CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The structural and functional transformation of human society unfolds many records of material advancement. Along with this, there has also been ever increasing economic, political, social and cultural problems. Academic disciplines and policy makers have been welcoming and improving upon human centred transformation of ideas and practices. Economics is no exception.

In economics, each progressive change in the conceptual journey of development has been a liberation from mere growth patronage and a movement towards humanisation. Human development is a unique expression of this shift (Fukuda – Parr and Kumar 2009). It conceptualises development as the creation of an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive lives they value (UNDP 2001:9). No aspect of development falls outside its scope (Haq 1995).

The conceptual associations of human development have been moulding different perspectives. A comparatively new addition is that of human rights. The alarming issues of inequality and distribution across the world have moved human development closer to human rights discourses and vice versa. In the interactive field of both, lie complementary resources, tools and institutions that energise integration. Human rights hold a definite potential for analysing the concept and methods of human development. The existing perspectives of the human rights based approach should be widened to understand, evaluate and operationalise human development.
1.2 Context of the Study

1.2.1 The enriched concept of human development

Economics has the legacy of human centred ideas with multi-disciplinary approaches. In the 1990s the concern with human development moved to the centre with distinctive vision on the dignity and worth of people. The conceptual and practical relevance of human development has been well acknowledged in development economics.

Since the publication of the annual Human Development Reports (HDRS) in 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), new ideas have been emerging. The reconceptualisations of development issues like poverty in human development perspective have influenced global and national policies. Policy makers have moved away from mere growth– centred approach to broader dimensions of human well-being. Human development has come to be accepted as enhancement of capabilities, widening of choices and expansion of freedoms. Many nations have started formulating long term human development plans in accordance with this perspective (Haq 1995: 34).

The Human Development Index (HDI), the Gender-Related Development Index (GDI), the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and the Human Poverty Index (HPI) have served policy debates and dialogues. Academic researches and empirical studies have led to disaggregated indices reflecting local contexts. Related concepts and tools have been explored in the national and sub-national HDRS of more than 135 nations (Fukuda – Parr and Kumar 2009: xxii).

It has been recognised that the concepts and measures in the HDRS are not final (Streeten 2009: 104). The HDI is perceived as an incomplete measure of human development (Raworth and Stewart 2009: 169). Its over simplification of the complex dimensions of human development has made it restrictive. The insensitivity of the HDI to the processes behind the recorded outcomes has also been questioned. In its excessive reliance on easily available data set and convenient summarisation tools, the HDI has remained silent on the need to capture capabilities other than education, life expectancy and income.
Suggestions have been made to add political freedom, self respect, creative opportunities, freedom from crime and violence, culture, nutritional status, and job security, to the index of human development (ibid). Efforts are on to construct indices that measure political freedom (Desai 2009). However the difficulties of evolving universally valid dimensions and the data constraints at macro and micro levels, challenge such exercises.

1.2.2 The experienced ways of human development

Over the past decades, there have been unprecedented gains in material wealth and prosperity across the world. On an average, the world today has more opportunities for people than they had 20, 50 or 100 years ago (UNDP 1999:25). The HDI scores of nations have also been rising except in the Sub Saharan Africa (UNDP 2006). However all progress reports are of “glasses half empty and half full” (ibid: 267). The world faces huge backlogs of deprivations and inequalities. Many decades of lost opportunities have passed by (UNDP 2005). The global snapshots obscure intra-national and inter-regional variations in human development. One person in eight in the richest countries is affected by some form of human poverty (UNDP 1997). For the first time since 1970, more than one billion people are hungry and undernourished worldwide (FAO 2009).

Economic growth is a necessary means to achieve and sustain human development. But the change from economic growth to human development is not automatic. The non-translation of economic growth into human development achievements could obstruct growth itself. Empirical studies (Ranis et.al 2000) showed that human development lopsidedness permitted movements to economic growth in one third of nations. A similar pattern seems to emerge in Kerala (GoK 2005). But this could prove to be non-sustainable, if unaccompanied by non-conversion of human development achievements into actual achievements of all sections. Universally the effective delivery and poor quality of service provisions accelerate exclusions of some from the mainstream achievements.

On the one hand democratic institutions, subverted by corruption, non-accountability and elitism have been creating many asymmetries in human
development (Goetz and Jenkins 2002). On the other hand autocratic regimes in certain parts of the world have been suppressing the freedoms essential for human development. Irrespective of the form of government, bad governance has been leading to lags between the proclaimed norms of development and the real entitlements (UNDP 2002).

The failures of personal dimensions have also been challenging actual achievements. Many individuals fail in exercising the self-agency for one’s own well-being; many fail in using their agency for fulfilling the obligations to others (Chambers 2004; Scott–Villiers 2004). Thus the real plane of human development achievements is vitiated by misdirected actions and irresponsible actors.

Amid all these deficits in human development, the world has been witnessing creative and participatory efforts. Equity issues have been accommodated in the conventionally growth centric multilateral financial institutions (Haq 1995, op.cit). Global networks in human development partnerships provide scope for collective solutions. Voices of the people are heard in the institutions of decentralized governance. Civic activism demands accountable development practices and effective monitoring of the same. Legislative, executive and judicial outputs address human development deprivations as violations of human rights. Social responsibility has become a key word in the corporate sector. Grass root collectivities mobilise public action. Diverse sources of information mould public reasoning and informed debates of policies. Theoretically and practically, human development has come to be recognised as a field where multiple actors interact with mutual claims and obligations for the advancement in multiple dimensions.

1.2.3 The human rights based approach to human development

Common motivations and concerns brought human development and human rights closer. The integrated conceptions of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights converged with ideas of human development. A holistic approach was given by the Declaration on the Right to Development in 1986. A major breakthrough came with the mutual reinforcements visualised in HDR 2000.
Human rights based development strategies evolved as the most frequent linking of human rights and human development in policy (Marks 2005). Vizard (2006) saw this approach as a needed solution to the limitations of the theoretical approaches to human development in international forums, academic writings and development practice (Marks op.cit.: 28). Its uniqueness has been recognised in development literature (see Chapter 2 for a detailed review). The approach is in perfect harmony with the wide conceptual ambit of human development in development economics. This is largely due to the common motivations and concerns. But the uniqueness emerges from the conceptual, evaluative and operational additions ingrained in the approach. These refine human development to the definite directions for being truly people centric (ibid).

It starts from the ethical propositions that all people are entitled to certain standards in material and non material well being. All along its theoretical and practical ways, it locates people not as beneficiaries, but as active right holders, who too are aware of their duties to get included in the process of development. It removes the charity dimension from development programmes and policies. The integration of human rights with human development has been upheld by academicians and development practitioners to make human development workable (Robinson 2005). It builds accountability into development work, characterised as a mutually obligatory system of correlated rights and duties and as a partnered practice of right holders and duty bearers. The special concern for the excluded and the loosers in the development progressions makes the approach meaningful in the inclusionary drives of the contemporary plans and policies.

Both developed and developing countries see the approach as genuinely people centred. Many developing countries see this as an opportunity to resuscitate the New International Economic Order of the 1970s and to affirm an obligation of developed countries to reduce global divides. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the UNESCO, the UNDP and several donor governments have expressed interests in implementing the right to development (Marks op.cit). The United Nations Millennium Declaration of 2002 sought to promote respect for all internationally
recognised human rights. In 2002, the UN, in collaboration with the Bretton Woods Institutions, prepared guidelines for a human rights approach to poverty reduction strategies (OHCHR 2006).

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNICEF), the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), have adopted the approach, either as a policy or as an evaluative norm. It is also used by many non government organisations (NGOs) (Mikkelsen 2005: 201).

The ethical and practical relevance of the approach is enshrined in the constitutions of the nations of the world including India. Besides, official recognitions are evident in the enactments of the Right to Information and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education, by the Parliament of India. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme being implemented at the national level is intended to guarantee the right to work. The Panchayati Raj system is an attempt to promote participatory approach in development.

1.2.4 Changing standards of development assessments

The human rights based approach stands in the midst of strong arguments for changing the nature of development evaluations. There has been an increasing emphasis on capturing the quality dimensions in the process of development. This has generated academic interests in including multiple indicators closer to the experiences of people rather than an abstract top view of a system. Its recent evidence is the Report of the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (2009). The human rights based approach points to capturing the live spheres of human development, from the perspective of people. Its orientation matches the contemporary academic recognition of the voices of people, with rejection of the possibilities for analytical flaws. Human development is a value judgement, not a technical exercise. Hence it demands evaluation by people. It is no longer believed that people’s perceptions are self reports (CMEPSP 2009). Their cognitive evaluation defines their priorities,
aspirations and expectations. Besides, the subjective assessments bring out the contents of the opportunity set and processes (ibid).

It has been realised that macro level assessments are informative to track aggregate pictures. However, human development studies have been facing the urgency to go to the ground levels better followed through household perspectives (ibid). Besides, the non-delivery of opportunities to certain sections of the population has been reemphasising the need to design assessment standards that take the sides of the left outs. The human rights based approach could clearly cater to these changing standards.

1.2.5 The space for research

The existing human rights based perspectives to human development have largely been descriptions of the conceptual relation between the two. Empirical studies have been mostly concentrating on specific issues of food, health and education. But the approach holds out many other directions for holistic explorations of human development, as comprehended and experienced in actual life. The multidisciplinary and behavioural approaches in economics suggest that the discipline has enough space to fix and refine studies that reflect the real motivations and concerns of people. A human rights based approach is well placed in that space offering mutually enriching conceptual, evaluative and operational bases to human development. The present study is an exercise in this direction.

Its concept and methods uphold the fundamental unity of all human beings to get the opportunities for participating in the process of development and to use these opportunities responsibly. This vision needs theoretical formulations and empirical verifications. A study in this direction is justified in the context of the present day goals and strategies for inclusive growth, through participatory approaches and practices.

The special potential of the approach in delineating the process environment of human development and in assessing the outcomes of the process remains relatively less explored in research studies (Marks, op.cit). It has empirical
direction towards studying the human development positions of those sections with proven outcome records of deprivations. The fact that such a study would proceed on an already known image of backwardness, would not degrade the validity of the research. Its novelty lies in going into the processes behind the positions of human development by starting from the perspectives of people and by verifying the positions in relation to the process. All along such an empirical exercise, the study would be justified by the basic thrust of the approach, on excluded sections. This research direction has ample scope in development studies aiming at new ways of assessments and solutions.

In the backdrop of this potential of the approach, the study focuses on a marine fishing area in southern Kerala. The marine fishing sector of Kerala has an established record of many deviations from the mainstream human development achievements of the state (Government of Kerala 2005). However academic outputs did not show an application of a human rights based approach towards understanding and assessing the situation. The persisting records of worse performance of the marine fishing sector in Kerala (Mathew 2000; Haribabu and Rajan 2007) call for a study that goes beyond the restricted sphere of human development indicators. A human rights based approach has special relevance in academic enquires into the rights of the marginalized sections and into the ways for their inclusion in the mainstream of development. It assumes added significance in the context of the entry of Kerala into the second phase of development experience, confronted with issues on quality of provisioning, horizontal inequities and segmented exclusions (Government of Kerala 2006). A human rights based approach has intellectual space in the efforts of the state, for widening the data base at disaggregated levels of human development. It has operational spaces in the quest of the 11th Five Year Plan, to work out inclusive paths of economic growth, and in the reemerging focus on designing participatory ways for bringing the fisher folk to the mainstream (Haribabu and Rajan, op.cit).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The concept of human development is multidimensional with sensitivity to the process of development. Human development is about the enlargements of all
human choices, social, economic, political and cultural, through human agency itself. It has two sides - one, betterment of human lives through formation of various capabilities and two, the way in which people make use of these capabilities for dignified and worthy lives. The concept stands for a balance between the two.

Besides this conceptual side, human development has an evaluative side too. Human development is a practical reflection of life itself. Hence it needs to be evaluated by real lives of people. All processes are to be examined in a human context.

The real lives of people are reflected at the micro level. There, various actors are involved in providing an environment for expansion of capabilities of people in various dimensions. This environment comprises various facilities essential for advancements in life. Mere provisions of facilities are not enough. The provisions should have the quality to enrich lives. Hence the evaluation of human development should include the quality of the environment generated. In addition to the creation of facilities, human development involves utilisation of these facilities by the receivers of the same. Thus utilisation is another evaluative aspect. Together human development evaluations need to specify the multiple facilities, access to the environment generated by aspects in addition to provision of facilities and to find out the utilisation of facilities. Such an exercise would bring out the conceptual ideas of multiple dimensions and process sensitivity. Besides, the evaluation needs to take into account the perpetual movements of human development activated by the reached positions relative to the process environment.

Another side is empirical. The empirical analysis should be consistent with the conceptual ideal of valuing the dignity and worth of people. Human development evaluations should have an empirical frame based on the central agency of people. These agency evaluations should reflect the perceptions of people on environment generation and utilisation. Empirical assessments imposed by external agencies do not match the essential nature of human development.
Although multidimensionality, process sensitivity and human agency are implicit in the concept of human development, the evaluative measures do not bring out these. The concept itself becomes narrow by the restrictive assumptions. Standing alone, human development reverses to the ways of simplifying dimensions for easy assessment of outcomes with no consideration of how they came about and without assessing people’s perceptions on all these. Hence it needs to be qualified by an approach that specifies the facilities and evaluates the environment generation based on empirically known perceptions of people.

The conceptually established relation between human development and human rights provides such an approach. A human rights based approach has conceptual, evaluative and operational dimensions to explain human development. Its participatory and evaluative procedures could provide a backdrop analysis. The approach could be developed further to arrive at an understanding about the opportunity components valued by people. Besides, the normative contents of various human rights instruments could provide a base for categorisation of these components. Human rights have process components that could be developed as rights based aspects denoting the provision and possession of social, economic and political arrangements for human development. The approach conceives outcomes of human development as positions relative to the process aspects. Its evaluative base could be developed to get measures of human development. It could also be framed to know the routes of the perpetual movements of human development and human rights together. The whole base of the approach could be developed into an analytical framework, encompassing the contextual, conceptual, evaluative and operational inputs to human development.

1.4 Objectives

The study focuses mainly on the conceptual, evaluative and operational bases of a human rights based approach to human development. Within this broad focus, the major objectives of the study are:

1. To look into the concept and practice of human development.
2. To examine the conceptual relation between human development and human rights.
3. To find out the analytical bases of a human rights based approach and to develop an analytical framework of the approach.
4. To evolve human rights based measures of human development.
5. To bring out the policy implications of the approach.

1.5 Sources of data

Primary as well as secondary data have been used in this study. Secondary data obtained from the publications of the UNDP, the World Bank, the UNICEF, the UNESCO, the WHO, the FAO and the Government of India provided the necessary insights into the experienced patterns of human development at the global and national levels. The internet sources were also used to ascertain the macro level positions of human development. The publications of the Government of Kerala, particularly the Human Development Reports pertaining to the state, served as data sources to assess the human development dimensions at the regional level. The local self governing institution, neighbourhood groups and voluntary agencies have given the necessary data support. A field survey conducted in two coastal villages of southern Kerala and a focus group discussion which preceded the survey provided the primary data. Both have served to highlight the qualitative dimensions of the study.

1.6 Methodology

The study is analytical and empirical. It combines the use of quantitative and qualitative methods. In order to have an overview of the conceptual dimensions and evaluative measures, available literature on the subject has been used.

On the theoretical side, the existing perspectives have been examined. The analytical requirements in the existing perspectives on human development, human rights, and the human rights based approach have been reviewed to get an idea about the needed framework. All the analytical inputs that would flow from a human rights based framework are listed out as seven analytical bases. From these, an analytical framework was evolved for contextualising, conceptualising, evaluating and operationalising the approach in this study. The framework of
each of these concerns has been explained by charting out routes of the theoretical sequences (see Chapter 3).

The core of the study is the micro level enquiry undertaken by the researcher (see Appendix 6 for a description of its different phases). Two fishing villages - Kollengode and Paruthiyoor – located at the Southern tip of Kerala, were selected for the micro level study. The rationale for the selection of the area and its background features are explained in Chapter 4. A focus group discussion marked the beginning of the micro level study. In the next stage, a pretested questionnaire was used to collect data during the household level interviews (see Appendix 5 for its six parts – A to F).

The data collected from the field survey have been processed and analysed to arrive at meaningful conclusions. At the analytical stage, human rights based human development indices have been developed.

1.7 Limitations

Being an evolving approach with relatively less developed theoretical and evaluative insights, the formulations of the same were done more on a subjective basis. The human rights based approach is flexible to accommodate any valid academic effort to expand its intellectual frontiers. Hence the same approach could have a different research direction in another study. Catching on the flexible space in the approach, this study marked ‘a’ human rights based approach to human development. It is ‘one’ but not ‘the’ final.

The empirical field was found to be constrained by availability, accessibility, adequacy and quality of data. Secondary data sources did not provide human rights based assessments and information. The primary field was thoroughly limited by the non availability and poor quality of official data sources. No proper records that would have facilitated the cross checking with the perceived and observed facts could be located. Although the authorities were cooperative, they had no data bases.
As the approach is applicable in any context of human lives, no comparison was made, geographically or community wise. Due to time constraints, the study has not attempted to address the changes over time. No effort has been made to analyse the macro environment of resource supply as it falls outside the purview of the study.

1.8 Plan of the study

The study is organised into six chapters. Following this chapter, Chapter 2 presents an overview of the concept and the measures of human development, in relation to the experienced patterns and desirable directions and looks at the conceptual relation between human development and human rights. In the process, the theoretical and empirical insights of the human rights based approach are also discussed. Chapter 3 examines the theoretical background and analytical dimensions of the study, and develops an analytical frame work. In Chapter 4, the rationale of the micro level study is explained. The profiles of the study area and the sample are given in this chapter. Chapter 5 gives an empirical analysis of the data collected in the micro level study. The summary and conclusion of the study are given in the final chapter.