

# **Thoughts on Development Philosophy, Policy and Practice**

Speeches and Articles by Mahbub ul Haq in the 1990s

A volume compiled by Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre

## Preface

In August 1998, a month after Mahbub ul Haq passed away, Masooda Bano, a devoted foot soldier of Mahbub ul Haq, compiled this volume so that Haq's writings during 1997 and 1998 could be easily accessed by interested people and media. This compilation was, by no means, a complete collection of the articles, papers and opinion pieces that Dr. Haq wrote during that period. But the volume gives an idea of Haq's interest in diverse topics at a very crucial phase of his life when he had been reflecting on several of the initiatives that he had launched, including the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) Human Development Report series, South Asia Human Development Reports, and the setting up of Human Development Centre in Islamabad. So the first three sections present think-pieces on human development in general, and on Pakistan and South Asia. The subsequent articles are on Haq's major concerns in South Asia, particularly poverty and low human development in the region, relationship between India and Pakistan, and the nuclear race in South Asia.

Mahbub ul Haq was always concerned about the visible disparity between economic growth and its distribution. As Mahbub put it, "The issue is not growth per se, but its character and distribution. To address poverty, economic growth is not an option: it is an imperative. But what type of growth? And who participates in it? And who derives the benefits? These are the real issues." From his books *Strategy of Economic Planning* in 1963 in which he first raised the issue of disparity of income between East and West Pakistan, to *Poverty Curtain* (1976) where the issue of international income disparity was discussed, to the 1972 Guyana Lectures where the injustice in the international economic order was analysed, and finally to the 1990s series of UNDP Human Development Reports, Mahbub ul Haq consistently talked about the glaring gaps between the rich and poor within and among nations and what could be the explosive outcome of this.

Mahbub ul Haq's visionary thinking on economic development policies and practice dominated the development dialogue during the last four decades of his life. On international stage, Haq articulated with passion, eloquence and brilliant technical skill the need for reducing poverty and international inequality, for strengthening institutions of global governance and for fair trading opportunities for the developing world. A history of the World Bank documented the profound intellectual influence Haq exercised in the evolution of the World Bank into a major development agency in the 1970s by shifting the Bank's policies toward poverty reduction and satisfaction of basic needs of the bottom 40 per cent of the population.

Mahbub ul Haq's greatest contribution, however, was the creation of the Human Development Report of UNDP of which he was the architect and principal author for the first six years. Along with the imperative of human development, Haq introduced the concept of human security which, he said, was a necessary condition for human development. For Mahbub, security of people in their homes, streets, jobs, communities and environment were just as important as territorial security. He also introduced the concept of peace dividend by passionately advocating for a cut or a freeze of the global military expenditure and devoting the savings to social development priorities.

For the South Asia region, he was an outspoken critic of the low priorities that the governments of the region placed on social development, making South Asia as "the most

deprived region in the world.” The economist in him saw the potential of trade within the South Asia region, yet the rivalries among the countries, especially between India and Pakistan, stood in the way. The arms race between India and Pakistan, two countries with a huge proportion of population in poverty, pained him most.

In Pakistan, he was the severest critic of concentration of income and wealth in the hands of a few families that had distorted all policy-making. His passionate appeal for land reform, agricultural income tax, punishing bank loan defaulters, freeing economic decision-making from the stranglehold of corrupt officials and many other reform proposals were popular among the people but not among the rich and the powerful.

Mahbub ul Haq has left behind many legacies in the realm of ideas, institutions and intellectual courage. His legacy of humanizing economics by giving a human face to economic development and bringing poverty concerns to the centre stage of development agenda will long endure. So will his concerns for the income and capability gaps between the rich and poor within and among nations. Mahbub untiringly advocated for a better development cooperation for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a less brutal process of globalization, a system of global institutions that will protect the vulnerable people and nations, a cut in military spending to free resources for social development, a more transparent and ethical national and international system of governance and a compassionate society. His legacy is also that he seldom talked about issues without providing a concrete point by point blueprint for action.

Mahbub ul Haq was an institution builder. In Pakistan, he built the finest institute of computer science with four campuses in Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad and Peshawar. But the last institution that he built, Human Development Centre, was dearest to him, because he was concerned about the state of human development in South Asia and wanted to give a wake-up call to the region’s policy makers through the hard-hitting annual reports that the Centre produced.

But Mahbub ul Haq’s most enduring legacy is his intellectual courage. He never shied away from telling the truth, even when he might have been an insider. He was always fighting for the voiceless, the marginalized, oppressed millions against a system that is unjust, unethical, corrupt and anti-people. In his last public speech, only two weeks before he passed away, Haq was concerned. He questioned, “Why do we have such bouts of intellectual nervousness when anyone has the courage to talk about the need for a genuine lender of last resort in an era of financial volatility...Have we lost the motivation to dream, to innovate, to challenge, to dare?” Mahbub ul Haq’s favourite lines from the poet T. S. Eliot were: “Do we dare? Do we dare? Do we dare to disturb the universe?” Mahbub ul Haq dared and he disturbed the universe. That courage is his finest legacy.

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