

Menace on the Menu: Development and the Globalization of Servitude

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Global Research, November 27, 2014

Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [Global Economy](#), [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

In his book 'The World Economy: A Millennial Perspective', economist Angus Maddison noted that India was the richest country in the world and had controlled a third of global wealth until the 17th century [1]. Political unity and military security helped evolve a uniform economic system, increased trade and enhanced agriculture productivity. India was an exporter of spices, food grains, handicrafts, handloom products, wootz steel, musk, camphor, sandalwood and ivory items, among other things.

It was for good reason that Gandhi once stated the future of India lies in its villages. The village was the centre of a rural economy that was an economic powerhouse of entrepreneurialism. According to Sudhansu R Das, however, the British Raj almost dismantled this system by introducing mono crop activities and mill made products, and post independent India failed to repair the economic fabric [2]. As a result, successive administrations have ended up preparing relief packages from time to time and rural India is thus too often depicted a 'basket case'.

In India, there is a plan to develop well-planned 'smart villages' (and cities) that have decent, modern infrastructure. The question remains, though, whether the government can restore the economic fabric of the village, which Das argues was once enshrined in a performing eco-system and a healthy social life based on fellow feelings and mutual co-operation.

If anything implies that India's social and economic fabric requires restoring, it is the findings of the *2014 global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)* [3]. If someone is deprived in a third or more of ten weighted indicators, the global index identifies them as 'MPI poor', and the extent - or intensity - of their poverty is measured by the number of deprivations they are experiencing. Those indicators are based on health, education and living standards and comprise the following factors: years of schooling, school attendance, levels of nutrition, child mortality, access to cooking fuel, sanitation (open defecation, for example), access to water, ownership of assets, access to electricity and flooring material (eg, dirt).

- Based on a rural-urban analysis, of the 1.6 billion people identified as MPI poor, 85% live in rural areas.
- The highest levels of inequality are to be found in 15 Sub-Saharan African countries and in Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Yemen and Somalia.
- The researchers have paid special attention to the situation of the destitute, or what

they term the poorest of the poor. Over half of the world's poor are classed as destitute.

- Countries which have reduced MPI poverty and destitution the most in absolute terms were mostly Low Income and Least Developed Countries, with Nepal making the fastest progress.

The MPI reveals some worrying aspects of poverty in India. Eradicating poverty in that country requires every person having access to safe drinking water, sanitation, housing, nutrition, health and education. According to the MPI, out of its 1.2 billion-plus population, India is home to over 340 million destitute people and is the second poorest country in South Asia after war-torn Afghanistan.

Some 640 million poor people live in India (40% of the world's poor), mostly in rural areas, meaning an individual is deprived in one-third or more of the ten indicators mentioned above (malnutrition, child deaths, defecating in the open).

In South Asia, Afghanistan has the highest level of destitution at 38%. This is followed by India at 28.5%. Bangladesh and Pakistan have much lower levels. The study placed Afghanistan as the poorest country in South Asia, followed by India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal.

Just 20 years ago, India had the second-best social indicators among the six South Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan). Now it has the second worst position, ahead only of Pakistan. Bangladesh has less than half of India's per-capita GDP but has infant and child mortality rates lower than that of India.

Writing India's Deccan Herald newspaper, Prasenjit Chowdhury notes that according to two comparable surveys conducted in Bangladesh and India in 2006, in Bangladesh, 82% of children are fully immunised, 88% get vitamin A supplements and 89% are breastfed within an hour of birth [4]. The corresponding figures for Indian children are below 50% in all case and as low as 25% for vitamin A supplementation.

Moreover, over half of the population in India practices open defecation, a major health hazard, compared with less than 10% in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has overtaken India in terms of a wide range of basic social indicators, including life expectancy, child survival, enhanced immunisation rates, reduced fertility rates and particular schooling indicators.

What is going wrong?

"We build cyber cities and techno parks and IITs at the cost of the welfare of the downtrodden and the environment. We don't think how our farmers on whose toil we feed manage to sustain themselves; we fail to see how the millions of the poor survive. We look at the state-of-the-art airports, IITs, highways and bridges, the inevitable necessities for the corporate world to spread its tentacles everywhere and thrive, depriving the ordinary people of even the basic necessities of life and believe it is development." – Sukumaran CV [5].

Former Indian Finance Minister P.Chidambaram once claimed that his government's economic neoliberal policies were pro growth and pro equity and envisaged 85% of India's population eventually living in well-planned cities with proper access to water, health, electricity, education, etc. [6]. That would mean at least 600 million moving to cities –

possibly hundreds of millions more when population growth is accounted for. He stated that urbanisation constitutes 'natural progress'.

After 23 years of a shift towards neo-liberalism and increasing urbanisation, to what extent has the process thus far been 'pro-equity', 'progressive' or 'natural'?

The drive towards neo-liberalism and urbanisation has thus far been underpinned by unconstitutional land takeovers and the trampling of democratic rights. For supporters of cronyism, cartels and the manipulation of markets, which to all extents and purposes is what economic 'neo-liberalism' has entailed in India over the last two decades [7-9], there have been untold opportunities for well-placed individuals to make an under-the-table fast buck from various infrastructure projects and privatisation sell offs: assets such as airports, roads, ports and other infrastructure built up with public money or toil have been sold off into private hands.

The neoliberal model of development has seen the poverty alleviation rate in India remain around the same as it was back in 1991 or even in pre-independence India (0.8 percent), while the ratio between the top and bottom ten percent of the population has doubled during this period [10,11]. According to the Organisation for Co-operation and Economic Development, this doubling of income inequality has made India one of the worst performers in the category of emerging economies.

This is the type of development that is being forced through on behalf of elite interests via the World Bank, WTO, and the G8, etc. It is being driven through by what Vandana Shiva says is the biggest forced removal of people from their lands in history and involves one of the biggest illegal land grabs since Columbus, according to a 2009 report commissioned by the rural development ministry.

In the West, the route to capitalism or urbanisation was not 'natural' and involved the unforeseen outcomes of conflicts and struggles between serfs, lords, peasants, landowners, the emerging bourgeoisie and class of industrialists and the state. The outcomes of these struggles resulted in different routes to modernity (communism, fascism, capitalism) and levels of urbanisation [12,13].

Unsurprisingly, struggles (both violent and non-violent) are now taking place in India. The naxalites and Maoists are referred to by the dominant class as left wing extremists who are exploiting the situation of the poor. But how easy it is to ignore the true nature of the poor's exploitation. How easy it is to lump all protesters together and create an 'enemy within'. How easy it is to ignore the state-corporate extremism across the world that results in the central state abdicating its responsibilities by submitting to the tenets of the Wall Street-backed 'structural adjustment' pro-privatisation policies, free capital flows and unaccountable cartels.

That's the real nature of extremism. It is the type of extremism that is regarded as anything but by the mainstream media.

The subjugation of India

Powerful corporations are shaping 'development' agenda in India and have signed secretive Memorandums of Understanding with the government. The full military backing of the state is on hand to forcibly evict peoples from their land in order to hand over land to mineral

hungry extractive and processing industries to fuel a wholly unsustainable model of development. Around the world, this oil-dependent, urban-centric, high energy, high consumption model is stripping the environment bare and negatively impacting the climate and ecology.

The links between the Monsanto/Syngenta/Walmart-backed Knowledge Initiative on Agriculture and the US sanctioning and backing of the opening up of India's nuclear sector to foreign interests have already shown what the models of 'development' being pushed onto people really entails, not least in terms of the powerful corporate interests that really benefit and the ordinary people that lose out [14,15].

Almost 300,000 farmers have taken their lives since 1997 and many more are experiencing economic distress or have left farming as a result of debt, a shift to (GM) cash crops and economic liberalisation [16]. And yet the corporate-controlled type of agriculture being imposed and/or envisaged only leads to bad food, bad soil, bad or no water, bad health, poor or falling yields and an impending agrarian crisis [17-20]. This form of agriculture has meant the US and the UK are now facing similar crises [21,22]. It's a global crisis.

In addition to displacing people to facilitate the needs of resource extraction industries, unconstitutional land grabs for Special Economic Zones, nuclear plants and other projects have additionally forced many others from the land. Moreover, it has been a case of massive tax breaks for industry and corporations and underinvestment in rural infrastructure and farming [23]. It's not difficult to see where policy makers' priorities lie.

With GDP growth slowing and automation replacing human labour the world over in order to decrease labour costs and boost profit, where are the jobs going to come from to cater for hundreds of millions of former agricultural workers or those whose livelihoods will be destroyed as corporations move in and seek to capitalise and mechanise industries (eg wheat processing) that currently employ tens of millions (if not hundreds of millions)?

It is clear that farmers (and others) represent a 'problem': a problem while on the land and a problem to be somehow dealt with once displaced. But food producers, the genuine wealth producers of a nation, only became a problem when Western agribusiness was given the green light to take power away from farmers and uproot traditional agriculture in India and recast it in its own corporate-controlled image. This is who is really setting the 'development' agenda.

India is acquiescing to foreign corporations. Take a look at the free trade agreement being hammered out behind closed doors between the EU and India. It all adds up to powerful trans-national corporations trying to by-pass legislation that was implemented to safeguard the public's rights.

We could see the Indian government being sued by multinational companies for billions of dollars in private arbitration panels outside of Indian courts if national laws, policies, court decisions or other actions are perceived to interfere with their investments. This is already a reality in many parts of the world whereby legislation is shelved due to even the threat of legal action by corporations. Such free trade agreements cement the corporate ability to raid taxpayers' coffers even further via unaccountable legal tribunals, or to wholly dictate national policies and legislation. This agreement could see rural Indian society being restructured and devastated in favour of Western corporate interests and adversely impacting hundreds of millions and their livelihoods and traditional ways of living [24].

Do people really believe India's future lies in tying itself to a moribund system that has so patently failed in the West and can now only sustain itself by plundering other countries via war or 'free trade' agreements, which have little if anything to do with free trade? At best, it shows a lack of foresight. At worst, it displays complete subservience to elite interests.

The bedrock of any society is its agriculture. Without food there can be no life. Without food security, there can be no genuine independence. Nowhere is this the case than in India where 64% of the population derives its sustenance from the agricultural sector. To control Indian agriculture is to exert control over the country. One needs to control only seeds, agro-chemicals and resultant debt and infrastructure loans. The World Bank, the IMF and the US State Department are well aware of this fact. Indeed, US foreign policy has almost always rested on the control of the agriculture of poorer countries:

"American foreign policy has almost always been based on agricultural exports, not on industrial exports as people might think. It's by agriculture and control of the food supply that American diplomacy has been able to control most of the Third World. The World Bank's geopolitical lending strategy has been to turn countries into food deficit areas by convincing them to grow cash crops – plantation export crops – not to feed themselves with their own food crops." Professor Michael Hudson [25].

US foreign policy is about power and control: the power to control food, states and entire populations. In many respects, the subjugation of India by the US rests on the likes of Monsanto eventually controlling agriculture and hijacking food sovereignty and the nation's food security. The sanctioning of open field trials of GM crops in the country is the thin end of a very broad wedge that would not only boost the profits of global seed and agritech companies but would also serve US geopolitical interests.

Looting the economy

Rural society may have once been regarded as India's bedrock and still is by many, but that bedrock is now being steadily dug up. Global agritech companies have been granted license to influence key aspects of agriculture by controlling seeds and chemical inputs and by funding and thus distorting the biotech research agenda and aspects of overall development policy. Monsanto already controls the cotton industry in India and is increasingly shaping agri-policy and the knowledge paradigm by funding agricultural research in public universities and institutes: it has been described as the "contemporary East India Company" [26].

In an attempt to control agriculture and despite evidence that suggests otherwise, agritech corporations promote the notion that they have the answers to feeding the world. People are generally hungry not because of insufficient agricultural production but because they do not have money to buy food, access to land to grow food or because of complex problems like food spoilage, poor food distribution systems and a lack of reliable water and infrastructure for irrigation, storage, transport and financing. If these deeper problems are not addressed and as long as food is not reaching those who are hungry and poor, increased agricultural production will not help reduce food insecurity.

We already produce enough food to feed the world's population and did so even at the peak of the world food crisis in 2008 [27]. Moreover, India can already feed itself and arguably doesn't need modern technology of poisonous pesticides, destructive fertilizers

and patented GE seeds that can't match 1890 or even 1760 AD yields in India [28,29].

"India has been self-sufficient in food staples for over a decade and more than that for cereals. Today, the country grows about 100 million tons (mt) of rice, 95 mt of wheat, 170 mt of vegetables, 85 mt of fruit, 40 mt of coarse cereals and 18 mt of pulses (refer to the Economic Survey for the data). These totals ensure that our farmers grow enough to feed all Indians well with food staples. We have 66 mt of grain, two-and-a-half times the required buffer stock (on January 1, 2013). The country has reached this stage through, first and foremost, the knowledge and skill of our farmers who have bred and saved seed themselves and exchanged their seed in ways that made our fields so bio-diverse." – Viva Kermani [28].

Four GM crops account for almost 100 percent of worldwide GM crop acreage. All four have been developed for large-scale industrial farming systems and are used as cash crops for export, to produce fuel or for processed food and animal feed. The answer to food security, food democracy and local/national food sovereignty does not lie with making farmers dependent on a few large corporations whose bottom line is exploiting agriculture for their own benefit under the guise of 'feeding the world'.

Various reports have concluded that we need to support diverse, vibrant and sustainable agroecological methods of farming and develop locally-based food economies [30,31]. After all, it is small farms and peasant farmers (more often than not serving local communities) that are more productive than giant industrial (export-oriented) farms and which produce most of the world's food on much less land [32]. However, the trend continues to move in the opposite direction.

There has in fact been an ongoing attempt since the 'green revolution' to strip farmers of their knowledge and expertise in India:

"... (farmers') legitimate claims to being scientists, innovators, natural resource stewards, seed savers and hybridisation experts. Instead, they were reduced to becoming recipients of technical fixes and consumers of the poisonous products of a growing agricultural inputs industry." – Viva Kermani [28].

Part of the current 'development' agenda in India is based on dismantling the Public Distribution System for food. Policy analyst Devinder Sharma notes that the government may eventually stop supporting farmers by doing away with the system of announcing the minimum support price for farmers and thereby reduce the subsidy outgo. He argues that farmers would be encouraged to grow cash crops for supermarkets and to 'compete' in a market based on trade policies that work in favour of big landowners and heavily subsidised Western agriculture.

By shifting towards a commercialised system that would also give the poor cash to buy food in the market place, rather than the almost half a million 'ration shops' that currently exist, the result will be what the WTO/ World Bank/IMF have been telling India to for a long time: to displace the farming population so that agribusiness can find a stronghold in India [33] (aided by the free trade agreement, which could see land in the hand of foreign entities who prioritise cash crops for export).

Monsanto, Bayer, Cargill, Walmart, Archer Daniels, Sygenta and other large corporations are ultimately eyeing control of the food system from lab to seed to field to shop to plate.

We need only look at what happened to the soy industry in India during the nineties (34), or the recent report by GRAIN [32], to see how small farmers are forced from their land to benefit powerful global agritech. Current policies further add to the problems faced by farmers due to ludicrous trade policies that encourage imports while driving down prices for produce at home [35].

If unfair trade policies, the colonization of official bodies or policy space by corporate players and other practices do not result in displacing farmers, it is achieved by repression and violence, as Helena Paul notes regarding the situation in Paraguay:

“Repression and displacement, often violent, of remaining rural populations, illness, falling local food production have all featured in this picture. Indigenous communities have been displaced and reduced to living on the capital’s rubbish dumps. This is a crime that we can rightly call genocide – the extinguishment of entire Peoples, their culture, their way of life and their environment.” [36]

A similar situation is happening in parts of India.

Much of what is taking place is often justified on the basis that high GDP growth has been achieved. But where have the benefits been accrued from the 8-9% year on year GDP growth in recent times?

Amartya Sen and the World Bank’s chief economist Kaushik Basu have argued that the bulk of India’s aggregate growth is occurring through a disproportionate rise in the incomes at the upper end of the income ladder. To use Arundhati Roy’s term, the poor in India are the ‘ghosts of capitalism’: the ‘invisible’ and shoved-aside victims of a now rampant neoliberalism.

Furthermore, Global Finance Integrity has shown that the outflow of illicit funds into foreign bank accounts has accelerated since opening up the economy to neoliberalism in the early nineties. ‘High net worth individuals’ (ie the very rich) are the biggest culprits here [37].

India’s social development has been sacrificed on the altar of greed and corruption for bulging Swiss accounts, and it has been stolen and put in the pockets of the country’s ruling class ‘wealth creators’ and the multinational vultures who long ago stopped circling and are now swooping.

Hostage to ideology

Me-first acquisitiveness is now pervasive throughout the upper strata of society. Run out and buy some useless product because Kareena, Priyanka or another icon of deception says ‘because you’re worth it’... but never ever let this narcissism give way to contemplate why the rivers and soils have been poisoned and people are being made ill in places like Punjab, agriculture is being hijacked by powerful agritech concerns, land is being grabbed on behalf of any number of corporations or why ordinary people are violently opposing state-corporate power.

Much of this acceptance results from deals hammered out behind closed doors. Much of it results because too many are conditioned to be ignorant of the facts or to accept that all of the above is necessary for 'growth'.

This is a country where the majority sanctifies certain animals, places, rivers and mountains for being representations of god or for being somehow touched by the hand of god. It's also a country run by Wall Street sanctioned politicians who convince people to accept or be oblivious to the destruction of the same.

Many are working strenuously to challenge the selling of the heart and soul of India. Yet how easy will it be for them to be swept aside by officialdom which seeks to cast them as 'subversive' [38]. How easy it will be for the corrosive impacts of a rapacious capitalism to take hold and for hugely powerful corporations to colonise almost every area of social, cultural and economic life and encourage greed, selfishness, apathy, irretrievable materialism and acquisitive individualism, as well as the ignorance of reality 'out there' – what lies beyond the narrow concerns of spend and buy affluent India.

Consumerism's conspicuous purchasing and consumption draws on and manipulates the pre-existing tendency to buy favour, the perceived self importance deriving from caste, the sense of entitlement due to patronage, the desire nurtured over the centuries to lord it over and seek tributes from whoever happens to be on the next rung down in the pecking order. Lavish, conspicuous displays of status to reinforce difference and hierarchy have always been important for cementing social status. Now icons of capitalism, whether renowned brand products, labels or product endorsing celebrities, have also taken their place in the pantheon of Indian deities to be listen to, worshipped and acquiesced to.

And the corporations behind it all achieve hegemony by altering mindsets via advertising, clever PR or by sponsoring (hijacking) major events, by funding research in public institutes and thus slanting findings and the knowledge paradigm in their favour or by securing key positions in international trade negotiations in an attempt to structurally readjust retail, food production and agriculture. They do it by many methods and means.

Before you realise it, culture, politics and the economy have become colonised by powerful private interests and the world is cast in their image. The prevailing economic system soon becomes cloaked with an aura of matter of factuality, an air of naturalness, which is never to be viewed for the controlling hegemonic culture or power play that it really is.

Seeds, mountains, water, forests and biodiversity are being sold off. The farmers and tribals are being sold out. And the more that gets sold off, the more who get sold out, the greater the amount of cash that changes hands, the easier it is for the misinformed to swallow the lie of Wall Street's bogus notion of 'growth' – GDP. And India suddenly becomes capitalism's poster boy 'economic miracle'.

If anyone perceives the type of 'development' being sold to the masses is actually possible in the first instance, they should note that 'developing' nations account for more than 80% of world population, but consume only about a third of the world's energy. US citizens constitute 5% of the world's population, but consume 24% of the world's energy. On average, one American consumes as much energy as two Japanese, six Mexicans, 13 Chinese, 31 Indians, 128 Bangladeshis, 307 Tanzanians and 370 Ethiopians [39].

The Earth is 4.6 billion years old and if you scale this to 46 years then humans have been

here for just four hours. The Industrial Revolution began just one minute ago, and in that time, 50% of the Earth's forests have been destroyed [40]. Forests are just part of the problem. We are using up oil, water and other resources much faster than they can ever be regenerated. We have also poisoned the rivers, destroyed natural habitats, driven some wildlife species to extinction and altered the chemical composition of the atmosphere – among many other things.

Levels of consumption were unsustainable, long before India and other countries began striving to emulate a bogus notion of 'development'. The West continues to live way beyond its (environmental) limits. The current model of development is moreover based on a deceitful ideology that attempts to justify and sell a system that is designed to fail the majority of the global population and benefit the relative few.

This wasteful, high-energy model is tied to what ultimately constitutes the plundering of peoples and the planet by powerful transnational corporations. And, as we see all around us, the outcome is endless conflicts over fewer and fewer resources. Such conflicts are likely to gather pace as wars are not only fought to grab resources, but are also manufactured in order to destroy states from within by fomenting civil wars and thus destabilize economies and reduce demand for resources [41].

The outcome is also environmental destruction and an elitist agenda being forwarded by rich eugenicists [42], who voice concerns over there being 'simply too many mouths': those mouths would only take food from their rich bellies – bellies that long ago became bloated from the fat of the land, lucrative wars and the misery brought about by economic exploitation. The super rich who currently run the world regard most of humanity as a problem to be 'dealt with'.

The type of 'progress and development' on offer makes any beneficiaries of it blind to the misery and plight of the hundreds of millions who are deprived them of their lands and livelihoods. If people cannot be removed from their land via making it economically non-viable to continue farming, tens of thousands of militia into the tribal areas to displace 300,000 people, place 50,000 in camps and carry out rapes and various human rights abuses [43].

In 'The Greater Common Good', Arundhati Roy writes about the thousands of tribal people displaced by the Narmada Sarovar Dam:

"Many of those who have been resettled are people who have lived all their lives deep in the forest... Suddenly they find themselves left with the option of starving to death or walking several kilometers to the nearest town, sitting in the marketplace offering themselves as wage labour, like goods on sale... Instead of a forest from which they gathered everything they needed – food, fuel, fodder, rope, gum, tobacco, tooth powder, medicinal herbs, housing materials – they earn between ten and twenty rupees a day... In Vadaj, the man who was talking to me rocked his sick baby in his arms... Children collected around us, taking care not to burn their bare skin on the scorching tin walls of the shed they call a home. The man's mind was far away from the troubles of his sick baby. He was making me a list of fruits he used to pick in the forest. He counted forty-eight kinds. He told me that he didn't think he or his children would ever be able to afford to eat any fruit again...I asked him what was wrong with his baby. He said it would be better for the baby to die than live like this." [44]

The type of development that we are seeing is legitimised by a certain mindset and ideology. Vandana Shiva sums it up as follows:

“People are perceived as ‘poor’ if they eat food they have grown rather than commercially distributed junk foods sold by global agri-business. They are seen as poor if they live in self-built housing made from ecologically well-adapted materials like bamboo and mud rather than in cinder block or cement houses. They are seen as poor if they wear garments manufactured from handmade natural fibres rather than synthetics.” [45]

The ‘poor’ must therefore be helped out of their awful ‘backwardness’ by the West and its powerful corporations and billionaire ‘philanthropists’. As with Monsanto and the Gates Foundation in Africa and the ‘helping’ of Africans by imposing a highly profitable (for the corporations) and controlling system of agriculture, the underlying premise harks back to colonialism and an imperialist mindset. What some might regard as ‘backward’ stems from an ethnocentric ideology, which is used to legitimize the destruction of communities and economies that were once locally based and self sufficient. The disease is offered as the cure.

Sudhansu R Das, who was mentioned at the start of this article, argues that reweaving the Indian village economy lies in the ability of the leadership to revert the change in societal behaviour that lets villagers prefer unnecessary consumer items to real economic assets.

Das argues that the young generation in villages today prefers fast food to homemade nutritious food. Similarly many biodegradable, handcrafted, daily use items give way to plastic and synthetic products. People give up many climate friendly traditional dresses, footwear and a wide range of homemade eatables for no convincing reason but for the influence of ‘the market’ and advertising. People are persuaded to borrow and live beyond their means. The mad craze for status symbol has indebted millions of people.

Pursuit of consumer comfort and decay in social value have broken the joint family system in villages which once provided safety to old people and saved family expenditure. Das calls for reinvigorating entrepreneurship in villages.

However, instead of this government after government aggravates the problems by creating an impression that the villagers are a backward, inefficient and unproductive lot who can survive only on relief. Das argues that with proper investment and appropriate policies, India’s rural economy could once again thrive. Bringing back Indian villages into shape needs honest and committed leaders at the helm, he argues.

If what is set out above tells us anything, it is that India and other regions of the world are suffering from internal hemorrhaging. They are being bled dry from both within and without.

“Look at species destruction. It is estimated to be at about the level of 65 million years ago when an asteroid hit the earth, ended the period of the dinosaurs and wiped out a huge number of species. It is the same level today. And we are the asteroid... There are sectors of the global population trying to impede the global catastrophe. There are other sectors trying to accelerate it. Take a look at whom they are. Those who are trying to impede it are the ones we call backward, indigenous populations – the First Nations in Canada, the aboriginals in Australia, the tribal people in India. Who is accelerating it? The most privileged, so-called advanced, educated populations of the world.” –

Underpinning the arrogance of such a mindset is what Vandana Shiva calls a view of the world which encourages humans to regard man as conqueror and owner of the Earth. This has led that the technological hubris of geo-engineering, genetic engineering, and nuclear energy. Shiva argues that it has led to the ethical outrage of owning life forms through patents, water through privatization, the air through carbon trading. It is leading to appropriation of the biodiversity that serves the poor [47].

And therein lies the true enemy of development: a system that facilitates such plunder, which is presided over by well-funded and influential foreign foundations and powerful financial-corporate entities and their handmaidens in the IMF, World Bank and WTO.

Yet it is activists like Shiva herself and NGOs which advocate a different path that are attacked and smeared by officialdom. To open economies to private concerns, proponents of economic neoliberalism are always fond of stating that 'regulatory blockages' must be removed. If particular 'blockages' stemming from legitimate protest and dissent cannot be dealt with by peaceful means, other methods will be used. When increasing mass surveillance or widespread ideological attempts to discredit and smear do not secure compliance or dilute the power of protest, beefed up 'homeland security' and paramilitary force is an ever-present option.

Across the globe, powerful corporations and their compliant politicians seek to sweep away peoples and their indigenous knowledge and culture in the chase for profit and control. They call this 'development'.

Is the narrative set out here to be dismissed because it is deemed too extreme and based on dogma? Tell that to the 340 million destitute that make up over half of India's poor in 2014. Tell that also to millions around the world, from Greece to the US and beyond, who are bearing the brunt of 'globalisation'.

If you are looking for extremism and dogma, look elsewhere. Look towards those whose unimaginable wealth feeds off and fuels a system of exploitation and conflict that is designed to benefit the few. That's the nature of the model of development that is depicted as anything but. Nonetheless, it is the reality of the development we have.

Notes

1] <http://theunbrokenwindow.com/Development/MADDISON%20The%20World%20Economy-A%-20Millennial.pdf>

2] <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/441179/challenges-abound-pm039s-model-villages.html>

3] <http://www.ophi.org.uk/multidimensional-poverty-index/>

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- 10] <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/india-is-prospering-indians-arent-aiyar/158081-60-120.html>
- 11] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-16064321>
- 12] Robert Brenner (1976), "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-industrial Europe". Past and Present 70
- 13] Barrington Moore (1993) [First published 1966]. [Social origins of dictatorship and democracy: lord and peasant in the making of the modern world](#) (with a new foreword by Edward Friedman and James C. Scott ed.). Boston: Beacon Press.
- 14] <http://www.guernicamag.com/features/we-call-this-progress/>
- 15] http://www.democracynow.org/2006/12/13/vandana_shiva_on_farmer_suicides_the
- 16] <http://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/new-evidence-of-suicide-epidemic-among-indias--marginalised-farmers>
- 17] http://www.business-standard.com/article/markets/bt-cotton-losing-steam-productivity-at--5-yr-low-113020601016_1.html
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