

REAL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD TRANSFORM¹¹ PEOPLE'S LIVES, NOT JUST ECONOMIC

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STATISTICS

Outline

(1) Introduction &

"Communities and more importantly people
^{face} (are at) the brunt of all developmental work;
focus should be on investing 'in' them and
rather than investing 'on' them; to reap
the maximum ^{benefits}."

(2) What is 'real development' that transforms people's lives?

- (2a) People-first Investment approach
- (2b) Development of Societal Norms
- (2c) Preservation of Culture and Heritage
- (2d) Planning, for the developments, is done with
the people
- (2e) Community-centric developmental approach.

(3) How can 'real development' be achieved?

- (3a) Investing in the Country's Health System
- (3b) Upscaling Education Quality and Outreach

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(3c) Spending more on people friendly architecture

(3d) Funding ^{to bridge} the gender gap

(3e) Backing Social uplift and Poverty Alleviation programs.

(4) Why is 'real ^{transformative} development' that important?

(4a) Happier ^{and skilled} workforce is a productive one

(4b) Economic and social disparities can lead to uprisings

(4c) Discontent ^{and resentment} can boil in Underdeveloped Areas

(4d) Prosperity and Economic uplift, right of all

(4e) ^{Human centric} (Real) development leads to ^{positive} economic figures.

(5) Conclusions

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Mohenjo Daro, the pride of the Indus valley civilization was a place for learning and development. The people built cities that are still studied to this day. They perfected crafts such as pottery, bricks making, steel work and so on. This city became a hub of learning the arts and sciences at that time. What was so remarkable about the people was that they modelled their city around human function. The thinking was that physical form should follow human function. In doing so, they invested heavily in their people raising them far above the people of other civilizations of that time. Communities only progress when every member (of it) is treated with respect and invested upon/in. Those who chase only economic statistics can only go so far. Real progress and development is achieved when the priority of the process are people and not flashy numbers. To achieve this, countries must expand investments in their social services, such as education, health and so on. By investing here, not only is the country preparing skilled and knowledgeable human capital but is also ultimately converting them to economic statistics.

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The very first question that arises, in the mind, is what is this 'real development'? It can be generally said that it is the development achieved when the people are prioritized and capital/funding is allocated for those projects that improve the people's lives. It is an approach that focuses on lifting people's living standard. Throughout history and even in the present time, one can find numerous examples where people-first or human-centric investment occurred. If one goes to Early Arabia, the state of Madinah invested heavily in its members. It prioritized education and social uplift programs among other things. During the Prophet's time and later on the Caliph's time, it was refined to create and upgrade the standard of living of its members. Today, the Nordic welfare model also resembles this. As they have put people ahead and invested heavily in people-centric programs.

By investing in the people, the country is not only creating new standards/norms for society but also carrying the old ones along with it. People form the backbone of any communities. They bring and create norms that govern the community. When states, create an atmosphere of people friendly development. Norms and attitudes are adjusted along with

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spirit. After world war 2, Germany was divided up by the Allied powers under the Yalta Conference. West Germany was handed over to the west and East to the then Soviet Union. In both regions, their governments invested in education. In the Eastern wing, it was in fields of Physics, Chemistry while in the opposite it was in engineering. Investment grew and grew, and the result was society's adoption of STEM subjects. Today, the country boasts ^{ho} ^{one of} the highest numbers of technically (qualified) universities and populace. This created the hallmark title of 'German Efficiency,' which they still carry ^{on} ^{unto} this day.

^{Cultural Norms}
Cultures, such as 'German efficiency,' have an impact on the development process. If countries are to achieve real and meaningful development, they need to realize the importance of preserving their cultural roots. Culture provides the basis for a civilization to grow and prosper. It is the glue that holds people together. The development in the Middle East is the best example. Newly found oil reserves gave the countries/kingdoms ~~big~~ coffers of money. Cities like Dubai, spent heavily on flashy projects such as the Burj-~~al~~-khalifa ~~were made~~ to attract foreign tourists and expatriates. Whereas, cities like Muscat preserved its culture and invested heavily on its people. The difference between the two is Dubai became

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home for the world's elite and wealthy. While it displaced the country's native culture and heritage, Muscat cemented its position as a cultural stronghold for Omani culture.

The Omanis achieved this by planning all the development, being done in Muscat, with the people. Planning with the people is an approach in developmental planning in ^{which} community representation is ensured and their needs are met by the planners. By incorporating voices from the community, real and effective development can take place. The community knows better about its needs; however, lack of technical know-how stop it in its tracks. By accompanying the community, social uplift and better living standards can be achieved. The Orangi Pilot Project ^(OPP) by Akhtar Hameed Khan is the best example of this. More than 70,000 houses were built and sewer about 100,000 people were housed during the span of 5-10 years. The OPP worked with the community and gave them the technical expertise as well as financial one to execute their projects. The people's living standards and social ^{status} was lifted due to this project.

Carrying this forward, every community has different needs. Specialized plans are required to take care of the intricacies of

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every community. To achieve real and prosperous development, a community's needs must be identified. Some might require infrastructure, ^{investment in} education or health or social uplift programs. Misplaced projects not only cause a burden on the exchequer but also discontent in the community as their basic needs have not been met. Dubai, despite having the tallest building in the world, is devoid of a functional sewerage system. Moreover, its drainage system (suffered) went through hell and back during the recent rains in 2024. Rather than addressing these issues, there seems to be a sense of delusion that has clouded the ruler's minds. If community concerns were addressed, maybe Dubai would have had a functional sewerage and drainage system. (This is why) skewed development programs might benefit the community in the short run but are a living nightmare in the long run. This is why community development and input is so necessary for sustainable development.

Community centric encompasses a vast area of topics/approaches. As mentioned previously, every community has different needs; however, these can be narrowed down into a few main categories such as education, health, infrastructure and so on. Every country might take a different route but all desire

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to reach the end; that is equitable and sustainable development.

If development was a train, and the end destination was equitable and sustainable development, then it would probably pass through the first station called 'Education'.^{Healthcare} Any country wishing to invest in its people must realize the importance of an effective and efficient ^{Healthcare} education system. As the popular proverb goes 'Health is wealth'. It is no doubt that a prosperous and productive nation is also a healthy one too. The citizens and their medical needs are of the utmost importance. Healthcare should not only be of the highest but also affordable too. People can only perform to the best of their abilities, if they are in the best of shapes. Nordic and other European countries have introduced free healthcare for its citizens. They, by doing so, have alleviated many with worries of paying for their health. Once ^{universal} healthcare is achieved the next goal should be 'education'.

In the journey towards real and equitable development, the next stop is accessible, high-quality education for all. As the American political journalist ^{Sydney Harris} once commented on the beauty of education, "The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows."

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Education provides the tools necessary for man to not only survive, but to thrive and leave their marks in this world. Literacy might be referred to as the cures^{all} of social evils. After getting independence in 1948, Israel invested heavily in its education and defense sector. Free flow of American capital allowed it to quickly build its base and launch itself as the pioneer in cyberwarfare and technology. Today, the country has the highest number of scientists per capita and is a major global superpower. By investing in education, it grew itself out and projected itself into the region. It achieved a literate population and strong tech base by investing in the quality and reach of education.

Where Israel is being credited with being the leading country in cyberwarfare and tech in the region, it should also be given credit for being the country that has the most 'hostile architecture/infrastructure' in place for Palestinians. Real development is lost when people are confronted with hostile architecture. A term used for infrastructure that is not friendly for man. Most of this infrastructure is built to prevent certain type of behaviours, (homelessness etc). For countries to achieve real inclusive growth, infrastructure must be people friendly. Amsterdam, is the best example, has made its road, streets according to the pedestrians

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and cyclists. They ^{have} modelled the city to match the human-scale preference of speed. It prioritised people over cars. The city gave the residents a reason to ditch their cars. By doing so, the city's residents were surveyed to be ^{one of} the ~~the~~ happiest in the world. The city's not only grew economically but also socially by cultivating new found values.

Bridging the transit demand has had numerous impacts such as ^{an} increase in women participation in the workforce. In any country, women mostly make up half of the population. Most of these women do not contribute directly to the economy due to familial pressure, societal norms, religion and so on. Where countries are looking to expand on their human development index, the need to bridge this gap is ever more. China lifted close to 800 million from poverty since the 1970's. However, it was done by ^{investing in} both men and women.

The Chinese created opportunities for both genders. In an interview to a BBC reporter, a Chinese woman once remarked that the weight of the country lies on both (men and women) and we ^(women) are more than committed to holding our end up. By investing in women, the country has increased the labour participation rate from 50% to 70% in the early 2000's. Today, more women are attending university in China than ever. China has achieved ^{The country has worked}

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to bridge the gap ~~as it can~~ ^{to the best} of its abilities.

Gandhi once remarked, that

"The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members."

Whether it be the underprivileged, disabled/handicapped or from the fringes of society, the role of the state is to carry all of them forward. Poverty is the mother of all social evils. People are not inherently bad, it is due to the desperation and hunger at home that warrants such acts. In this regard, poverty alleviation and social uplift programs play a great deal in providing cover and a life line to all those in need. To ensure inclusive ^{development} states must make sure to bridge the gap ^{gap between the} poor and rich. Those that manage to do it, end up creating a welfare state. Those that don't end up creating a vicious cycle of skewed development plans, like India. Today, India is considered one of the most unequal countries when it comes to wealth distribution. Times Magazine has dubbed today's Indian elite capture as the "Billionaire Raj".

During this entire journey, towards real developments, a question might arise that why is it even important? What is the point of it all? If communities/countries ^{like} ~~can~~ India can reach the G20, without any inclusive development, why shouldn't others. They have achieved all of the relevant economic figures, why shouldn't others

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follows suit.

It is a well known fact that happier and skilled workers are more productive ones. Similarly, this can be expounded to cover countries. Citizens whose countries have invested in them, tend to be more happy and contribute more to the benefit of society, and the country as a whole. Finland and Denmark have been voted as the best countries to live in and their citizens the happiest across the world, according to the world happiness index. These citizens are also taxed at about 50%, but in turn they get free services such as healthcare, education, social protection and so on. By investing in their citizens, these countries created a welfare state and strengthened the bond between the state and the citizen. These countries record ^{levels} above 90% of productivity. They have emphasized on providing the basic needs for the citizen, so that citizens may work without any stress.

Where skewed or misplaced priorities ~~are~~ take place, often fissures and disparities are created within society. Economic and social cohesion is ^{tied} linked with uplift and development of the area. Development should uplift not only man's physical but also mental surroundings. Where the benefits of the development do not reach the lowest strata; social uprisings can take place

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The best examples of the Arab spring protests which started out as protests against sky rocketing inflation and high costs of living eventually turned into protests against governments themselves. The governments of Tunisia, Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries got shaken from the ground up. It provides an insight into the power of social uprisings. Misplaced and ill-thought development policies create disparities within the community which lead to mass social uprisings.

Moreover, particularly in underdeveloped areas, discontent and resentment against the powers corridors grows. ^{Robert} Frank Moses, the architect of New York's highway and infrastructure was revered as a God. With a flick of his pen, he could divert funds and build highways, bridges and tunnels. His highway projects were built right through communities, some areas became high-end posh neighbourhoods and some backwater crime-ridden ones. It was these neighbourhoods that launched social and political movements to remove him from his office. The discontent and resentment was so much that people did not even show up to his funeral. ~~Indians~~ People from those communities made it their mission to ^{get rid of} rid him (The Power Broker). That is why it is important to develop every part of the

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community. Instances like these are just ^{one} of ~~one~~ many throughout history.

Today, there are 8 billion people on Earth, according to the latest UN estimates. Every one of those people has a right to economic prosperity and making their lives better. Article 23 of the UN Charter of Human Rights enshrines ^{this} States must provide an environment for citizens to exercise those rights. By creating mechanisms conducive to economic uplift, countries can create an ecosystem that promotes cohesion and development on all levels of society. Moreover, the real prospects of development can be achieved when the means are handed to the person. As the popular proverb goes, "Give a man a fish, you have fed him for a day. Teach a man to ~~catch~~ fish and you have fed him for a lifetime." States must work towards ^{investing in people, communities} ~~creating~~ ~~people that are~~ and societies. These groups hold the key to moving the nation forward.

Lastly, any planned development is bound to lead to some economic generation/activity. If that development is done by keeping the community in mind, it will produce more positive growth figures. A highway or road might create jobs or bring people, but if a mass-transit line is built it will create

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even more opportunities sustainably. By investing in people-friendly technologies/projects, the country cannot only uplift people but also economic figures. The Nordic countries spend Billions of their tax revenues on providing subsidies to their citizens. Their citizens then give back in shape of taxes. However, this wasn't all the case for this to be efficient these countries spent decades in perfecting their development priorities. Only recently, can have they started reaping the rewards.

All in all, the priority of countries should be to invest in people and increase their Human Development Index. The race to attain economic figures will itself be won if the priorities of the country are set. This can be done by investing in the citizen's health, education and creating economic opportunities for them. Moreover, augmenting people-friendly architecture in development can also achieve growth that transforms the people's lives. Lastly, all of this is possible if communities are made part of the development process and not sidelined from it.