

For a discussion of the contemporary sociological concerns about development, we can begin by outlining some of the views based on historical events, on the sociocultural dimensions of development. But before we examine these dominant concerns regarding development, it would be useful to undertake a brief description of the “three worlds of development” as it had existed prior to the break-up of the Soviet Union. This had become an important part of the social scientists parlance since the middle of the 20th century. Earlier the world was divided into two i.e. it was a bipolar world with the capitalist block of United States of America (USA), on the one side and the socialist block of the Soviet Union, on the other. After the break-up of Soviet Union, the ‘Cold War’ has ended and the world has become Unipolar, with USA as the most powerful nation of the world.

34.3.1 The Three Worlds of Development

The First World consist of North America, Western and Southern Europe. The countries were seen to be following mainly a capitalist model of development. The Second World had consisted of Soviet Union and the East European group such as, Poland, East Germany, Hungary etc. Many socio-political changes have occurred in these countries now and they do not remain a communist bloc any more. They were associated with the socialist model of development. The Third World was and to certain extent still is generally used to refer to the less developed or developing societies of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Most of these countries emerged out of colonial rule to attain political independence only in the middle of the 20th century. The majority of the third world countries are characterised by low per capita income, high rates of illiteracy and infant mortality. These were generally agriculture-based economies where people had short life expectancies, low degree of social mobility and strong attachment to tradition (Estes, R.J., p. 92). The countries, though subject to influence by the erstwhile First and the Second World countries, have devised their own national strategy and path of development. The First and the Second World’s models of development had laid primary emphasis on economic growth.

i) The Capitalist Model of Development of the First World

The main characteristics of the capitalist model of development are: a) provision for private ownership of property and means of production, b) promotion of economic activities through private enterprises, and c) minimum possible state regulation and control on private enterprises. Thus the capitalist model is characterised by a free economy regulated by competition.

ii) The Socialist Model of Development of the Second World

The socialist path of development adopted by the Second World, was seen to be opposite or dichotomous to the capitalist path of development. The former, contrary to the latter, is characterised by state ownership of property and means of production, public enterprises and complete state regulation of economic activities. Thus, the socialist model refers to a regulated economy. The main allegation against the capitalist model is that, since it permits minimum state regulation, its economic system becomes exploitative in the sense that the working class people (proletariat) do not get their due share. The capitalists enjoy a major share of the nation’s resources. Hence it contributes to inequalities so that a few are very rich and the majority is very poor. The capitalist model is, therefore, alleged to be exploitative and non-egalitarian. On the contrary, the socialist model was ideally considered as non-exploitative and egalitarian. Private ownership and the lack of state regulation, were considered to be important measures of exploitation of the weaker sections and hence the causes of income inequalities. Since, the socialist state did not allow private ownership of property, there was a strong belief that there was no room for exploitation and inequality in it. However, historical events proved this belief to be incorrect as the Soviet Union could not survive for long. The period of “Glasnost” and “perestroika” led by Gorbachev, the erstwhile Russian Prime Minister during the 1980’s, dismantled the communist political and economic structure. The Soviet Union broke-up into several small countries and the socialist ideology gave way to capitalist tendencies.

However, China still follows a socialistic socio-political order. The two models had also differed in their conception of development. Whereas the capitalist model lays greater stress on economic growth, than on equal distribution of the fruits of economic growth. The socialist model layed equal stress on both resource generation and equal distribution of income, and tried to change the social system in such a way that greater social justice could be ensured. In reality, socialist model did not give much space to individual initiative and consumeristic desires. The foregoing discussion implies another difference bet