

## **BOOK REVIEW**

(Manzoor Ahmed Abbasi)\*

Title of the Book : 'Reflections on Human Development'  
Author's Name : Mahbub ul Haq  
Publisher : Oxford University Press  
Place of Publication : New York  
Year of Publication : 1995

This book has been written by a legendary and renowned Pakistani economist Dr Mahbul ul Haq, who made remarkable contribution to the welfare economics at the global level. He is the one who pioneered the concept of Human Development Index, to assess the developmental levels of countries. He also endeavored to re-locate the concept of human security, which has a much broader canvass than the previous narrowly defined doctrines.

The focus of the book, as the writer himself reflects, is "on the emergence of human development as a major focus of economic thinking."<sup>1</sup> He argues that "only 30 years ago, it would have been heresy to challenge the economic growth school's tacit assumption that the purpose of development is to increase national income. Today, it is widely accepted that the real purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices in all fields - economic, political and cultural. Seeking increases in income is one of the many choices people make, but it is not the only."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mahbub ul Haq, 'Reflections on Human Development'. Oxford University Press, New York, 1995.p.9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.p.9

The book has been divided into two parts. Part-I, titled 'Towards a New Development Paradigm', reflects on the concept that people in most part of the world are missing in development-planning, therefore, there is need to shift towards human development paradigm. Consequently, a Human Development Report was prepared by the economists of World Bank, under the leadership of Mahbub ul Haq, which gave birth to 'Human Development Index (HDI)' and 'Political Freedom Index'. The focus thereafter shifted towards sustainable development, which is now prevalent all around the globe.<sup>3</sup>

Part-II of the book, titled 'Towards a New International Dialogue', reflects on extremely important issues, such as 'New Imperatives of Human Security', 'What happened to the peace dividend?', 'A New Framework of Development Cooperation' and six other relevant topics. A few excerpts of the book are shared with the readers to highlight the significance of this book. "The sad reality is that spending on education and health as a proportion of central government spending declined from 21% in 1972 to 9% in 1982 in low-income developing countries, while during the same period, the defence expenditures of all developing countries increased from \$7 billion to more \$100 billion. It is, therefore, pertinent to ask, when our children cry for milk in the middle of the night, shall we give them guns instead?"<sup>4</sup> Reflecting on international debt-traps, the author quotes Tanzania's President Julius Nyerere, who said in a state of utter desperation, "must we starve our children to pay debts."<sup>5</sup> Terrorism became the buzz-word since the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.p.9

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.p.9

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.p.9

incident of 9/11, but ironically there was hardly any worthwhile efforts to root out the causes of spread of terrorism in the world. Mahbub ul Haq alluded not only to this phenomenon as early as in early 1990s but also to other issues that confront humanity in the following words, “Every drug that quietly kills, every disease that silently travels, every form of pollution that roams the globe, every act of terrorism that destroys life senselessly - imagine for a moment that they all carried a national label of origin, much as traded goods do, and there will be a sudden shocked recognition that human security concerns are more global today than global trade.”<sup>6</sup>

Readers would find a number of assertions in this book about the plight that humanity finds itself in; emphatic assertions based on knowledge, experience and above all passions. This book, written in a simple but pithy language, is a good read for every conscientious citizen of the world and ‘a must read’ for graduate, post-graduate students and M Phil/PhD scholars.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.p.115