

Development and Change in Odisha: Some Issues

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Odisha has witnessed rapid development and changes in its socio-economic, political and cultural spheres since last one decade. The economic growth rate is consistent and remains above the national average. Poverty has reduced from 57.2 % in 2004-2005 to 37 % in 2009-10. The State aims to achieve 9% growth during the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-2017) and the budgetary allocation for the 12th plan is over 1.24 lakh crore. In this backdrop, it is pertinent to emphasize on some of the pressing issues while achieving economic growth. This paper highlights some of these issues for the interest of the public. Since beginning of the new millennium, the development interventions are based on some targets with reforms packages. One such target is popularly known as Millennium Development Goals (MDG) adopted by the United Nations for nation states of the globe to follow up and integrate them into national and regional plans and tryst to achieve those goals in time-bound manner. Only two years are left for UNMDG to complete its 15 year period, in 2015. What are the real achievements during these fifteen years ? This requires a serious introspection by those who are seriously concerned with development and change, basic human rights, entitlements to the poor and welfare of people in India and elsewhere. This paper highlights some of the issues for the

interest of the general people of Odisha to ponder over.

Sanitation and Health:

India spends 6 % of its GDP annually to meet the health burdens due to lack of basic sanitation and hygiene to its population (UNICEF, WHO et al.). As per the census data, in 2001, total census households were 98.73 lakh in Odisha. This has increased to 127.59 lakh in 2011. In 2001, total population of the state was 3.68 crore and this has increased to 4.19 crore in 2011. In the fields of the basic sanitation, toilet coverage is one of the minimum parameters set out by the government to be achieved 100% by 2015. But the toilet coverage in our households is really very pathetic one if one studies the trends since 2001 census.

Currently little less than one crore households (98.55 lakhs) have not covered with toilets. Over 80% of households those are covered with toilets are not using them. This is a major challenge for Odisha to achieve sustainable sanitation. In 2001, households not covered with toilets were 85.1 % (83.33 lakh HH). In census 2011, households in the State not having toilets, is 77.6 % (98.55 lakh HH). Though the households not having toilets in percentile terms shown as decreased from 85.1 % to 77.6 %, in

census 2011, in absolute numbers, this has increased from 83.33 lakhs HH to 98.55 lakhs, during 2001 to 2011 period. Over 28 lakh HH got added to total households in the State during the period from 2001 to 2011 as new households. Correspondingly, over 15 lakh households not having toilets also got added, during this period.

If one compares the growth rate of the toilets in households in Odisha, it is yet very dismal. In percentile terms, households not having toilet have decreased to 77.6 % in 2011 which indicated the rate of increase in toilet is only 7.5 % over 10 years time. This further indicates the annual growth rate of toilets in the State limited to 0.75 % only. If business as usual continues, then one can better imagine when can we meet the Millenium Development Goals in Odisha and ensure basic sanitation rights to all. Per year, based on the census figures, we find some 1,40,000 odd toilets gets constructed in the state for individual households. This means Odisha has to wait till 2080 to achieve the goals of basic sanitation rights to all. Not in 2015 as originally the goal set out by the UNMDG-2015 in the year 2000. This is despite of the fact that, India is having the world's largest toilet movement under the banner of Nirmal Bharat Aaviyan (NBA) / TSC on a subsidized mode. The State Government has undertaken a number of innovative steps like SANJOG, NGP and others to scale up the toilet coverage matching to the UNMDG year. But demand for the toilet – the most important life saving and economic household assets for the families, is not increasing. A crores of rupees earmarked by the Government as subsidies on this head as poor men's entitlements remain unreachable to common people. Now time has come to understand a basic fact that subsidies can not generate demands for toilet unless toilet solutions are innovated and marketed. While providing toilet solutions to

people as sanitation measures is important, the government and civil society and research institutes now need to think seriously on solutions for toilets from technical, economic, behavioral and cultural perspectives of people which can make toilets to effectively function and generate demands and in turn will definitely ensure sustainable sanitation in Odisha.

Saving Water from Waste is a Challenge:

Our primary health care continues to be a major challenges before the state government. While life style diseases have created havocs, yet new challenges are being increasingly felt by the people due to the effects of climate changes. Our water sources - the rivers, surface and ground water are increasingly getting depleted and polluted. The aquifers are getting dried up. The very occurrence of waterborne and vector borne diseases is more frequent than earlier. This has become universal in the state, not limited to few pockets of state as before. While our health care infrastructures are grossly inadequate in terms health care centers to cater to the needs of the people in urban and rural areas, for men and women and children, availability of the minimum doctors in hospitals.

Water security and food security is a bigger challenges before the government and civil society to deal with in coming years. Air pollution has serious effects on our lives. As all of us know, cleanliness is linked to sustainable waste management that envisages reduction of waste, recycle and reuse of waste. It is linked to toilet coverage by all. It is linked to environmental cleanness. It is about giving technical, financial and behavioral solutions to people. It is about protecting our natural resources from pollution with stringent laws and public actions. It requires massive sensitization of general public on how waste become hazardous and becomes

disastrous in our daily life if not timely treated. It is a fact that Odisha has 11 river basins and they are polluted by industries and others. Basins need to be protected. The State has 103 ULBs which pollute more than 80 major rivers and rivulets that flow nearby generating wastes and not treating them properly. Though it is stated by the Central Ground Water Board Authority (CGWB) that the State possesses 11 % of country's and only 18 % of this been utilized till date, the very methods of the ground water assessment is questioned by experts. On the top of this, increasing ground water pollution due to faster depletion is worrisome phenomena in the State today. Water is a state subject and Odisha State Pollution Control Board is to regulate the water conditions. But remain ineffective. Water consuming companies never felt the very concept of water positive and water neutrality when they use the water. Large number of studies has found how the untreated solid waste has become more dangerous to both surface and ground water pollution.

The Government both at center and at state level has shown greater concerns and experts are seriously engaged in debates over ideas on how to protect water form pollutants and wastes of all types. But all of them never translated into action as it lacks people's participation. To remain clean is a question of personal habit and that habits to form a culture and that culture should get transferred inter generationally at family and community level. Then only government efforts and policies can be implemented. Unfortunately in waste management the government has centralized the actions within its own structural matrix. There is no space for the public to participate except being a victim of the waste. Per capita waste is increasing in the state both in urban and rural areas and the state has not set up any treatment plants for the domestic solid waste

that gets generated by the people. However waste treatment is one of the enterprising fields can generate employment for the people.

One of the major problems that cleanness drives and waste management not taking place in Odisha is probably that most of the critical stakeholders need to understand that if we do not generate cleanness and manage the waste properly now, the climate change and spell of extreme weathers will become fatal to our daily lives and to question our very survival on this earth. We need to understand how our rivers are polluted, dried and dead due to massive industrial and urban waste that we generate. We need understand how our ground water is increasingly diminishing and polluting due to man made wastes in Odisha. We need to understand how our air is polluted and become fatal to our breathing and health. We need to understand the key factors of soils and land degradation and faster desertification that have questioned our very food and livelihood security. Cleanness has many connotations and need to be understood and internalized by the common people so that we can maintain the principle of "reduce, recycle and reuse" as part of the waste management.

Environment and Poverty:

To reduce poverty is one of the vital sustainable goals for the governments to achieve. Currently, the debate over poverty is now centered on its methodology to measure poverty properly and estimate and identify the real poor households in order to target them in government schemes. The most unfortunate part in this process is that in these two areas of poverty debate it is now looking like a never ending process due to political and economic condition so of the country today. On the other hand conception of poverty has got expanded from mere measurement of household income level to

meet two square meals a day to the study of households' consumption pattern and consumer choices and now moved to find out how people are lacked with their fundamental rights and of basic minimum needs for their survival. Poverty debate is now moved from hunger to deprivation areas. This is for the reason that inclusive growth and development is adopted by the Government so that everybody can get access to market and take part on the government programmes and be inclusive and developed. But new forms of exclusion have emerged in the processes. These exclusion needs to be stopped.

Poverty is squarely linked to environment degradation. The schemes adopted by the Government are proved both a hope and distress. In MGNREGS while water bodies are created and protected and environment concerns are addressed to some extent, it has brought new challenges for agriculture sectors and cottage industries and small enterprises due to rise of labour price and idle of human power. Sustainable agriculture now becomes a challenge.

Environment degradation has gone to a pick in the State and debate still continues whether we should go for industry or sustain our environment. People's protests are increasing in the state. Yet we do not have any clear cut direction to where to go and what to do. State's biodiversity lose is rampant which has brought newer challenges on livelihood system of people. Coastal livelihood and biodiversity and climate change are serious issues required to be understood and vital and rare species on earth like mangroves needs to be preserved. Agriculture sector still carries the burden of poverty as more than 70 % are still depending upon agriculture for survival and growth. Soil erosion, land degradation, desertification, soils acidity are issues besides majority of farming community are landless farmers, use of pesticides and fertilizers are

increasing day by day in spite of we propagate organic framing.

High Cost and Low Quality of Education:

In basic education, issues that were in years earlier are still continuing today. While schools and school buildings are increased in numbers, nutritional supports through the school channels are linked to children, gross enrollment has increased and drop-outs rate have decreased, yet accesses to education remains a biggest challenge due to new conditions are posed before the public. Education planners usually set norms of setting up schools to cater the needs of education. Now a new trend has emerged where more and more private schools in the name of quality of education are hugely set up in rural and urban areas. Government schools are suffering due to want of good quality teachers to teach in the schools. At one end the government school teachers are physically and mentally spend time in streets for getting their dues and payments. On the other hands the parents and guardians are protesting fee hikes by the private schools. Common to both the private and government schools a new teaching structures have permanently placed between the students and schools- the private tuition. This is the additional cost been met by the parents. Yet quality of education is not improving. Engineering colleges are being closed due to lack of students. Majority of the engineering and management colleges fails to fill up 50% of their seats. This year some 50000 seats are not filled up by the colleges. Similarly 50-60 % of the management and engineering passed out students who have joined industries are failed to perform and remain delinked to the requirements of the industries. Though the skill development programmes are devised and imparted to youths and a good programmes for the state, this should be very purposive and productive. External environment for the youths

and children of Odisha is hostile and conflict ridden and remain very insecure for them. Gender disparity in education is still persists. Youths should be oriented with new areas of professionalism and enterprises. For example, in 2011 India has received 6.29 million foreign tourists compared to USA 62.3 million and France 79.5 million. In Odisha it is limited to less than even 20000 despite of the state endowed with ecological and cultural and geographical diversities which is perfectly poised for travel industries and hospitality. Secondly, if one analyses experts in Odisha started declining which will have a negative impact of state GDP. This needs to be revived besides making Odisha self sufficient in many areas such as fishery, in agricultural and horticultural fields. Shortage of agricultural labours in Odisha is a cause of concern and can our youths be able to change this situation now. If not, the state will face huge economic problems in coming years.

Governance Deficit:

We have serious issues of governance deficit while instruments like PIL, RTI, and E-governance etc have empowered general citizens to ask for governmental accountability. Use of technology to deliver and monitor the public services at all levels is initiated. Identification of genuine poor, even after the Adhar Cards and NPR, still not been possible for which pilferages and diversion of entitlements take place in large scale. Most of our public policies are facing problems of interpretations by the executives those who implement them. The conceptual meaning and operational meaning of a public policy becoming different and separate for which desired results are failed to arrive in society. While last decades target led interventions has brought us to point we have now different types of statistics yet no one is correct in public perception and all are questionable. Inequality in wealth and inequality in opportunity are increasing at a time

when we are advocating incisive growth and society. Time has come we need to understand structural issues of poverty and work on them to solve with innovative approaches.

Defamed Civil Society Groups:

In 1980s, 1990s and early of 21st century, civil society groups were in fore front of the human development movement. Many progressive policies that the government has devised after 1990s are mainly due to the influence of the NGOs and civil society activists. But towards mid 1990s when the new economic policies are adopted and open market economy came to India, new conditions were set before the NGOs and civil society groups to undertake their activities where NGOs failed to give pace to the changing times and requirements. Many forms of civil society members surfaced under the guise of NGOs and claimed partnership in sustainable development before the government. In the process, NGOs failed to participate in PPP mode projects, tendering and consultancy areas due to lack of string institutional research base. More and more NGOs are blacklisted by the government and NGO movement has lost its ground completely. Now time has come where NGO's credibility has to be renewed and workable partnership with government and market forces need to be devised in the state.

Affordable Housing and Urban Poverty:

Urbanization has been proved to be a growth engine for any country or State. China's economic success is attributed to its high urbanization. In India states having more urban population are reporting less poverty compared to states having list urbanization. Rapid urbanization is a challenge for Odisha yet this is an opportunity to its development. Odisha is the least urbanized State in the country. Only 16.95 % of its population is the urban population

compared to national average of 31 % as per the 2011 Census. One of the bigger challenges is the urbanization and urban poverty in Odisha growing faster. Unplanned urbanization in the state is a serious concern, although recently government is very proactive for the planned urbanization. To provide the basic services like water and sanitation and dwelling units and affordable housing to urban poor is yet a biggest challenge. Only 15 Urban Local Bodies (ULB) are reporting slums in Odisha out of 103 ULBs and showing 30 % of Odisha's urban people are in slums. The cities and towns do not report slums in successive population censuses, are actually slum like towns and cities in comparison with national standards. By 2030 when over 40 % population will be residing in urban areas as projected by the government, the efficiency of our city managers and urban planners are very critical to meet the situation then. Government need to be prepared now to meet the urban requirements. Government's efforts to ensure affordable dwellings through property rights to slums dwellers, BSUP (JNNURM), IHSDP, Low cost

housing and EWS are laudable but it requires capacity of ULBs to implement. But ULBs in Odisha are grossly lacking their capacity to understand minimum reforms agenda and basics of city and urban management.

Conclusion:

History of state system has established a fact that it gives solution to people in pursuit of their happiness. But now state is more and more becoming a problem for people than solutions for the pursuit of happiness of few. Our democratic culture and norms are being threatened in multiparty political system. Both Opposition and Treasury Bench have patronized the state apparatus and remain far away from the real issues that people are facing. This is a biggest challenge for the state like Odisha.

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