

# Is there a Christian WAY to Development?

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In this talk to a Christian audience I made an effort to throw light on the aspect of our commitment to development as human beings, as citizens of India and as believers. I suggest that development needs to be understood as a change in the quality of human life, in individuals, in the communities and society at large. I suggest that individuals, communities and development of society are interrelated, and one is not possible without the others. Some obstacles are highlighted and finally some suggestions for intervention and involvement in development are offered. I am very grateful to Ms. Persis Ginwalla of the Behavioural Science Centre for the editorial help she has rendered in writing this paper. The author [jimmv@isidelhi.org.in](mailto:jimmv@isidelhi.org.in) is Executive Director of the Indian Social Institute, Lodi Road, New Delhi 110003.

Society is shaped by human persons influencing one another by their thinking and action. For every living organism on earth there is beginning, growth and an end, and human beings are not different in this **matter**. But *there is* a difference about change. Human beings are not merely passive in the evolutionary change but can consciously and willfully bring about change in themselves and in the society where they live. Development of and in society is linked to the change decided by human beings. Human interventions are important and necessary for social development. Development does not happen: it is made to happen. Social development is not just God-given, or fate-determined, but human-made. Development means here a change in the quality of life in individuals, in communities and in society at large. Individual, communitarian and societal development are complementary processes: none is possible without the others.

I want here to reflect on the role of the individual in development, the individual as a person, as a citizen and as a believer - no matter what religion s/he may belong to (if indeed there is such a thing as 'belonging' to a religion!). An individual may have her own aspirations and sense of development. She may also think of her community (I refer to the faith community, sharing the same creed) and its development. She may have some aspirations and ideas about the development of the community she belongs to. The same person may also have a dream, a vision of the larger society of which she as well as her 'faithful community' are a part. This individual Christian may draw inspiration from her tradition, scriptures,

**and** the teaching of the Church, or may have a different spiritual and religious approach to development. But her tradition, scripture and Church teaching cannot stand in opposition to development and to her right to live as a human being, a right valid for all, based on the principles of justice, equality, and freedom enshrined in the Constitution of India and also enunciated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I shall first discuss the concept of development and then look at it from a Christian perspective and suggest ways and means of engaging in development starting with the Christian community but moving on to the larger society. Development is the transformation of the quality of human life in individuals, communities and society at large, and each person, each citizen has a responsibility for development, as well as a claim to her/his share in it. Development is not a prerogative of any one individual, religion, or a group. Human development is not different for Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Jains and Hindus, though culturally and religiously it may have different manifestations. The difference appears in the perspectives taken, the values highlighted and the motivations that stir the individuals to act. Those who believe in God and a particular religious teaching may have a specific religiosity/spirituality and a unique tradition of being involved in and contributing to development. They may have specific religious beliefs, and/or have recourse to their 'sacred books' to be motivated for development, that is, the "well-being of all." A Christian may be motivated by the theme of 'Kingdom of God', a Muslim by 'universal brotherhood and sisterhood', the Hindu by 'Ram Rajya' (not necessarily the 'ram-rajya' of a Hindu Rashtra promoted by the Sangh Parivar), and a Buddhist by 'Karuna'. I would like to suggest that the specific 'Christian way' of development implies a socio-religious construct, the specific Christian motivation and interpretation of development.

### **What is Development?**

Development must be seen against "Man's inhumanity to man *and more so to woman* (italicized words are my addition), increasing in leaps and bounds, and the still sad music of humanity is unheard by those who wield power and command wealth" (IYER, 1999:6). Development, then, is a passage from inhumanity to humanity, promoting and maintaining the quality of life and opposing all anti-life forces, because "we believe that human life is a gift, but this gift is constantly threatened by various anti-human forces created by human beings themselves" (DABHI, 1999a).

According to Amartya Sen, 'development' means the expansion of capabilities, in other words, increasing the possibilities for more people

to realize their potential as human beings through the expansion of their capabilities for functioning. According to his 'capability approach', development should be about the enrichment of human lives, not in the sense of 'having more things', but in the sense of having the freedom to choose between different ways of living. According to Mahbub ul Haq,

The basic purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and can change over time. People often value achievements that do not show up at all, or not immediately, in income or growth figures: greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services, more secure livelihoods, security against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, political and cultural freedoms, and sense of participation in community activities. The objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. [Source: <http://hdr.undp.org/hd/default.cfm> 'What is Human Development']

These two economists, Sen and Mahbub ul Haq (from India and Pakistan respectively), insist that development goes beyond just economic well-being, though this is an important aspect of human life. The understanding of wellbeing beyond economics is presented in the following box:

Therefore development has to do with all that concerns and affects human communities and human life - "Development process has to be ultimately assessed for impact on quality of life and human well-being" (*National Human Development Report, 2002:3*). The economical, political, cultural, religious and social impact on the well-being of human beings are aspects that need to be analyzed and worked upon in order to constantly and consciously transform human life and its quality, thus bringing about development (DABHI, 1999). Development then is transformation of human beings, society and the environment. Development involves taking sides (KORTEN, 1992), taking a stance, a stance in favour of the poor, the marginalised, the excluded, the laity, the women, the dalits, and the tribals. The Gospel and many Church documents urge us to make this option for the poor. Those who are not prepared to displease the establishment and people in power, whether in the family, community, Church or society, are ill equipped to work for development.

Some of the conditions for development cited in A. Thomas and D. Potter (1992:123) may enhance our understanding of it. The conditions are: democratization of political life, good literacy and educational levels, relatively equal status for women and participation by women, sustainable

ability to meet future needs. (Development which does not include sustainable environment cannot be called 'development'). People like Worsley (1984) include culture in studies of development. Development involves a respect and appreciation of all cultures, and at the same time maturity to critique cultures and eliminate elements which are discriminative and anti-human.

Many identify human rights as the goal of development and rightly so, because "Human rights postulate a spiritual vision and philosophy of divine presence in the larger *brotherhood/sisterhood* (*italicized* word is my addition) as the cornerstone of global democracy. Being holy or unholy is irrelevant; being religious or atheist is immaterial. A revolution in consciousness, a kindly process of active fraternity deeply rooted in the reverence for fellow-beings and the personhood of every other - that is the essence of human rights" (IYER, 1999:44). Iyer cites a Philippine jurist of eminence: "No cause is more worthy than the cause of human rights. Human rights are more than legal concepts: they are the essence of man *and woman*. They are what make man *and woman* human. That is why they are called human rights: deny them and you deny man's *and woman's* humanity ..." (IYER, 1999:3, *italicized* words are my addition).

### **Implications**

The above discussion makes it clear that every citizen, and thus of every Christian, has a role in development. It must be recognized that not all are equally capable, endowed (humanly and materially) or empowered to contribute towards this development in terms of time, energy, and resources (see 1 Cor 3:7-9, 12:4-11). But no one is exempted from participating in the process, whether poor or rich, powerful or powerless, clergy or layperson, woman or man, believer or non-believer. Individual and collective critical awareness of the situation of underdevelopment and of the process of development, and a pro-active stance are of vital importance for development in a community and society, the more so when, in the wake of globalization and privatization, the role of the State is being reduced. Anjali Chavhan (CHAVHAN & PRASAD 2000:27) has rightly argued that "The State action does not provide initiative and leverage; in the absence of supportive collective community efforts, the fabric of society remains almost unchanged, which leads us nowhere." In a secular and democratic country like ours (at least constitutionally), the people's voluntary participation in development activities is essential.

The contribution of individuals and groups can vary according to their respective competence and endowment. I would like to emphasize that the roles of women and of men are similar. We are talking of a

development where women are equal partners in visioning, planning and implementing. Some people might like to contribute intellectually, i.e., they can put their intellectual expertise at the service of the community - e.g., by education, research, writing, journalism for a social cause, etc. Some can contribute with their emotive strength, namely they can help people to change their attitudes, values, prepare people to be more emotionally mature to handle conflicts and stress. They can help people to be motivated and committed to change. Those who are action oriented can assist people in their efforts to change their own behaviour and help them to be more pro-active rather than reacting to people and events, by learning to foresee events and act strategically. Finance and other resources are musts in development and it goes without saying that a group/community must mobilize, from within and outside, the necessary resources to make development sustainable.

Some of the obstacles to our progress, change and development are:

*Obsession with tradition* - "As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be," is an attitude typical of the clergy more than the laity. Often this attitude masks behind a so-called concern for people's faith: "We must not shake people's faith," is a tape invariably played by clergy at any hint of even trying out, forget about achieving, change. The Christian tradition has often been betrayed by the custodians of tradition. "Christians have sometimes fallen into 'integralism', reducing every sort of knowledge to a subset of theology and all authority to a function of religion" (ALFORD & NAUGHTON, 2001:21). Traditions have socio-cultural and religious aspects but "an active tradition can retain its significance only if it succeeds in continuing its relevant ... dimensions which are meaningful in the light of the realities of its time" (VERSTRAETEN, 2000:67). Traditions are good to the extent that they keep the community united and preserve what is valuable. But if they do not allow me to exercise my right to choose, to change and to develop, they have no meaning.

Some of the traditional rituals around birth, puberty, marriage, death and religious celebrations are governed by strong beliefs, assumptions and ideologies, which are not God-given but made by human beings, in fact to a large extent made by 'men'. It is important to note that most of the world highest religious councils are made up of men, as is the synod of bishops in the Catholic Church, where women's representation may at best be a mere token. The dichotomy between divine and profane, religious and worldly, still controls our minds, emotions and behaviour. When these traditions and their 'beliefs and assumptions' become exploitative and a tool for domination and control, they need to be

scrutinized, changed and if necessary discarded, because "the Sabbath is for human beings and not human beings for the Sabbath" (see Mk 2:23-27, Lk 12:10-17). All that is old need not be gold. But traditions and laws a 'holy cow' so that if you kill them you are branded anti-religion, anti-church. Self-protection is at the root of this attitude: Don't think, don't confront, don't question, and things will be easier. It shows a religiosity based on fear, not freedom or love. It has been said that "there is no fear in love; perfect love drives out all fear. So, then, love has not been made perfect in anyone who is afraid, because fear has to do with punishment" (Jn 4:18). If you do not break the traditions you will not be punished!

It is high time we think and act differently, creatively, humanly - "Freedom is what we have; ... stand then, as free men and women, and do not allow yourselves to become slaves again" (Gal 5:1). Let the urge to hide behind traditions remind us of "the dangerous memory of the Cross" and urge us "to fight against the misuses of memory and ideological deformation of reality" (VERSTRAETEN, 2000:76). This author goes on to suggest that this memory of the Cross has shaped a prophetic company of critics who remain vigilant about the risks of being perverted by the logic of the market or technology. I would add the risks from *pro-status quo* theologians, religious teachers and 'Christian brahmins'.

Such anti-change, anti-human, and also anti-Christ religiosity is a graveyard of dead religiosity which thrives on the *status quo* and an uncritical mentality. There is a need to stop promoting a religiosity which does not foster internal freedom and internal and integral well-being, and does not allow individuals and communities to grow. Even if this goes in the name of 'spirituality' which, it seems to me, is very different from religiosity. We need to overcome the polarities body/soul, horizontal/vertical, secular/sacred. It is paradoxical that in the name of religiosity people only develop docility and resistance to change and to new thinking and to committing oneself to justice and equality. A spirituality which does not help the whole person to take a stand against the anti-Christ and anti-human forces in Church and society is an obstacle to development. One can find clerics fighting for human rights, gender equality and democracy in the non-Church situations but the same priests are blind (with selective blindness!) to the similar situations within the Church. Maybe in the 'secular' world they have nothing to lose, while within the Church they have plenty to lose - position, security, status and power! Let me cite an example from the healing ministry: the clergy tend to foster a sense of guilt and insist that to be healed by God one needs to be purified, and therefore need to make a confession (not just

repent!). The number of people going to confession may have increased, but did joy and happiness increase?

*Domination and discrimination* - Domination and discrimination are contrary to freedom and development, which are human rights:

Human development shares a common vision with human rights. The goal is human freedom. And in pursuing capabilities and realizing rights, this freedom is vital. People must be free to exercise their choices and to participate in decision-making that affects their lives. Human development and human rights are mutually reinforcing, helping to secure the well-being and dignity of all people, building self-respect and the respect of others ("Human Development Report, 2003": in *United Nations Development Programme, 2003* website).

Domination and discrimination have to do with power over others used coercively and manipulatively (see Lk 11:37-54). Power is necessary for development, but exploitative power needs to be firmly opposed. Divisions, discrimination between groups and the domination of one group over the other are not uncommon in the Church and in society at large. Many communities experience discrimination both in the secular society and within the Church. Such discrimination with domination may be real or only perceived. It may be related to linguistic, economic or power status within the Church. The divisions between the clergy and the laity and between women and men are still strong, and change is resisted by people in power and those who aspire to it.

Development is of vital importance for the Church community. The call to work for development is to all women and men of good will and strong faith - faith in other human beings and not only in any 'particular god'. We need to find out together means and methods that will help the many dimensions of development. In my opinion there is no *best* way of development, nor are there *best* people to engage in it. Everyone can contribute. Development is a process. We must join hands locally, nationally and internationally, in a constructive spirit, yet ready to destroy whatever blocks progress, and always looking for different options.

### **Biblical Inspiration for Development**

The biblical values highlighted in the experiences of the early Christian communities promoted life, justice and fraternity. A follower of Christ not only tries to personally live the spirit of Christ and his values but also promotes them around. Therefore the mandate for development comes to us from three sources, as human beings, as citizens and as a follower of Christ who stood for quality of life in his own times. The scriptures

recall the experiences of the disciples sent on a mission to invite people to work for liberation and quality life.

St James says: "So it is with faith; if it is alone and includes no actions, then it is dead. But someone will say, 'One person has faith, another has actions'. My answer is, 'Show me how anyone can have faith without actions. I will show you my faith by my actions.'" (Jas 2:17-18) The 'miracles' in the Bible give us an insight into Christ's sensitiveness to the physical needs of people and to his efforts to do something about them (Mt 14:13-21, Mk 6:53-56, Lk 13:10-13). The stories in the Bible are an inspiration and an invitation for us to be seriously involved in the lives of others in society.

### **How do I Contribute to Development of Self, Community and Society?**

Religious experience and our understanding of it are not static. They keep evolving. To encapsulate them in narrow definitions and impose them on other people or communities is violence. God cannot be controlled by any person, community or definition. Faith must flourish in freedom. A faith that does not respect others, or is not concerned about justice is suspect, to say the least. Communities within the Church have surely contributed to the cause of justice. In recent times the efforts of many believers have incorporated "human rights into Catholic social thought and have transformed the older Thomistic natural law model into one that can better account for the complexity and diversity that exists in modern social life" (GLAGUE, 2000:140).

The Human Rights' Declaration, our Constitution and its fundamental rights are all useful and necessary for the development and transformation of society, but history shows that without a strong commitment of the human will and concerted action things do not change. In his Address to the Harvard University, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June, 1965, Lyndon B. Johnson said, "Freedom is not enough. You do not wipe away the scars of a century by saying: Now you are free to go wherever you want, do as you desire ... It is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through these gates .... We seek not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and as a result" (cited in IYER, 1999:21).

In theory and in practice, development planning and implementation are not possible if we do not play our part. Our role can be played in very many ways and in various situations. As a human being, as a citizen and as a Christian I have opportunities: first of all I must be 'aware', think, analyze, and act effectively in my family, in my locality, in my parish, in

my work place. There are many situations where I can take a stand in favour of fairness, of justice, and for equality, maybe in favour of women, or of the poor, and perhaps at the cost of displeasing the powerful. Do I take it, do I wish to take it? In my work place I can do my duty justly and help those who are helpless and marginalised. Can I, and do I, open my mouth, run risk of saying things, and changing rules, regulations and policies in favour of the poor and marginalized, or do I prefer to be in good books of everyone? As a person and as a citizen I can look at many situations and events from the human rights perspective and not from the perspective of the injustice done to me or to my community alone.

The development efforts and interventions from individuals, groups and organisations within the Church may be on many fronts, psycho-spiritual, socio-cultural, educational, economic, and political. They can vary in scope and range, degree and intensity. The efforts can be at the level of governance, management, implementation and evaluation. At every level, I have a right and responsibility to contribute to the development of society and the country.

Let me specify some areas where as human beings, as citizens and as Christians, individuals and groups can take initiatives and participate in development.

### **Socio-cultural:**

Creating a critical awareness about justice, equality and freedom - "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Mt 10:16-17); promoting new ways of relating, interacting and functioning in the family, parish and society (Jn 13:12-17); consciously and constantly examining all the places, events and situations to establish gender equality; sharing in household work by women and men, girls and boys, without gender stereotypes; using inclusive language in prayers, reading, in daily conversations. Allowing voices from below to be heard is also important. It is unfortunate but "a first weakness of Catholic social thought in the contemporary context is a relegation of its non-official, non-ecclesiastical stream to the margins, in terms of both historical understanding and continuing roles, as compared with the official teaching of the magisterium" (Boswell, 2000:95).

[UDHR, Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood/sisterhood (my addition). Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.]

Use the available media to highlight the issues concerning the community and join others, especially the marginalized and the excluded communities, through advocacy. Networking with other groups and organizations to learn from them and to give and gain support for a common cause is of paramount importance. Join hands with poor Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Adivasis, other backwards castes, Hindus and other groups, to work towards a development benefiting the poor and marginalised. Understand and respect the strength and limitations of cultural symbols and the heritage of various groups, besides yours, and develop a pluralistic approach in the over-all empowerment of the people.

As lay people, distinguish the different roles that can be played in the Church by clergy and laity; question, however, the stereotype roles that exist and continue to dialogue to change the injustice and bias in the social assignment of these roles. Empower yourself to be autonomous and interdependent as lay persons. Being a member of the Church and being 'churchy' in our approach to life, language and practices are different things. (Gal 6:1-10; 1 Cor 12:6-9; Jam 2:14-21; 1 Pet 4:10-11,5:1-7) Rise above petty denominational and religious interests (1 Cor 1:10-17) and look at the injustice, hardships, suffering of the wider community (your own community as well as other).

[UDHR, Article 29/2: In the exercise of his/her rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.]

### **Educational:**

The universalisation of elementary education is a constitutional provision and a national commitment. It implies the enrolment of all children in the age group of 6 to 14 in schools or their alternatives. Ensure the literacy and education of the members in the Church community and the surrounding society in which it is rooted. In India the literacy rate among adult men is 75.9 % and 54.2 % among women. Make sure that all children go to school, especially the girls and children from families which for whatever reason find it difficult to send their children to school. See to it that the children in the church-run education institutions do not just get bookish knowledge but grow in confidence and civic sense, environment friendliness and holistic health and have less prejudice and bias towards other peoples, cultures and communities (see GINWALLA & DABHI, 2003). Those who can afford to contribute to these children's

education outside the classroom must do so with least expectation of return.

Empowerment and distributive roles: a greater literacy and education of disadvantaged groups can increase their ability to resist oppression, organize politically and get a fairer deal. Redistributive effects are important not only between different social groups or households, but also within the family, since there is evidence that better education (particularly female education) contributes to the education about gender-based inequalities.

[UDHR, Article 26/1: Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit].

Create opportunities for career guidance to students from early age and help them pursue it, especially after completion of higher secondary education. Many children need help to decide which subject to choose and what career to pursue in college and universities. Many land up with subjects which they are not happy about and find it difficult to change later because of our inflexible education system.

[Article 29:2 of the Indian Constitution shows the importance of equal opportunity of education].

Encourage young women and men from the community to go into different disciplines of education and professions (depending on the job opportunities and market demand). There still exists gender bias in professions: some may take initiatives to challenge that. Often girls go in for teachers' training and nursing, which are somehow viewed as extensions of child caring and nurturing, and the stereotype of women's work at which they are good. The pulpit can be well utilized for useful information about services for young people and their parents.

[UDHR Article 26/2: Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace].

### **Economic:**

Promote and create livelihood options for the poor families in the community especially in the rural areas - development of new skills, small business, employment. In India 26.10 % of the population lives below poverty line. It was earlier projected that India will be free of poverty,

hunger and malnutrition and would become an environmentally safe country by 2020. Presently, 204 million people in the country are under-nourished and more than 350 million live below the poverty line. They are vulnerable to natural disasters. Also, more than 50 per cent of pregnant women are anaemic, and every third child born in the country has low birth weight, having the risk of impaired health and brain development (*The Statesman*, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2004).

[UDHR, Article 23/1: Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. Article 25/1: Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself/herself and of his/her family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his / her control. Article 25/2: Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.]

### **Psycho-spiritual:**

Promote a spirituality that goes beyond pious religious and cultic practices, a spirituality that integrates human development and wellbeing and is not averse to economic and political empowerment of people. Spirituality should increase people's faith not only in a particular personified god but in the universal Divinity within each one of us. Faith should help me to have faith in my fellow human beings. True spirituality facilitates growth in wisdom and in the courage to affirm oneself, and confront the self and others in cases of injustice. It does not make me a 'yes' woman or man, subservient to authority and traditions. A spirituality devoid of joy, freedom and life has to be rejected.

Learn, develop and imbibe a spirituality and theology that are people oriented, God-loving rather than God-fearing, liberating, respectful of others and democratic in nature. Religions and spiritualities are human made (in fact, they are man-made: the paternalism and anti-women teachings and practices are clear sign of the male origin) and therefore can and must be changed and transformed. Ensure that they serve humanity and do not enslave the human body and spirit, especially woman's body and spirit.

The exchange between American economist Higginbotham and Gandhi may be enlightening. Higginbotham said: "Spirituality to be meaningful should be three-fourth economics." Gandhiji replied: "Economics too, to be useful, should be three parts spirituality" (Iyer, 1999:6).

**Political:**

Enhance the participation of people and encourage the Church to take up and join hands with others in public action. Public action means the participation of the Church along with other groups in a process of social and political change (DREZE & SEN, 1989).

Strengthen the organisations and organisational power of the community. It is advisable, however, to weaken the hold of traditional leaders, rigid orthodoxy and enslaving traditions on the organisations (DABHI, 1999a, 2004). Activate these organisations to be at the service of poor in the society - providing opportunities for new and varied leadership to come up (especially of women). The financial co-operatives of the community could creatively provide loans for livelihood options, education, etc.

[Article 29/1: Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his/her personality is possible].

Find out and utilise appropriate government schemes for various purposes and make them available to yourself and others in the community.

[The Declaration on Right to Development, Article 8: The State should undertake, at the national level, all necessary measures for the realization of the right to development and shall ensure, *inter alia*, equality of opportunity for all in their access to basic resources, education, health services, food, housing, employment and the fair distribution of income. Effective measures should be undertaken to ensure that women have an active role in the development process. Appropriate economic and social reforms should be carried out with a view to eradicating all social injustices].

Acquire and use bureaucratic and political power for yourself and for the empowerment of others, without being coloured by the ethos of the "dirty, manipulative, self-centred present-day politics!" Encourage people to participate in Panchayati Raj actively, not only by becoming role holders but also by active participation in the *gramsabha* and its decisions. Facilitate participation in *gramsabhas* and help the basic units of national governance to generate and provide opportunity for leadership from among the poor, marginalised and women in particular.

[Article 21/1: Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his/her country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. Article 21/2: Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his/her country].

**Conclusion**

It is suggested that there is no Christian development as such, though people may get involved in development inspired by their religious

teaching and vision. But at no point should they put the human being second and religion first. Let me end with a note that any effort, intervention in the direction of development of people is valuable and needs to be encouraged. But not all the efforts are born out of people-centred intent. It is my hope that people will learn to detect the egocentric intent behind some development efforts and interventions, however high-sounding their proclamations, and stop such people from vitiating public action and efforts.

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