysfunctional. In reality, the process of registering CCBs was too long and technical as any other government business. There were only five percent examples where the CCBs were given developmental funds regarding their submitted projects. The CCBs were not in the priorities of the any district government that I visited during my stay in district and Tehsil administration.

According to the new System, the development expenditure from Local Fund should not be less than twenty five percent 9 of the Funds. The development budget according to this system was to be prioritized in accordance with the bottom-up planning system and not less than twenty five percent of the total development budget be reserved for the schemes initiated and identified by the Citizen Community Boards. Under the new System, CCBs 10 the income is to be paid by way of dividend, profit or bonus to any of its members or contributors. The accounts of the Board will be subjected to audit. In case of dissolution or de-registration of a CCB, its assets will pass on to the local government which contributed towards creation of these assets or funds and it will continue to be used for community welfare. may receive 8 During meetings with officials of Federal Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MoLG&RD), National Commission for Human Development (NCHD), Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment, Akhtar Hamid Khan Center for Rural Development and Municipal Administration (AHKCRD&MD), and through the practices of the official facilitating the process of registering the CCBs. 9 Note: (* The words 'Fifty Percent' substituted through amendment in LGO, 2001 by the respective provincial governments.) 10 There were many examples where the provisos of the prescribed law were severely damaged. For example, the district assemblies of districts of Attock and Gujrat which are famous for the most powerful figures of PML (Q) residing there did not allocate anything for the CCBs. Soon after the elections in the 2005, I happen to attend a series of training workshops organized by NCHD under their capacity development program that works in close coordination with city and district governments. During the lecture there was an interesting question raised by one of the staff of NCHD about the discrepancies that lie in the budgets of districts of Attock and Gujrat. The Resource person from DCTE said that 'he is sure that when both of the districts ensure to implement the LGO 2001 in letter and spirit that would be the day when one can say the LGO 2001 is fully implemented in Pakistan'.

The process specified for the CCBs for making developmental projects and thus participating considerably in the development of their area was made so difficult and lengthy that the people usually lost their commitment level in pursuing the funds for the concerned departments. The lack of proper training about administering the registration, proposal process really made the idea beyond one's access. In some places, though NCHD was reported to imparting the training to the CCBs' officials as per their statement but I saw that all promises of NCHD as mere statements for the sake of creating their nuisance value among the government and its donors with no concrete difference made on ground. I happened to attend the training workshop of the trainers known as the District Program Coordinator (DPC) and District Program Manager (DPM) to conduct the training in their respective districts. The whole training component for the DPCs and DPMs were not comprehensive and was so lengthy that the staff itself started criticizing that under these conditions, how can the villagers who do not know the technicalities may empower themselves to meet the requirements to apply for the funds.

The promise of bottom-up planning and ownership incentive was proved to be just a statement of words. The few genuine CCBs in village Sacha Soda were also curious in knowing how to complete the requirements for the developmental projects. The CCBs were keen to submit their portion in the proposed project budget that is twenty percent of the total amount requested from the government. The new district governments proclaim

that through CCBs, a community can submit their respective development project at any time but in reality the projects submission date is the month of March of each financial year. The projects submitted earlier were delayed until month of March.

Youth Welfare Organization, Sacha Soda was one of the CCBs that submitted a project proposal. This organization basically comprised retired people from education and health departments along with young people as field force. The respective CCB was aiming to start a medical dispensary in the village. The project was submitted to Sacha Soda Union Council which was refused on basis of shortage of funds. After getting refusal from UC's office, same was submitted to Tehsil Council where project was again rejected under the justification that once a project submitted and getting refused at any level may not be resubmitted for funding at another level. This treatment also violated the provisions provided under the law that clearly stated 'Funds for CCBs are available with each Local Government at District, Tehsil/Town and Union level. CCBs are free to approach all sources of funding.' f) Endangered Theme of Participatory Development The approach 11 g) Union Council to Control villagers and opponents of Participatory development though an attractive promise made by the devolution plan believes in four building blocks, those are: organization; resource mobilization; linkages and networking; and capacity building as emphasized by one official from Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment (DTCE). In real, the basic core of participatory development seriously lacked in Sacha Soda as no spade work what so ever was done in the village to organize scattered community to start development process to improve the living conditions of village people. Officials were neither visiting village nor it was reported by villagers about any official visiting the village or contacting villagers. Not to speak of lay men residing in village, even the UC's newly elected staff was unable to organize the community to commence basic and most needed development work in village that included the pavement of streets, arrangements of light polls in the streets (that also served as a gift to the cattle thieves), getting the sanction of a girls high school, making the basic health unit operational, to provide a new link road for villagers in order to have a swift communication between the farm and market, etc.

While having conversations with the staff of UC, none of them was found to be having a basic understanding of the devolution plan and its spirit. For majority of staff, elections were a kind of continuation of the old BD system introduced by Ayub Khan. The villagers' view was not even different as those of staff of UC. The most interesting thing that came into notice was the influential groups forming their own election panels ??2 11 The methodology suggested by DTCE was the basic realization of the need to organize scattered community to raise among them a need for collective work for the general welfare and betterment of facilities in any community. There was an understanding during the applications of 'Bottom-Up developmental approach' that organized groups can better identify the developmental needs of any specific community. It was believed that the village communities were already organized therefore only lip services was dedicated to this important factor. in which candidates were nominated from all considerable allies of a specific group so that 12 It was done so because of the following requirements laid down in the election procedures. There shall be a Union Council (UC) in each Union comprising thirteen following members elected directly: i. Six Muslim members, elected to general seats, including two reserved for women; ii. Four members, elected to seats reserved for peasants and workers, including two reserved for women; iii. One member elected to a seat reserved for minority communities; and iv. Union Nazim and Naib Union Nazim elected as joint candidates: representation of each considerable group within one Dhara is ensured.

The picture on ground was portrayed that only Nazim and Naib Nazim were influential in matters related to UC and rests of members were only supposed to nod their heads in agreement. While handling with the official procedures, Nazim and Naib Nazim often remained absent from the village because of their essential presence in the District and Tehsil assembly sessions. The decisions of the council were held mostly at the Dera of Ranas because of Mr. Rana being the Nazim. The code of conduct required the sessions and meetings to be recorded for the sake of record maintenance which was not maintained under the belief that somebody in the evening would prepare the minutes of the meetings. The UC did not encourage the establishment of CCBs in the village because of the fear of other influential groups coming in the picture and thus establishing their role in the pursuits of the council. Besides, the UC was supposed to establish the monitoring committees to look into the matter of UC which was deliberately delayed because of having the confident and reliable members of these bodies with the elected staff in order to reduce the very much possible opposition and resistance from the general public. Sacha Soda's Union Council was supposed to elect an Insaaf (justice) Committee responsible for the selection of the panel of Conciliators of Musalihat Anjuman (mediation committee) for out of court amicable settlement of disputes. These important bodies were formulated in order to suppress the voices that could have risen against interests of Ranas in the village.

The night when the results for UC were being announced, there was a sense of dissatisfaction among most of the voters because of controversial results. Majority of the voters started whispering that results were rigged because on polling day, there were bandits of Rana group rooming in the village with threatening and warning messages for villagers. On the same day during polling, there was a dispute due to which polling was stopped for an hour as the presiding officer asked all polling agents of contesting panels to vacate polling station because of the pressure being built on the election staff by the polling agents.

14 h) Fabrication of Union Council's Administrative Powers and Functions

All UCs under the devolution plan were required to make sure that the following functions were being done in time and its required spirit: i. To consolidate village and neighborhood development needs and prioritize them into union-wide development proposals with the approval of the Union Council (UC) and make recommendations thereof to the District Government or Tehsil Municipal Administration, as the case may be;

The picture in real was desperate, because till august 2006 majority of the official work was still to be done. Only birth incidences were recorded as it was previously happened in same office. The current and previous office failed to maintain the record and conduct activities under its powers. While having a look on the proposed functions of a UC, it could be easily inferred that proposed functions of UC were not acted upon. In fact, the voters in particular and villagers in general were ignorant of functions and powers of UC because nobody told them about it. Although complete details of the voters were present in office, but it was also available with all influential groups at their Deras where after election, the voters were asked to take vows of ii. To identify deficiencies in the delivery of services and make recommendations for improvement thereof to the Tehsil Municipal Administration; iii. To register births, deaths and marriages and issue certificates; iv. To make proposals to the Union Council (UC) for levy of rates and fees specified in the Second Schedule of Local Government Ordinance, 2001 and to collect such rates and fees within the Union; v. To establish and maintain libraries; vi. To organize inter-Village or Neighborhood sports tournaments, fairs, shows and other cultural and recreational activities; vii. To disseminate information on matters of public interest; viii. To improve and maintain public open spaces, public gardens and playgrounds; ix. To provide and maintain public sources of drinking water, including wells, water pumps, tanks, ponds and other works for the supply of water; x. To maintain the lighting of streets, public ways and public places through mutual agreement with the Tehsil Municipal Administration; xi. To arrange facilities for the handicapped, destitute and poor; xii. To provide protection against stray animals and animal trespass, and to establish cattle pounds; xiii. casting votes for their groups. In extreme cases, the vows were not believed by the respective groups as the results of the election presented a different story. The secretary of UC was supposed to carry out all major activities with the advice of Nazim but he was of the view that when Nazim would ask to do things only then he could do something. The important work tasks were incomplete which included the genuine desire of the youth to develop a public library where they can sit and consult each other for their studies. Not to speak of establishing a library, space for the same was not even allocated. UC was also supposed to cooperate with the voluntary organization which was taken as only a pastime that if the members were available only then they gave time to the staff of these concerning organizations. For instance, Sacha Soda village was famous for cricket clubs because of the high fervour of youth in the game. UC was continually requested to allocate some money to develop the play ground of village but each time it was announced that there was shortage of funds which caused problems in developmental work. People were of the view that excuse may be true with somebody somewhere else but with sitting Nazim and Naib Nazim it was not true as Nazim belonged to Rana group which was the most influential group in village. In addition, he was in the good books of city administration especially Nazim as well as had good terms with sitting MNA who was from his own caste. It was in view of villagers that Nazim was making them understand that Rana group was indispensable in village. They added further that voters especially those who did not vote him would remain same throughout the turn. According to head of Gujar group, this situation would not lead to good sign because of fact that whosoever would win next elections would only be benefiting his group not the whole of village. He said that tradition set by Ranas would ruin integrity of the village.

15 i) Business Conduct of the Union Council

First session of UC after its election and on commencement of first session of every year the Union Nazim was supposed to address the UC and inform Council about his plans and programs for New Year and performance of the Union Administration during the preceding year. In addition, UC was supposed to regulate its business in accordance with the by-laws made by it. The UC was required to meet at least once in every month. All decisions of the UC were meant to be taken by resolutions passed by a simple majority of its total membership. All meetings of UC were to be presided over by Union Nazim and, in his absence, by the Naib Union Nazim or, in absence of both Union Nazim and Naib Union Nazim or where a motion for recall of Union Nazim or Naib Union Nazim has been moved, by a member elected by the UC from amongst its members present in the meeting. The quorum of the meetings of UC was mandatory to be fifty-one percent of its total membership. The meetings of UC shall be open to public, unless UC, by a resolution, decides to hold any meeting in camera. The minutes of the meetings of UC shall be recorded and maintained by an official authorized by UC.

The instructions for code of business of UC were feasible and democratic in nature. But these were made impossible because the political life of not only Sacha Soda but also other villages in neighborhood were also erected along the same lines. The meetings of UC were supposed to be open to the residents of village but mostly informal sessions were conducted at Ranas' Dera which was not a place where anybody could dare to come except Dera members. The session usually lacked attendance of women members which was compensated by taking the

signatures on plain paper sheet next morning under the belief that they were from same panel, and also there was no point in disturbing the females in the evenings especially when they were supposed to be busy in household chores.

16 j) Manipulation of Devolution Plan by the Influential

The startling thing in devolution plan was that it increased the influence of power holders to a large extent. On other hand, the federal government introduced minimum educational qualifications (i.e. graduation) for the candidates who were contesting national assembly elections. The conviction for doing same was that these old politicians are corrupt and looted assets of country therefore there should be a yardstick which could help in debarring them to join the new assembly. The candidates who were disqualified in the new criteria made their minds to indulge in the newly evolved district government system in which power and authority was more than that of MNAs or MPAs while preparing their sons and nephews ready for new 'graduate assembly'. These two reasons enabled the elders of families going after district or Tehsil elections and their youngsters for national or provincial assemblies.

Before I talk about Sacha Soda, an example is worthy of quote from Kharian Tehsil as represented by the opponents group as one sitting and occupying the district assembly and the other in Tehsil. The case 14 ??4 The road mentioned was important from defense point of view that linked the road from Sargodha to Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Not being the main road from Sargodha to Sarai Alamghir (Gujrat district), this road was mainly used in the war times when most of the heavy war equipment was deemed to move to the close border areas. The road also provided a link to the surrounding villages to Lala Musa city of Gujrat district. Due to bad and demolished patch of more than ten kilometers, the road became a best looting spot for criminal groups that occupied road from 6pm in the evening till 7am in the morning. Similarly in case of medical emergencies, so many precious human lives were lost due to this bone of contention. The last end of road which was in the Gujrat Tehsil was constructed while leaving that portion of the road which came under jurisdiction of Tehsil Kharian. presents a gloomy picture of no work done in Tehsil because of the opponents. Even one road was witnessed by me that was classical picture of conflict between opponents' parties. The said road was under jurisdiction of Tehsil Kharian of Gujrat district. There was an issue of a road construction under consideration of Tehsil administration who expressed their helplessness as having no developmental budgets. The district Nazim wanted voters of Tehsil learn a lesson from it and to refrain from voting their opponents party in next elections. In this mess, rural masses were facing lot of problems.

In village Sacha Soda, where conflict was deeply rooted in the cultural life of people is also wide with a number of similarly examples as cited above. As link road from Sacha Soda to Phularwaan (a town at a distance of 15 kilometers) was also a bone of contention between power groups of the village. The road was not maintained after it was once constructed. Regarding the local transport, people and general public were really concerned about the road as it became notorious for looting even in day times. Due to badly damaged road, it was impossible for public vehicles and other local transport to move swiftly due to which it was so easy for local bandits and other wanted criminals to loot and plunder there. The evidences led to loss of many lives, raping passenger women, kidnapping young girls who travelled from there, etc. Though road was just a link road that linked Farooqabad city to Sangla Hills (another town at a distance of 28 Kilometers). The presence of main Sargodha Lahore road and railway track from Faisalabad to Sheikhpura really made the road comparatively unimportant as town of Sangla Hills was accessible by train and said road became a mere link road connecting villages to the agricultural market of Farooqabad city. The transport load was also lessened therefore the road was even desolated and deserted in day times. There was only one Police check post in Sacha Soda village where the patrolling police was supposed to search criminals and other matters. From the check post up to Sangla Hills, there was no single check post or Police station therefore the area served as a paradise of bandits where there was no concept of law, only the local Deraydars along with their bandits ruled the area and made decisions that suited them and their groups.

17 k) Union Monitoring Committees (UMC)

Devolution plan devised the establishment of the monitoring committees to look into the functions of the government at all tiers. For a long period of time the UMCs were not enacted as per the fears of the council about the role of the monitoring committees. There was a strong sense of feeling among the people of the village that the monitoring committees were to stop doing anything illegal in the village. It took them so long to understand that the functions of UMCs were only to look into matters of UC with a consultative role to play while based on three principles of Mutual curtesy and patience, participation and mutual cooperation. The positive role of UMCs in the law was to ensure accountability. The provincial district offices were often threatened about bad consequences in order of disobedience of any order. The Executive District Officer (EDO) of works and services department was mostly threatened because his office was supposed to look into the roads and related matters. EDO education was also threatened to transfer teachers in the school of Sacha Soda by the Dera allies of Rana group.

The powerful Nazims from all three tiers were successful in horrifying the provincial government officials in doing and taking up things in accordance with their directives. One of the EDOs in Sheikhpura was harassed

by stating that your provincial government will take two days to reach the district and ask about case whereas in district you will be a past story in just two hours. This statement seemed to me as more than true as I during the last eleven years' contact with the village and power groups have witnessed. Mostly, I found people especially the government officials to avoid developing controversies with district, Tehsil or the union councils because of the factor that they were working in government set up that introduced the devolution plan. It was often recommended by government officials to accept demands of the newly evolved devolution system to save one's own skin.

V.

18 Discussion

Development is enhancing people's options to have better control over their lives to progress ahead without posing a threat to natural resources. This is especially to ensure that natural resources continue to provide upcoming generations means of sustainable survival. Development is not what was once termed by mere standards of economic growth. It is put people first by making them recipients of progress. It is to enhance efficiency of human society for insured progress. It is only possible with the effective participation of communities in their own decision making. Sustainable development has to employ local resources so that outside dependence is avoided. The communities and people have a better understanding of their problems and solutions. They have an understanding of resources to be utilized for proper trouble shooting without endangering social fabrics or natural cycles. People at grass root level can best utilize their natural and human resource to plan, implement, and thus eradicate their problems. With minimal support from government and development agencies along with their actors they can bring long term remedies for their livelihood issues.

Critics have also questioned the meaning of development implied in modernization theory (Frank, 1967; Todaro, 1985; Neubeck & Glasberg, 1996:284).

In past, development process was only concerned with the growth related indicators without a mention of how much damage and exploitative harvest of natural resources was done. International scholastic view on development and its ultimate meanings particularly its strict economic interpretation has been questioned:

During the 1950s and 1960s many third world countries achieved growth targets identified by United Nations, suggesting that they were indeed evolving. Yet the standard of living for most people in these nations did not improve (Neubeck & Glasberg, 1996:284) Similarly, Neubeck and Glasberg add: This contradiction between the growth of wealth production and the stagnation of poverty called into question the conventional meaning of development. It showed that development existed for some people but not others in these nations. Moreover, such inequality could be found in the 'developed' nations of the West as well. How, then, do we measure development? (Neubeck & Glasberg, 1996:284) According to Alkire and Deneulin, the perception of development is a matter of multidimensional conceptions which needs attention for more clarity and vividness.

The word 'development' has as many meanings as there are listeners. For some, development means more material prosperity: owning money, land and a house. For others, development concerns liberation from oppression. Some see development as a new word for neo-colonialism, and despise it. For still others, development is a holistic project of personal social and spiritual progress. In many contexts we speak of the 'development' of a child or the 'development' of new software as if development completes something as yet unfinished. But this too is simplistic, for in certain ways 'developing' countries are more mature than 'developed'. So the term is ambiguous and value laden. This textbook aims to present a peoplecentered meaning of development which is relevant to all countries, and to show its implications for development practice in many areas (Alkire & Deneulin, 2009).

Still many development experts visualize the term according to their vision as it is accepted in statement listed below: Regardless of any particular normative framework, many would view 'development' as a multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral process, involving social, economic and political change aimed at improving people's lives (Cowen & Shenton, 1996; Preston, 1996; Rist, 1997).

As regards the village, the government departments viewed 'development' that meant number of tractors, threshing machines, harvesters, installation of tubewells, increase in yield per acre, bags of synthetic fertilizers used, amount of pesticides sprayed per acre, and total sum of profit earned out of produce sale, etc. During this process, care for the damage of rural ecology, air pollution due to fumigations, underground water contamination, conservation of natural resources including forest regions, soil compaction, land erosion, soil erosion, etc were only given a lip service. The agriculture extension staff interpreted refusals from farming communities to adopt modern technology in terms of the conservatism, fatalistic attitudes, and laggard behaviour. The farmers who could not use these modern techniques were graded as anti-development and reported to be lacking interest in national development. The reasons expressed for non-adoption were elaborated to be illiteracy, resistant personalities, and unwillingness to change. Farmers of such background were thought to be a burden over regional and national economies.

On the other hand, the social damages of development process were also ignored or termed as only for time being. It was thought that when the economic prosperity would enter the society, it would further help in creating awareness about such issues. All this turned out to be a far dream because social and cultural factors given meagre important and these resulted in putting all the development efforts in a halt. Side by side, the indigenous notions were only labelled as backwardness and primitive as if consulting cultural mind would result

in complete disaster. It though happened to be a disaster but not by a use of it rather because of its ignorance. Development models, experts, agencies, and respective governments do not care for cultural norms because no such planning phase emphasized its utility or criticalness. Thus people were not made a part of development rather they were told to be sitting and watching for the results promised by development activity. This thing without making people participate in this whole exercise made people lose their confidence over their livelihoods therefore they started demanding more from the development agencies. This process was manipulated by the people who were influential, powerful, politically active and wealthy made benefits for them and their allies. The segments of society that lacked resources especially financial or having insufficient resources to adopt mechanization were never made a part of this development initiative. This thing created a sense of hatred among the people and even multiplied the incidences of conflict and violence within rural areas. Because people in rural areas have a strong faith that development practice

19 (D)

must not be uneven if it has to be accepted by all strata of society. When such doubts arise in people's mind, then there starts an unending story of failures in development process, bumpy success stories from communities and usually one group becomes actively reaping the offerings made by development agencies.

It is also observed that development agencies are unaware of the historical factors that often engage experts and local community into a blame game with former complaining non-cooperation from certain groups of society and the later doubting their opponents to be direct beneficiaries. Rural societies that are already fragmented into various groups based upon different castes, economic classes, power faction have to be dealt accordingly. Most of the anthropologists like Doorman (1991) have already pointed out such weaknesses in the planning phase of agriculture related project launched by agencies or governments. The lack of employing 'anthropological approach' ensue lack of participation, mistrust, rise of conflict within local communities.

The designated 'anthropological approach' effectively targets these sorts of issues well before time any project is launched in a community.

A collaborative approach adopted by development experts and agencies could simply raise the probabilities of winning cooperation, earning community's trust, enhancing social participation and creating a sense of ownership among the recipients of such activities. It simply means winning people is development. People want to get hold of their lots at all costs. They always doubt those who attempt to transgress their vicinities without their prior permission or intruding over the shoulders of some nonrepresentative coercive elements in the locality. Development launched through such ways is always rootless and issueless in succeeding stages that merely benefits few while disregarding the rest of society.

The new devolution plan was aimed to bring the devolution of power from concentrated sources to local level and sources. The second aim of the plan was to bring decentralization in especially four fields; those were Administrative, Fiscal, Authority, and Political power. Based on the field information and thorough interaction with key informants among the villagers, policy makers and devolution launching agencies I am of the view that this important and democratic in nature idea was not dealt professionally. The International Crisis Group (ICG), in a report released in March this year, strongly criticized Islamabad's efforts at political devolution. The report said that:

The devolution plan had served to strengthen the military rule of President Musharraf when compared to Ayub Khan's Basic Democracy Scheme in 1960s and Zia-ul-Haq's Local Bodies scheme in 1980s. Government policies had undermined established political parties and drained authority from the provinces, while doing little to devolve power, improve service delivery, reduce corruption or establish accountability at the local level, said the ICG review (ICG 2004).

20 The report further comments:

Devolution is not working in its true sense, centralization is there, and it needs to devolve power so that people could get benefit at the grassroots level. The officials of federal ministry of Local Government and Rural Development are critical of various points of political, institutional and administrative devolution besides fiscal decentralization for local governments. The decentralization and devolution of power to local bodies have been issues of contention in Pakistan since they were introduced in 1999 under the Musharraf's radical reform agenda to promote good governance in the country. Critics of devolution plans, however, have expressed concerns, saying decentralization had not empowered people; rather it had helped to legitimize the power of unelected military governments. The devolution program, as a whole is good. But, it is not going to deliver unless local bodies have the decision making power to use funds and undertake development schemes. I happened to attend the views of speakers at a Round-Table ?? The round-table came up with the following observations:

It was held that provincial government would become weaker since much of its power would be given to district governments. Devolution of power means transfer of powers from Centre to provinces and further to lower tiers, but depriving the provinces of whatever they have runs against the existing federal system. Or, is it that we are moving towards a unitary form of government? If it is so, the government should do it openly and initiate a debate on this crucial issue. It was noted that party-based political system and elections provide the best order of checks and balances. Non-party system, on the contrary, creates divisions along tribal, ethnic and linguistic

lines. A viable system of checks and balances cannot be evolved through bureaucratic machinations or game of numbers. The formation of about 20 monitoring committees may complicate a problem rather than solve it as they would be at loggerheads with each other.

The administrative tussle is feared to ensue also in exercise of the mayor's powers. While a mayor may want to have a 2/3rd majority of the district assembly to remove a police chief, the latter would try to have 1/3+1 members of the assembly with him to abort any move for his removal. It seems that the plan falls short of dealing with such issues properly. Huge resources would be required to run elections for the winning elections of Nazims. In earlier understanding the 32 (D) ¹



Figure 1: 7 6

Neighborhood Councils in the Union to execute development projects.

xviii. To assist the relevant authorities in disasters and natural calamities, and assist in relief activities, including de-silting of canals;

xix. To co-operate with the public, private or voluntary organizations, engaged in activities similar to those of the Union;

xx.

Figure 2:

¹We are not concerned with the developmental work, we are happy that person from our caste is occupying the seat.

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