

RE-EXAMINING THE IDEA OF INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF PINDARI VALLEY IN UTTARAKHAND

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the development perspectives of the communities residing in hilly regions of India by taking Pindari Valley as the sample space, using both qualitative and quantitative approach. It further aims to study the nature and evolution of the relationship of the communities with natural resources. The paper concludes by comparing the idea of development of natural resources formulated by the key stakeholders connected to those resources with the development initiatives that have taken place in the region. The results show that there is a growing disconnect between the people in Pindari Valley and their traditional occupations in agriculture, as well as less sustainable usage of forest resources.

Keywords: Inclusion, Natural Resource, Development Perspective, Community

1. Background of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the ideas of development of the residents of Pindari Valley in Kapkot Block of Bageshwar district in Uttarakhand so as to understand the inclusivity of natural resource management in the region and changes in the relationship of the people with the forest and other natural resources as a result of changing perspectives on development over the years. The International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) has emphasised the phrases like

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“green economy” and “inclusive and sustainable development” which are shaping the discourse on the development post COP 17 (Seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties) in 2011 in Durban and in the UN Convention on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in 1992 at Rio de Janeiro. Further, the World Bank (2012) in its report “Inclusive Green Growth: The Pathway to Sustainable Development” highlighted the fact that the growth achieved during the last past 250 years has been at the cost of environmental damage and this damage has now reached a point where it intimidates both development prospects and the progress achieved in society.

Over the years it has been observed in India too, as elsewhere, that there has been a noticeable shift in the focus of economic policy. The nature of Indian policy varied from community development to rapid industrialization during 1950s and 1960s. Further, it focussed on social development and then economic liberalization in the 1990s when the nature of shift was economic growth with social growth. This shift is further revealed in the change in Planning Commission’s perspective from “High Growth” in its 10th Five Year Plan to “Inclusive and Sustainable Development” in its 11th and 12th Five Year Plans. The shift represents a move away from the so-called “Trickle-down economics”, a concept that became popular in countries such as the United States (US) in the 1980s, wherein it was believed that as long as the economy was growing, the benefits would trickle down to the entire system. However, according to a report titled, “The Causes and Consequences of Income Inequality: A Global Perspective” published by the International Monetary Fund in 2015, it is understood that the benefits do not eventually trickle down. A one per cent increase in the income share of the top quintile (20 per cent) results in a 0.08 per cent decrease in GDP growth. Whereas, a one per cent increase in the income share of the bottom quintile results in a 0.38 per cent increase in GDP growth.

Since 1952, when the Government of India launched the Community Development Programme (CDP), its commitment to development has been clear. In 1957, the Government set up a committee under the Chairmanship of Balwant Rai Mehta to review the programme. The committee suggested that the CDP had failed because of low community participation. A homogeneous approach towards communities cannot be applied to the context of communities residing in India which are diverse in nature belonging to different religions, castes, and geographical regions.

World Bank (2014) in its report titled, “India: Green Growth—Overcoming Environment Challenges to Promote Development” stated that India has witnessed a strong growth that resulted in the poverty reduction of millions. But the reality tells a different story of the development which is marred by the degradation in environment resulting in a growing scarcity of natural resources.

Any developmental approach that does not take into account these realities will not have a significant impact on development. Inclusive growth does not merely mean including various neglected sections of the society in developmental activities but also focusing on making this development participatory by incorporating the perspectives and ideas of development of the people residing in the neglected areas.

2. Urgent Need: Participatory Development

Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen, in *India: Development and Participation* (2002), call for the evaluation of development by the expansion of substantive human freedom and not just by economic growth, technical progress, or social modernisation. But this approach requires new facts and fresh evidence. The word “social” in the expression “social opportunity” is a useful reminder not to view individuals and their opportunities in isolated terms. In arguing for a people-centred view of economic development that focuses on human agency and social opportunities, we are not just arguing for giving importance to so-called “human capital”.

New facts and fresh evidence that is required to be collected are regarding inequality and participation. Economics has tools to map inequality of ‘income’. But how the inequality of opportunity affects social opportunities is also critical to economic development. If the opportunity and participation is not generated for the literate and healthy population, then economic development will be sluggish. Participation is intrinsically connected with demands for equality. The future course of development will depend to a great deal on the extent of freedom and expansion of human capability. In recognition of this, special attention will be paid in this paper to freedom, capability expansion, inequality, social opportunity, participation, safety and security, democracy, self-governance, distribution, and deprivation.

In the works of Amartya Sen titled, *Collective Choice and Social Welfare* (2017), social choice and democratic commitment have been emphasized towards achieving development. Further, it is illustrated in the book that even though democracy has a long history in various forms, the emergence of modern democratic systems relates closely to the ideas and events that surrounded the European Enlightenment. The development of democratic social systems drew on earlier models from around the world, but it received a definitive delineation and emphatic support in Europe, in the second half of the eighteenth century, with the French Revolution and with the declaration of independence of Britain’s American colonies. According to modern social choice theory, a commitment to democratic systems includes the incorporation of individual freedoms into social programmes and structures. Persistent disagreement between members of a society must be represented in social agreements. In fact, even issues of inequality and poverty can be, to a considerable extent, addressed through democratic social choice

mechanisms (voting), by asking people to judge what “should” happen, rather than focusing merely on which alternative would best serve their own interests. The role of values which go beyond self-interest is critically important.

However, the development agenda not only relates to the participation of human agency but also includes the nature. The expansion of human freedom cannot be realised through the over-extraction of nature. Here, human participation plays a more crucial role to conserve the nature. P.S. Gopinathan Nair in, *Earth in Peril* (2008), quotes from the *Ishavasyopanishad* which says: “He who selfishly exploits natural resources to cater to his insatiable greed is actually a thief; because wasteful expenditure of finite resources effectively means robbing others of their legitimate share.” Further, he advocates that development should not result in destruction or degradation of the environment. Natural resources should not be exploited beyond their regenerative capacity. Underlying these restrictions is a concern for the future generations of mankind. Since there are different yardsticks of development, once the concept of sustainability is introduced, it becomes necessary to examine the varying perceptions of different viewpoints in order to arrive at a unified, all-encompassing framework for it. Following Nair (2008) it can be concluded that for development to be sustainable, the humankind should protect the resources for the future as well as make a balance of equal distribution of resources between present and future generations.

In the ecological movements such as Chipko Movement in Uttarakhand in the 1970s and the activism in Sarawak, Malaysia in the 1980s, natural resource is at the centre of conflict which is forest related—forest degradation through commercial logging or so-called modernisation through forest clearance for road building/large forest settlement on forest land. People have always protested against this type of state action, since their critical life support issues are involved in these so-called developmental activities.

From the discussion so far, it may be concluded that people do not reject “development” per se, but want a different kind of development—one that is *with* the people and not *for* the people. People’s genuine participation in collective decision-making power should be ensured at all stages: selection, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes, projects and schemes so that any development activity is based on the felt needs of the local people and is not dictated from outside the community.

Paulo Freire, in his masterpiece, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (2013), emphasises that to be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world. Human relationships with the world are plural in nature. When facing the different challenges of the environments, people are not limited to a single reaction pattern. They organise themselves, choose the best response, test themselves, act,

and change the very act of responding. They do all this consciously, as one uses a tool to deal with a problem. People relate to their world in a critical way. They apprehend the objective data of their reality through reflection, and not by reflex, as animals do.

3. Geographical Challenges for Development: A Case of Hills of Uttarakhand

As mentioned earlier, development will reach its full potential only when the benefits of economic growth are shared amongst all sections of the population and geographical regions of the country. This change in approach especially concerns the hilly regions of the country, as for long their development has lagged behind that of the plains due to the unique geographical conditions of the region. One such hilly state is Uttarakhand which is bounded by Nepal in the east, the Tibet Autonomous Region of China in the north, Himachal Pradesh in the west and Uttar Pradesh in the south. The state covers a geographical area of about 53,483 square kilometers. According to the 2011 Census, it has a population of 10,086,292. The state was carved out of Uttar Pradesh and given an independent status as the tenth Himalayan state and the 27th state of the Indian Union on 9th November, 2000. The rationale behind its creation was to accelerate the pace of the socio-economic growth of the people of Garhwal and Kumaon. The state has been divided into 13 districts, which are further divided into 95 developmental blocks with the aim at achieving development through effective administration.

Uttarakhand is primarily a rural state with 16,826 rural settlements, of which 81 per cent have a population of less than 500. Villages with population of more than 2,000 are only 2.7 per cent of the total settlements. With such a high percentage of small and scattered hamlets, mainly in the tough geographic conditions, the distribution of development becomes a challenge in the state of Uttarakhand. More than three-fourths (78 per cent) of the state's total population is dependent on agriculture for income generation. The scope of agriculture is not input-output based, as it is on the plains, due to various physical, geographical, and environmental constraints that are present in the hilly regions. This results in the population either surviving on sustenance agriculture or migrating to the plains for alternative employment opportunities.

Bageshwar is one of the 13 districts of Uttarakhand, which was carved out of the district of Almora in 1997 and lies in the northern part of the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand. The district is spread over an area of 1,687.8 square kilometres, accounting for 3.3 per cent of the state's total area. The Himalayas surround it from the north, the district of Chamoli is in the west, the district of Pithoragarh in the east and the district of Almora in the south. According to Census 2001, the population of the district was 2,49,462, accounting for 2.94 per cent of the total population of the state.

The district has 96.84 per cent of rural population and the remaining 3.16 per cent is urban population. Bageshwar is the district's only town which is divided into clusters and Pindari Valley is one such cluster that is located in the bed of the Himalayas surrounded by the Pindari, Kafni and Sunderdhunga glaciers. The pace of development has been slow in this valley due to its extreme geographical and environmental conditions. The region is inaccessible for about three months in the year due to road blockages caused by heavy rainfall, snowfall, and landslides. Tourism contributes a larger proportion of their earning a livelihood. Farming is practised on different land sizes across the valley. There are some villages in the valley which are able to cultivate everything from edible oil (mustard oil) to wheat, while there are some which have to buy all eatables from the shop. This variation is due to the increase of tourism in some villages, and better access of other villages to sunlight, favourable altitude for cropping and proximity to forest.

The valley is also home to several internationally renowned medicinal plants. The agricultural produce of the valley which includes *rajma*, potato, milk (for making ghee), and honey are known to be organic and have exceptional medicinal value. The water in the valley is rich in minerals and is known as being of highest quality in the state of Uttarakhand. Motorable road reaches till Kharkiya (since 1999) on the one end towards Sunderdhunga Glacier and Badiyakot (since 2016) on the other end. The last village from Kharkiya towards Sunderdhunga Glacier is Jatoli, which is located at a distance of 13 kilometres from the road head, while the last village from Badiyakot is Kunwari, which is located at a distance of 12 kilometres from the road head. All the villages after Kharkiya and Badiyakot are accessible only by foot. Electricity and network facilities vary according to weather conditions. For a region lacking various conventional amenities often synonymous with development, it is of utmost importance to understand the various viewpoints expressed by the people of the region regarding the development of the region so as to incorporate those points into the planning and execution of the developmental activities in the region.

4. Methodology

For understanding the idea of development that is limited to the provision of goods and services only and to understand the current status of their relationship with forest as well its changing nature, a questionnaire was collected from a cluster sample of 56 habitants of the Pindari Valley. Two clusters namely Badiyakot and Khati were formed on the basis of age groups wherein population below the age of 25 years formed one group and population above the age of 25 years formed another.

Purposive sampling was done within these clusters thereafter to ensure that population comprising of all sexes and social strata is included. 19 samples from Badiyakot and 37 from Khati were interviewed. Secondary data were

also used to validate the findings and analysis of the primary data collected. The type of data was related to land usage and farming etc. This section also represented the findings of relationship between the human beings and nature. The data were collected from the websites of statistical department of Government of Uttarakhand (GoU).

Primary data were collected over a period of one year from five Gram Sabhas, namely, Badiyakot (Dannupatti), Badiyakot (Kallupatti), Khati, Kilpara, and Teekh. These Gram Sabhas were chosen via purposive sampling as they cover both extents of the valley and also are inclusive of villages in the central region of the valley. This methodology attempts to give an overall perspective of the valley, leaving no region unrepresented.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was also used to know peoples' perspectives about their villages and the development agenda. Robert Chambers (1994) describes PRA as a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to express, enhance, share and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act. It includes the tools namely Social Mapping, Transact Walk and Venn diagram. Social Mapping is drawn by the local people not on actual scale but what they think relevant for them. Thus, it reflects their perceptions of the social dimensions with their collective authenticity. A transact walk is a cross-sectional view of the different agro-ecological zones. It provides a comparative assessment of the zones of different parameters. Timeline was used to capture the chronology of village events as per the local people's memory. Then, the villagers analysed the events. Venn diagram, a tool of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) enables the community to know the accessibility and importance of the institutions. This tool also makes the community to come into action to fulfil the gap. And the gap can be fulfilled by the collective action of the individuals through the formation of their own institutions. A focus group discussion (FGD) is a good way to gather people from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a specific topic of interest. FGDs are also used to explore the outcomes of survey findings.

5. Community Advocacy for Development

Past experience and ground reality shows that development is considered a local subject matter and therefore should be analysed keeping in view the local perspective. As far as the development of mountain region is concerned, it is different from the development of other parts of the earth. In this section we re-examine/analyze three aspects of the development: *Jal* (Water), *Jangal* (Forest) and *Zameen* (Land), which describes how the community has sustainable relationship with the natural resource (including these three aspects).

Table 1: Main Factors in Development of Pindari Valley

Sl. No.	Development Factors	No. of Responses	Responses (%)
A	Road	26	39
B	Electricity and telecommunication	7	10
C	Educational and vocational institutes	13	19
D	Increment in forest cover and agriculture	5	7
E	Maximum opportunity in employment	8	12
F	Best health services	8	12

Source: tabulated by the author

As is evident from Table 1, majority of respondents (39 per cent) are in favour of building roads for development of the Pindari Valley. It was found during the Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) that majority of the villages are not yet connected to the main road that connects block/market where they can avail basic amenities. Road construction is the most urgent need in the area. But construction of road causes the drying of groundwater, deforestation and landslides. Here, the community appears to favour a course of action that is in conflict with the environment, which is not a sustainable development.

Lowest number of the community (only 7 per cent) responded that increment in forest cover and agriculture would be the main factor leading to development of the valley. This is an alarming situation where the community itself is keeping away from the preservation of natural resources and making it vulnerable to unchecked development. In earlier times, the local community used to depend on natural resources and therefore protected the forest and water.

Earlier, agriculture used to be the main occupation of the agrarian community and the backbone of the economy of Pindari Valley. But the responses of the local people indicate that the community has started to leave their traditional agrarian practices. During FGDs the elders in the community lamented that they were the last generation of farmers.

Influx of tourists has stimulated the international demand for products such as hemp and medicinal plants found in the valley. The more commercially-oriented cultivation of such cash crops is disrupting the local traditional farming which was more connected to their day-to-day life.

The local people have to cover 3 kilometres to fetch fuel-wood and fodder. Generally, only women go to collect fuel-wood and fodder and the weight of these materials varies from 20 kilograms to 50 kilogram. This keeps women busy from morning to evening. Sheep owners take sheep outside the village for open grazing. Goats are fed on wild mosses. This constant and uncontrolled pressure on forest is alarming as the forest cover is depleting every year.

Forests in this region are the sources of livelihood for rural residents, which provide resources such as fodder, fuel-wood, green manure and construction timber. These resources are critical to the household economy, in the absence of which, household’s effective incomes would decline substantially. In such a situation, determining how forests can be collectively and appropriately managed is vital.

It was found during the interaction with the community that at the village level there are multiple sources of livelihood such as selling of wood, honey selling etc. A major source of income is from selling of *Ringal* (a form of bamboo), and then wood, potato/rajma, honey and milk/ghee (Table 2).

Table 2: Income from different Livelihood Sources

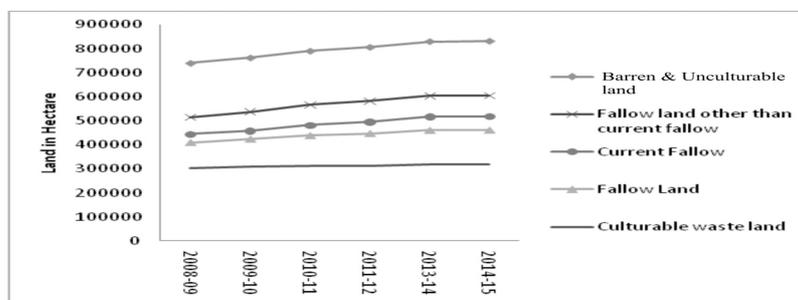
Sl. No.	Livelihood Source	No. of Responses
1	Wood @ Rs.100/day	32
2	Honey @ Rs.600/day	32
3	Potato/Rajma @ Rs.50/day	32
4	Ringal @ Rs.600/day	39
5	Milk/Ghee @ Rs.600/day	34

Source: tabulated by author

The above analysis is an eye opener for the community as well as for policy makers and local government. An institutional efficiency discussion using Venn diagram was held with individuals and groups. It was found that the development approach of the government is region specific and lacking in planning. The staff/officers of the related departments seldom visit the village. The distance from the block headquarters is about 50 km and department officials are very reluctant to visit the remote areas, as there is a high potential for landslides and inclement weather.

The micro level primary data are supported by macro level secondary data collected from the government data system. In this section, an analysis of secondary data is done to show the macro picture at state level.

Figure 1: Land Usage (in Hectares)

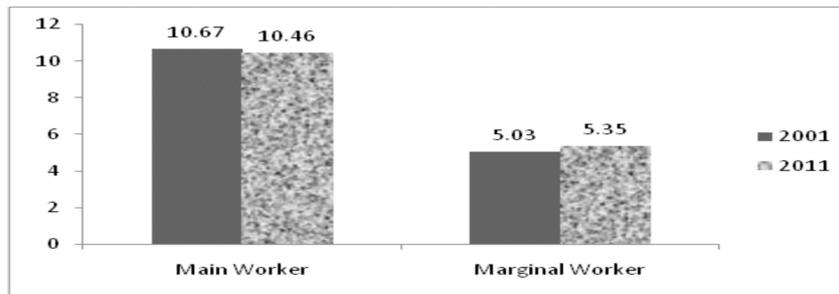


Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Uttarakhand, 2015

It is evident from Figure 1 that the fallow, culturable waste land and barren land are increasing every year. As discussed in the primary data analysis, people are disassociating themselves from agriculture leaving the land fallow and thus the land eventually becomes barren. According to the 2011 Census, around 5 per cent of Indian villages are not populated. The people are leaving agriculture and moving to the other sectors, which often entail outward migration.

It can be observed from Figure 2 that the number of main worker cultivators is showing a declining trend from 2001 to 2011, which is a major threat to agriculture and it indicates that people are disassociating themselves from the natural resources. The number of marginal workers has increased from 2001 to 2011, which shows that agriculture is not a profitable occupation and it is rather becoming a profession for the marginalized.

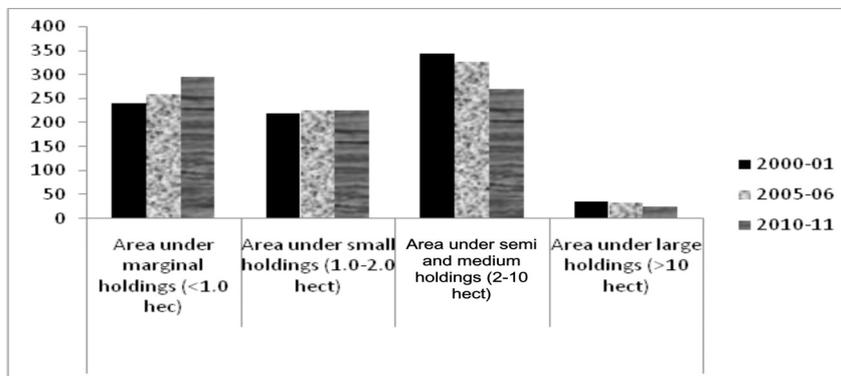
Figure 2: Number of Worker Cultivators



Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Uttarakhand, 2015

Figure 3 supports the proposition set by Figure 2 that the number of marginal farmers is increasing and that of main workers is declining. The increasing marginality and decline in main worker cultivators indicates the growing disassociation of human beings from nature and its resources, both in Pindari Valley and across Uttarakhand state.

Figure 3: Area under Agriculture Operational Holdings



Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Uttarakhand, 2015

6. Growing Disconnect from Environmentally Sustainable Livelihoods

Majority of the community members identified the provision of a motorable road as their primary need, not realising the fact that road building leads to widespread deforestation. Forest is ignored both by the community as well as by the Government and as a result the use of forest is decreasing which will ultimately affect the village economy, forcing it to be more market oriented. Agricultural practice is also decreasing since community members are not able to generate enough returns from agriculture as compared the time that they have invested in it. They believe that there has not been any progress in agriculture in the recent years which resulted in the increase of fallow land over the years. Agricultural practice in the hills is typically manual in nature. With people having access to other kinds of jobs, the opportunity cost of agriculture increases, not only because it is less remunerative but also because alternative professions that can be accessed via migration have a higher monetary returns. There is a loss of faith in agriculture and the mindset of the community is witnessing a change from being self-sufficient to preferring having higher monetary returns.

The average distance travelled for fetching firewood and fuel wood is increasing. This indicates the changing nature of the relationship between the community and the forest. Communities residing in the area in earlier times were attached to the forest and believed in replenishing the forest cover. The usage of forests was sustainable, which is why fire and fuel wood were available at the distance of a five minutes' walk from their houses as expressed by elderly members in an FGD. The younger generation members of the community view the forest as a source of raw materials which fulfil their needs for fuel wood, fodder and hunting etc. but still they are reluctant to replant the forest. This coupled with other developmental needs like increasing motorable roads and erection of electricity poles are the primary reason behind the depletion of the forest cover. Contemporary developmental needs are being prioritised over traditional means of livelihood.

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