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Theories of Development and Underdevelopment

Volume One

By

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The dangers threatening this most beautiful planet of ours are

much too serious to be any more denied; even by those people who due to their own material interests remained rejecting all the scientific findings. The strategies which have been developed under the rubric of sustainable development in the last few decades are the combinations of strategies which hoped to be able to face the challenges threatening the earth and the human race. Therefore as against the previous theories of development, sustainable development includes strategies involving almost every where and every one living on this planet. For that sake and with such conviction, the Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development of Razi University (Kermanshah), has since the year 2000 tried to become one of the main centres for teaching and research in the field of sustainable development of Western Iran. In addition to that, this department was able to organize the first national conference on Sustainable Development and Social Justice on 6. 6. 2001. In this conference in which more than one hundred of interested people attended, the guest speaker was Prof. Dr. Mohsen Massarrat, from the University of Osnabrück (Germany). On 2&3 October 2003 the First Conference on Indigenous Knowledge and Oral Traditions of Western Iran was held. In this conference several programs were presented in which a large number of native scholars and artists took part. In addition to that one of the senior traditional architects of Kermanshah was revered and his life time contribution acknowledged. The guest speaker in the conference was Prof. Philip Kreyenbroek from the University of Göttingen (Germany). Short after this conference (1.11. 2003) the Organization for Indigenous Knowledge and Oral Traditions of Western Iran was founded by Abd al-Hamid Papzan and M. Reza (Fariborz) Hamzeh'ee, members of the aforementioned department. This organization has up to now been able to publish several books regarding indigenous knowledge, oral traditions and sustainable development. The same persons have been organizing several other conferences among which: The First National Conference on Medical Herbs on 5-6. 5. 2002, as well as about the importance of cultural heritage of Western Iran in 12-13.5.2005 and finally sustainable development on 20. May 2009. The latest project of the department for agricultural extension and rural development is to publish the first Iranian scientific journal on sustainable development.

From the beginning of the above mentioned activities, the need for a book was felt which could provide general information about the new strategies to achieve sustainability. After all it was felt that there exists no book in Persian which could be used specifically by the students of Economic Development in the first semester as well as for interested people or officials, which can provide them a general introduction about sustainable development. There exist enough books of this type in European languages. But for most Iranians such books in European languages are not of any significant use. For that sake a book can be of much value if it is based on native Iranian researches as well as those already translated into Persian. It is necessary to mention that most of the existing books which are either originally written in Persian or are translated from English are mostly case studies.

These books can naturally be used for advanced studies or higher university courses or for specialisation in certain subjects and theories.

Therefore this book has been prepared so that the interested people can get acquainted with general theories, ideas and strategies of development, underdevelopment and sustainable development.

The present work with the first title: "From Underdevelopment to Sustainable Development" is published in two volumes. As already mentioned it is meant first of all for the students of "development" in order to enter into the field of their study and receive basic information about the existing scientific literature so that to be able to deepen their knowledge.

To find out systematic answers to the questions as to why, how and when is possible to achieve sustainability. The answers to these questions are put into three volumes. In the first volume the main theories of development and underdevelopment have briefly been reviewed in order to show whether they apply to the case of Iran.

After reviewing main classical Marxist and liberal theories, Hamzeh'ee presents his own theory regarding the main factors contributing to social and economic stagnation of Iran. Here it is attempted to show that Marxist theories like "Asiatic Mode of Production or Hydraulic Economy as well as Weberian theory regarding religious ethic do not really apply to Iran. It is enough to remember that a certain Shaibani (d. 804) who was the co-founder of the Hanafite School of Law wrote a book called "On Earning" dealing with problems similar to those discussed by Still¹.

Hamzeh'ee concludes that one the main factors seriously creating social and economic stagnation in Iran was the repeating invasions of the country by the nomadic tribes from Arabia and Central Asia. Each invasion was followed by certain other consequences, each of them causing different types of losses. Each nomadic invasion of Iran went through a closed circle of historical events, ending with a new invasion. He calls these repeated invasions and their consequences, "the vicious circle of historical events".

According to this theory, none of the classical theories of underdevelopment has considered such factors. This can mean that none of the universal theories can be valid as regards to Iranian case. Therefore it is necessary to find out the regional explanations for the subjects of underdevelopment and stagnation. Consequently for that sake it is necessary to find out regional models of development as also has been suggested by the theories of sustainable development.

Naturally before trying to create regional models of development for Iran, the general strategies of sustainable development need to be introduced.

¹-"He, like Richard Steel had to overcome deep-seated religious prejudices against making money, convictions made popular by mendicant ascetics, who might be compared to the begging fairs and monks, against whom Steel wrote so eloquently." S. D. Goitein, *The Rise of the Near-Eastern Bourgeoisie in Early Islamic Times*, in: *Journal of World History*, Vol. III, 1957, pp. 580-581.

The second volume of the book has been devoted to introduce international strategies of sustainable development. Some summarizing conclusions have been made in three parts: First of all it has been attempted to bring into attention some of the important damages to the world by the so called modernity. This was done in order to make it clear how important it is to change the courses of modernization and especially free economy towards sustainable development. After that in a short chapter it has been argued that in order to achieve a genuine sustainable development, as economic and political system is needed which is able to make the maximum participation of people in each society possible. Moreover a sustainable development needs to take place not from above, but rather only from below. In addition to that, in the last chapter it is argued that a long term sustainable development needs changes in the inner world of the people all over the world. That could be done by changes in the primordial mythology in which war is glorified.

The modern man needs a new myth. His hero is not one like Rambo, rather a wise man or woman who is NOT admired because he can kill well. Moreover referring to Emanuel Kant's idea about eternal Peace or "Ewige Frieden", it is emphasized that for the present underdeveloped societies, the road to general participation of people is the road towards sustainable development. Therefore it is emphasized that such societies need to create a democratic federal political and economic system which is necessary not only to reach eternal peace as suggested by Kant, but also to achieve a sustainable development.

At the same time these two volumes attempt to prepare the readers for a third volume, which would introduce thesis about the strategies and methods to move in to sustainable development, directly from the level of underdevelopment.

In the third volume of this work, the case of Iran is taken into consideration. For that sake, with the help of all that which are included in the first two volumes it is tried to create a native model of sustainable development. It tries to find out valid strategies on the basis of regional and local capacities as all the existing obstacles which stand on the way of development.

The whole work in this book is based on the assumption that not only a direct move from underdevelopment to sustainable development is possible for Iran, but even it is a rare opportunity for this country even as compared to the Western World. It is argued that Iran has the capacity to reach sustainable development even faster than the present industrialized countries.

Finally in the first part of the second volume, it has been attempted to show to the Iranian readers, that in the ancient Mazdyanan philosophy -for the first time in the world- a systematic ideology was created which aimed at protection of natural elements.

With the emergence of the Green Movements in Europe, many felt the need for an ideological myth in order to support the newly emerging awareness about the ecological problems. The traditional Native American views regarding the nature had already become very popular among people. Many came to learn respecting

the way the simple structured societies had been treating the nature for several millennia. But perhaps such pantheistic admiration of natural phenomena lacked a philosophical sophistication to support the ideas existing in the mind of modern man. It is also possible that still several European thinkers can not free themselves from the idea of connecting themselves to Greek “super” civilisation. It is not important to find out whether such tendencies have to do with the old “Eurocentrism” or is due to lack of knowledge about other world civilizations. At any case some have taken resort to their supposed ancient roots and created a hypothesis called “Gaia”.

Gaia Hypothesis goes back to the Greek idea of the living planet. This idea was first suggested in 1965 by an English man called James Lovelock. He was working in the American Space Agency in his time. But this man is not supposed to have been the first European to speak about our living planet. Similar idea had been suggested by a Scottish geologist called James Hutton.

It is not only these two men who were not familiar with an advanced system of philosophy existing in ancient Iran. Apparently the merit of discovering this philosophy is given to the contemporary French philosopher Henry Corbon. Corbon had concentrated his writings on the survival of ancient Iranian philosophy in the works of Suhravardi, a tenth century Iranian philosopher. But despite the works of these philosophers the Mazdyana system of thought is in need of detail investigation and further studies.

In the beginning of the second volume, Mamzeh’ee has tried to present an unknown aspect of this philosophy as regard to role of human being within the Great Nature.

In Mazdyasna the earth like other planets, is not only a living being, but also is regarded to be a living angel. The name of our beautiful planet is "Armaiti" in Avestic or "Spandarmaz" in Pahlavi. This angel is the protector of the earth and at the same time is supposed to be the earth herself. The earth is a female angel who is functioning against a demon, "Taromayti", who is determined to destroy the earth.

In this book the aforementioned philosophy has been analysed also in respect to principles of Choice and Determinism. It shows how in this philosophy human beings have been conceived as extremely important factors as either destroyers or protectors of nature. This philosophy justifies an active engagement of every one person to protect all natural phenomena. The difference between this philosophy and the related Indian concept is that in the former case, human beings are supposed to have the choice to decide between good and evil. Therefore in this respect this could be considered as an ancient version of “existentialist” philosophy. Here the human beings are not only regarded as having choice to decide, rather they have duty to protect the “living angels of the nature”.

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