Contextualizing poverty and culture; towards a social economy of community centered knowledge based development

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the critical interrelationships between poverty, culture and knowledge-based community development.

Design/methodology/approach – The traditional approaches to the management of poverty such as infrastructure, literacy and economic aid have failed to deliver and ameliorate the lot of common people. The current paper engages in critical constructivist discourse on poverty as unfolding in the era of knowledge economy and seeks to propose a community focussed knowledge-based development model of human economic and social uplift. This model has three dimensions: community knowledge focus, interactions of local, regional and global knowledge shaping and influencing poverty management and finally collective responsibility (collective commitment) of groups to rid them of poverty trap.

Findings – First, this paper looks at the social interconnections of poverty, culture and knowledge-based development in a critical discourse context. Second, it discusses the alternative worldviews of economic development. Third, it questions current epistemological and sociological assumptions of development paradigm.

Originality/value – The paper looks at the issues of poverty, culture and economic development from a critical pluralistic epistemological standpoint. It also questions some of the prescriptive methods of development by poverty experts. It also proposes to effectively explore and integrate different cognitive styles in development discourse and their usefulness and relevance to global development discourse.

Keywords Culture, Analysis, Poverty, Community, Development discourse, Knowledge based

Paper type Conceptual paper

Discourse on poverty and culture

The literature affords us variety of interpretations about the nature of the poverty. Karl Marx was the first person in modern social scientific writings, who developed a "critique" of the political economy of capitalism and the social inequalities created by the industrial society (Marx, 1976). He predicted about the rise of a "classless" communist society, which he thought to be the logical outcome of the social and economic contradictions of the industrial society. He stressed upon the proletariat to unite and change the bourgeois capitalistic economic and social system. This system

dehumanizes and perpetuates a cycle of poverty, inequality and alienation of the poor class. The social scientists have tried to understand the dynamics of this social phenomenon of poverty. However, it is argued that the social epistemological grounding of poverty depends upon the contexts and values of the social scientists as well as general norms prevailing in the human societies during a particular historical age (Cheal, 1996; McPherson and Silburn, 1998; O'Connor, 2000). Some writers even see and interpret poverty research as one, "produced by the agenda and methods of the social sciences," and thus shaping "public perceptions of poverty during twentieth century" (Cheal, 1996). In this context, Lowe and Reid (1999), have criticized the "lost opportunity" of social work to establish itself as a, "profession for the poor," thereby relinquishing its rightful place to spearhead the cause of the public welfare in relation to other professions. The sociologist, Alice O'Connor (2000) states that, "the idea of lower class culture was firmly entrenched in social problems research by the 1940." She then goes on to comment on the external social conditions which have shaped the notion of a "culture of poverty."

The analysis of social causes given by O'Connor portrays a complex interplay of political, psychological and economic forces shaping the poverty knowledge informed by the social scientific research. This poverty knowledge is further influenced by a broader strategic interaction of local, regional and global political actors. How then the concept of poverty can be understood and explained?

McPherson and Silburn (1998) and Amartya Sen (1982) have supplied us with theoretical classifications of the concept. They have developed a causal model for analyzing the poverty and its attendant social and economic characteristics. McPherson and Silburn (1998) thus define poverty in the following words.

"At its simplest poverty refers to a basic lack of the means of survival; the poor are those who, even in normal circumstances, are unable to feed and clothe themselves properly and risk death as a consequence." The definition is too broad and leaves ambiguous what is meant by "survival" and "normal circumstances." The meaning and interpretation of both terms can vary across societies. Sen (1982) and McPherson and Silburn (1998) have given the following theoretical model for analyzing the concept of poverty. It is a threefold causal analysis of poverty.

Some important characteristics of each type of poverty are discussed in following section.

Subsistence poverty
Subsistence poverty refers to the barest level of survival of the poor and underclass in harsh living conditions. Individuals and groups alike strive hard to maintain minimum levels of material and physical needs. According to McPherson and Silburn (1998), "In its narrowest sense this may mean more than having the resources to purchase or grow sufficient food for oneself and ones' dependents. The only needs that are acknowledged are biological ones, food, water, and in hostile climates, clothing and shelter. No allowances are made for broader social needs, and no recognition is given to social and cultural expectations." Sen (1982) refers to subsistence needs as "biological" needs and comments that, "it is not surprising that biological considerations related to requirements of survival or work efficiency have been often used in defining the poverty line. Starvation, clearly, is the most telling aspect of poverty. But he is reluctant to use biological concept of poverty due to its inherent limitations in applications to different human societies owing to peculiar social meanings attached to the notions of food and nutrition among the later.

Basic needs poverty
McPherson and Silburn (1998), state that, "the basic needs definition of poverty is an influential variant of the subsistence model, moving somewhat toward a more relative approach. Basic needs are defined by the International Labour Organization.

"[A]s the minimum standard of living which a society should set for the poorest groups of its people. The satisfaction of basic needs means meeting the minimum requirements of a family for personal consumption: food, shelter, clothing; it implies access to essential services, such as safe drinking water, sanitation, transport, health and education [...] it should further imply the satisfaction of needs of a more qualitative nature: a healthy, humane and satisfying environment, and popular participation in the making of decisions." McPherson and Silburn (1998) argue that, "the major importance of basic needs concept is that it is not confined to the physical needs for individual survival, but recognizes the importance of a range of community services and facilities, often of infrastructural kind, and beyond these no-material qualitative assets. It recognizes that basic needs objectives will vary from one country to another in the light of specific circumstances, levels of development, climatic conditions, social and cultural values. Basic needs are therefore in large part a relative concept; but there are also certain minimum levels of personal consumption and access to social services which should be universally regarded as essential to a decent life." The standards of a minimum decent living style can vary from society to society but are essential for the sake of useful social analysis of poverty as has been argued by Townsend (cit. in Sen, 1982).

Relative poverty
The concepts relative poverty or relative deprivation has been extensively utilized in economic and sociological analysis of the poverty. According to Sen (1982), "different issues related to the general notion of relative deprivation have considerable bearing on the social analysis of poverty. It is, however, worth noting that the approach of relative deprivation even including all its variants cannot really be the only basis for understanding the concept of poverty. A famine, for example, will be readily accepted as a case of acute poverty no matter what the relative pattern within the society happens to be. Indeed, there is an irreducible core of absolute deprivation in our idea of poverty which translates reports of starvation, malnutrition and visible hardship into diagnosis of poverty without having to ascertain first the relative picture. Thus the approach of relative deprivation supplements rather than supplants the analysis of poverty in terms of absolute dispossession. McPherson and Silburn (1998) take a different view of relative deprivation or relative poverty. Contrary to what Sen (1982) claims about poverty as a social state of "absolute dispossession," they contend that, "attempt to construct an absolute and presumably universal definition of poverty is fundamentally flawed, both in theory and practice. Poverty analysts are driven remorselessly to accept that poverty has to be understood as a socially constructed concept with powerful qualitative and normative components. As such it is inherently a relative concept." But it does remain relevant within a given social framework for explanation connected with some sort of measurable consequences of poverty prevalent in a particular society (McPherson and Silburn, 1998).

Poverty as value judgment
Poverty is a highly politicized issue (Cheal, 1996). Some analyst even suggest that mass poverty constitute, "a major ethical and political problem but also a serious threat to macroeconomic stability and a brake of long-term growth". They emphasize

that underlying ethical and cultural differences in the interpretation of the poverty should be given due consideration by the analysts. However, Sen (1982) takes a very different standpoint on this value-contextuality of the poverty. He argues that the assessment and measurement of poverty in a given society is very important. He states that, "It is important to distinguish between different ways in which the role of morals can be accommodated into the exercises of poverty measurement […]. For the person studying and measuring poverty, the conventions of society are matters of fact (what are the contemporary standards?), and not the issues of morality or of subjective search (what should be the contemporary standards? What should be my values? How do I feel about all this)?" It is justified to seek some sort of objective criterion to solve the problem of poverty both at the level of a particular society or across different cultures. Some sort of minimum criteria is indispensable to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor underclass. Policy makers, governments, development agencies and non-governmental organizations require some sort of benchmark to evaluate the impact of poverty reduction efforts. For example, Garner *et al.* (1998) in their article, "Experimental poverty measurement for the 1990s" has provided a useful criterion for measuring the poverty in the American society. They have devised what they term as "basic bundle" which include food, clothing, shelter and utilities. This basic bundle is then expanded according to the multiplier effect which may or may not include, transport, personal care, education, etc. These measures can help assess the real-time social conditions of poor and the minimum decent level of human survival. UNDP has also furnished way to measure the poverty. This measure is termed as Human Poverty Index (HPI). Generally, the HPI is considered to be a part of the measurement of human development. It measures deprivations in three basic dimensions of human development:

(1) A long and healthy life, vulnerability to death at a relatively early age, as measured by the probability of not surviving to age 40.

(2) Knowledge […] exclusion from the world of reading and communications, as measured by the adult illiteracy rate.

(3) Lack of overall economic provisioning, as measured by the percentage of the population not using improved water sources and percentage of children under five who are underweight (Mabugi and Selim, 2006, p. 10). This index is mostly used to assess the social state of poverty in the developing countries of the world. It is, therefore significant to note that currently international funding agencies such as World Bank, IMF and Asian Development Bank, have made it obligatory upon the recipient of financial and technical aids to apply some sort of policy framework for poverty reduction particularly in the context of gender, child labor, human rights and public services. This will help to utilize the financial donations and grants in aid effectively (Lichter, 1997; Smith, 1997). The social prevalence of poverty is not restricted to the rural areas, but can also be witnessed in the urban slums, ghettos, ethnic and racial minorities (Curley, 2005).

Communities and knowledge-based development
Human communities constitute the bedrock of civilization and culture. Culture plays a significant role in shaping the social and economic organization of rural as well as urban communities (Raza *et al.*, 2006). Communities have provided organized means to

support the social and economic existence of the people. Not until the industrial revolution that the social and economic structure of the human communities began to succumb to structural fragmentation (Caton, 1988). The collective behavior of economic and social institutions have become more autonomous, rational and driven by enlightened "self-interest." Both rural and urban communities experienced the irreversible loss of social and economic harmony of the agricultural age (Gibson, 2005). The individual became a victim of economic alienation, poorer and less satisfied due to industrialization of economy and modernization of society. Consequently, this led modern civilization to disastrous world wars and changed the social and economic systems of human societies (Attfiled and Wilkinson, 1992).

Toward the end of Second World War, there was a renewed political emphasis on social reconstruction and economic development. The world leadership pledged to create a just world order. The vision of a socially just world was shattered when the world was again dragged into the geopolitics of "cold war." This world division subsequently shaped the development discourse and the distribution of world economic resources to the poor and developing nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. This created a selective approach to development. The strategies of economic and social progress were designed to serve the political interests of respective power blocs, showing no consideration to local cultural and economic expectations. Here one can notice that the poverty management and evaluation strategies in Post-war era were mostly designed and implemented by International development agencies, such as World Bank, IMF and UNDP. These development agencies were mostly indifferent to the local social and economic realities of the poor communities of rural and urban centers of the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America (Aubery, 1997). The social and economic fragmentation caused by these external agents of development in the local social and economic systems of developing states led to extreme forms of economic dependency on the West (Gibson, 2005). The post-colonial agenda of development was based on "cold war" political hegemonies and favored local axis of civil-military-industrial elite, giving them money and power to control local resources. In return, these elites were obliged to serve the "strategic objectives" of their respective "blocs." These objectives were: first, political alignment to Western or Warsaw Bloc political agenda in their regions and states and second, domination of local communities and control of the local human and natural capital (Tulchin and Garland, 2000).

The end of cold war in 1989 ushered a new hope of freedom and democracy throughout the world. This hope became more urgent and pressing due to new modes of social communication and technological exchange between the human societies (Raza *et al.*, 2007). The new social modes of economic and technological exchange were provided by the knowledge society and knowledge economy. Cyberspace became the new melting pot of human cultures and the meeting point of cultural diversity and ideological multiplicity across the globe. The Post-war models of socio-economic development, whether based on W.W. Rostow's ideas or inspired by the socialist model of Soviet Russia and Communist China have been swept away by the global information revolution. The free spread of information has led to a growing social critique of restructuring international development model and recontextualizing it according to local cultural and economic values of communities (Gibson, 2005).

The international poverty management strategies of World Bank, IMF and UNDP did not improve the lot of rural and urban communities due to their cultural and psychological indifference to the social and economic needs of the local populations.

Much of the economic and social aid provided by these agencies have been pilfered by the ruling elites of the developing countries and hardly any loaf of bread or penny have gone in to fill the mouth and hands of the poor local communities (Mitra,1992; McDowell, 1996). The grants in aid given for the socio-economic improvements in health, literacy and job creation programmes have gone into the hands of corrupt politicians, civil servants and army generals. This political plunder of international development aid by the local elites have caused socio-economic contradictions in the local social and economic systems, turning them into breeding grounds for violence, terrorism, human smuggling, drug trafficking and woman and child labor abuses (Mitra, 1992).

The rapid rise of knowledge-based development now offers a new social hope for a mass scale poverty reduction. It is an alternative development strategy for the poor and resourceless communities of the developing countries. Obviously, this new social hope cannot be translated into reality without help of direct involvement and participation of local communities. The cultural knowledge and social capital of local communities can be leveraged to usher into socially harmonious development and economic growth and what it means for them and their children. The exogenous approach to socio-economic development has failed to produce desired results for the social and economic uplift of human communities across the Asian, African and Latin American societies. The failure of the exogenous economic model is caused due to its insensitivity to local cultural, ethical, spiritual and economic conditions. This model overlooks the regional socio-cultural complexities and tries to produce results by radically intervening into the age old social and economic harmonies of non-Western societies. In addition to this, the competitive and evolutionary economic epistemology of Western development model has brought the world to an impending ecological and social crisis. The world is already being reminded by people like Robert Algore, former US presidential candidate in 2000, that if we do not seriously reevaluate our economic and technological actions; we might be facing a tangible threat of imminent ecological disaster such as increased levels of global warming and climate change. Therefore policy makers, leaders and economists need to revaluate some of the core assumptions of modern economic system and its West-centric outlook of the world. This new and emerging global consciousness has made the branded and expert development knowledge of the West culturally irrelevant to developing regions as far as social and economic development is concerned. Seibers (2003), Buil and Bergua (1988), Alkire (2002) and Raza *et al.* (2007) have discussed and emphasized the culturally relevant models of knowledge-based development gaining grounds over branded models of development originating in Anglo-Saxon liberal political economics.

Methodological framework: contextualizing poverty, culture and KBD
Carrillo (2009) has identified three KBD continua. He has argued that, "geopolitical continuum, social continuum and cultural-economic continuum" come to demarcate and define the field of inquiry of KBD. This demarcation when extended and applied to issues of poverty, culture and development lead us to novel insights. First, poverty and culture fall within the social and cultural-economic continuum and thus justify their epistemological place within these units of analysis and require attention from experts, social scientists and policy makers across the different disciplinary engagements. Second, KBD has a particular social significance for the developing nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America because of its inherent epistemological flexibility to accommodate and respond to the cultural and spiritual diversity of these cultures. It

questions the West-centric notion of what Carrillo has termed as, "physics-based economics" and thus offers us an innovative alternative strategy of economic development. The "physics-based economics" look at poverty as a "problem" with precise cultural epistemology rooted in Western social science and with a well grounded utilitarian ethics. The "stages" of the poverty in a physics-based economic context have been discussed by McPherson and Silburn and Sen in the foregoing section. This approach to development completely disregards the significance of local cultures, indigenous knowledge bases and their inherent diversities in managing relationship with nature and technology. Therefore, one can see why branded models of development designed and implemented by Western experts with their peculiar geopolitical interests have miserably failed to ameliorate the lot of common people in the developing countries. On the other hand KBD offers new choice of development for the poor and downtrodden masses of the developing nations. KBD looks and interprets culture as a "capital," which local people can build upon and poverty as a challenge which is to be responded intelligently.

There is no doubt that technological context of KBD is very crucial in defining this emerging model of global development discourse. However, this paper seeks to contextualize KBD more as a constructivist-critical paradigm, which is more responsive to the inherent global cultural and spiritual diversities. It also critiques an "objectivist," linear grounding of KBD epistemology, which portrays KBD as a pinnacle of development hierarchy achieved by the Western social science. It is by critically constructing KBD in diverse cultural contexts that some tangible social meaningfulness of this "new" development model can be established by the policy makers of the developing countries. The establishment of K-cities in the developed West European societies can be a reasonable benchmark to gauge level of KBD there. But in case of developing countries with negligible or underdeveloped knowledge-based infrastructure, the application and social significance of KBD would be entirely different. Here per capita use of internet bandwidth is very low compared to developed nations of the world. But here again, KBD experts can devise strategies where KBD infrastructure is accessible at the social level. For example a large rural population can be catered with educational facilities through "social" internet kiosks. The strategy of "social kiosks" can profoundly enhance the literacy levels of the underprivileged rural communities in Asian and African countries. In this way the knowledge gaps created by technological advantage of the urban centers might be bridged and social access of knowledge is restored to those who do not possess advanced knowledge-based infrastructures. This paper also argues following Carrillo (2009) that knowledge economy has emerged as a new "game" which is rapidly reshaping new "rules" of economic and social behavior. Therefore, experts and policy makers also need to establish new rules to put in place the social and economic contributions of the local communities in the formation of global capital. The local people and their cultural and spiritual capital should be effectively consulted and integrated when devising poverty alleviation strategies for the developing countries by international bodies like UN and World Bank. These countries should be treated fairly by the developed nations of the world and not just "markets" and "spaces" for cheap human labor.

It is therefore argued that poverty and social and economic inequalities constitute an important sub-domain of analysis within the broader "social-economic continuum" of KBD which require the attention of the KBD analyst and policy experts. This can be achieved if KBD specialists look and interpret poverty and KBD as culturally constructed reality, accommodating diversity and variety in worldviews and

recognizing the contributions to development from multiple spiritual contexts of human cultures.

Finally, KBD should also look into the social ontology of "poverty." What it means to "be poor" and "rich"? What it means to possess "knowledge" and "technology"? The answers to these questions lie in understanding the diverse cultural and cognitive contexts which legitimize notions such as poverty and technology. The cognitive psychologist Nisbett (2009) has shown that there are inherent cultural differences in cognitive structuring of reality present in the Asian and Western cultures. For example, he has discussed that Asians perceive time in a "circle" while the Western interpret time in a "linear" fashion. For the Western, external world is progressively developing and changing to higher complex end, while the Asians think that the changes and developments in the world are nothing but the reflection of the eternal principles. These cultural differences might also have some existential connotations linking them to a particular way of life or moral and economic philosophy. The Neo-Freudian psychoanalyst, Eric Fromm (1967) has furnished a clue to this existential difference in human cultures and values of concepts. He identifies two modes of human existence; "having mode and being mode." In the "having mode" a person likes to possess more and more and add to his wealth and material things and consequently to his woes, miseries and dissatisfactions on each gain or loss. In the "being mode" a person stays in touch with the center of his/her self and understands the limits of his personal and psychological efforts to change his/her life. She/he accepts suffering, pain and material loss as part of his/her existential reality. She/he likes to maintain order, peace and tranquility in life. It cautions all those engaged in "grand" theorizing about cultural concepts such as poverty, knowledge and technology. There might exist a wholesome "culture of poverty" sustaining a well defined world-outlook and a way of life in the slums and ghetto (Lewis, 1965). It is here that the dominant and West-centric development paradigm and its political discourse of legitimizing "modernization" as the only social form of happiness, faces moral challenge. Are those holding economic and political power at the world centers and its peripheries justified to alter a particular people's way of life, their meaning system and their culture and ethics? This challenge simply informs us that "knowledge of poverty" created by the professional social scientists and development policy experts might be suffering from the syndrome of "poverty of knowledge" (borrowing from Poppers' "poverty of historicism" analogy), in addressing the issues of social and economic development. It is to this aspect of social exclusion that KBD should respond as a new paradigm of development particularly in the cultural context of developing countries.

Community-based model of KBD
The political economy of development aid has failed to bring social and economic transformation of local people in the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America as discussed in the foregoing section on communities and knowledge-based development. One can clearly identify three reasons of failure of modernization and economic development in the developing nations. First, the beneficiaries of development aid have been mostly corrupt local political-civil-military elites, who served the geopolitical interests of donors in their regions and thus freely plundered the economic resources meant for development of the poor. Second, social and economic exclusion of the local communities and insensitivity to their cultural and spiritual capital led to the utter collapse of the Western model of development in these developing countries. Third, modernization through development aid led to the growth of culture of dependency

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instead of economic prosperity and political autonomy in these developing nations. The strategic failure of dominant "modernization" philosophy and development aid strategy in fact testifies to the "poverty of knowledge" syndrome as alluded to in the methodological framework on poverty, culture and KBD.

The following section focusses on the role of human communities in the development processes. It discusses that how an "alternative" approach, sensitive to local cultural and spiritual capital can yield social and economic results, albeit unobserved in development discourse. It outlines a community focussed KBD model for development and then goes on to analyze its three important strategic-structural components.

Human communities are the core constituents of the "social" and "cultural-economic continuum" of KBD model of economic and social growth. The focal place of communities cannot be overlooked in knowledge-based development of socio-economic systems of developing countries. What follows is a "critical constructivist" discourse on a community-based model for effective implementation of KBD for rural as well as urban communities with three strategic levels of interconnected operations shown in Figure 1.

Community knowledge focus (CKF)
The two models of poverty presented in the first section of this paper can be interpreted differently in the context of different human societies. The meaning of "subsistence" level poverty may not be comprehensible to an average West European or North American citizen in their advanced and complex social systems. Their governments heavily subsidize social welfare programs which at least eliminate the fear of "insufficient income" to survive in harsh physical conditions. The harsh survival conditions are mostly observable in the Asian and Latin American slums and ghettos and African rural hinterlands. In South Asia, for example, one can locate communities
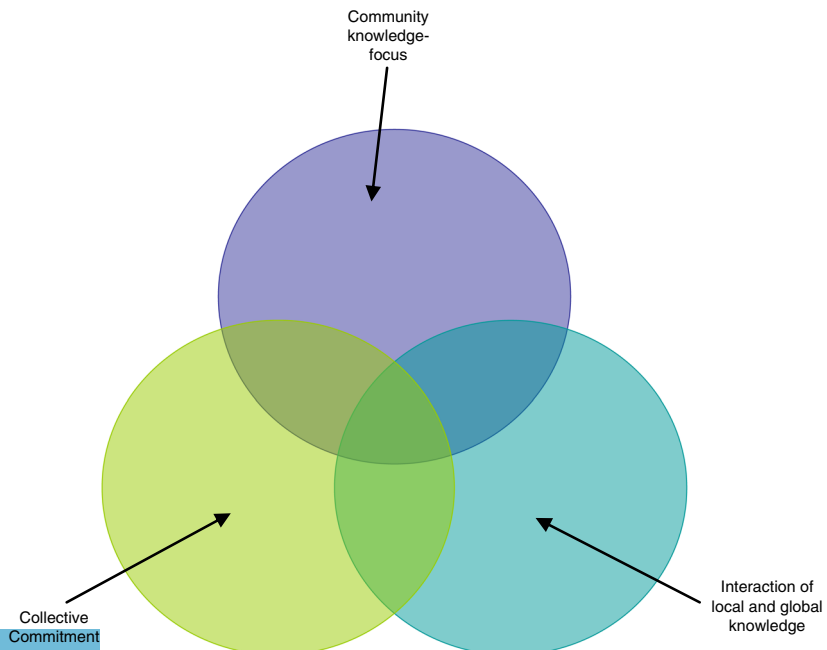

Figure 1.
Community-based
KBD model

after communities faced with social and economic alienation coupled with harsh physical conditions to exist. Mostly "subsistence" level poverty is socially prevalent and dominates the rural and urban landscape. Several social and governance problems, such as unplanned urban centers, organized crime mafia, theft, rape and human smuggling are linked with this unjust sprawl of social-economic geography of economic hegemony and political control of resources. The social-ecological landscape of major urban centers in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and elsewhere in Africa, Latin America and Far East display these uneven and irregular human communities in abundance. The social and economic transformations of these underdeveloped human settlements require their effective and humanistic engagement into the mainstream political and social system. In short, mainstream development practitioners and policy makers need to show cultural responsiveness to their identity and give them a new social hope as equal partners in development. This requires a development strategy, wherein community knowledge of these alienated social groups could be properly leveraged to enable them to change their current social state of exclusion.

CKF is a basic and operational level of community centered knowledge-based development. The development specialists now need to realize the core importance of CKF in development processes of the human societies. The community knowledge can transform the local knowledge and wisdom into useful development experience. Alkire (2002) while evaluating the poverty reduction program sponsored by Oxfam, an International NGO based in UK, for local communities of rural Sindh, Pakistan, has reported that those who benefitted from Oxfam financial contributions have spent the money on culturally relevant development activities. One of the beneficiaries reported to her that she feels satisfied in her "rose-selling" business because the activity brings her both money and spiritual satisfaction. Her roses are bought by the people who present them on a shrine of a local saint in order to seek his blessings. Amy Sherman (1997) in her empirical investigation of five Guatemalan villages consisting of a sample of 1,000 respondents has reported that there exist significant association between "worldview" and "economic development" of these communities. She has shown that "conversion" to Protestantism brings positive transformation in the socio-economic status of the people. She contends that spiritual change effects economic change in these communities. Seibers (2003) using somewhat different framework in another Guatemalan community of Q'echi tribes of mountains has shown that western development knowledge is culturally absorbed by these people by way of combining it with the indigenous view of life and cultural values. Lees and Gelles (2001) have also investigated the role of "cultural politics" in the management of water resources in highland Peru and found out that local political alliances play a crucial part in the water resources management in that part of the world.

Global local knowledge interaction (GLKI)
It is significant to note that global development methodologies can only bear results if they are properly internalized in the local cultural context. The GLKI provides a key in this connection. The developmental efforts of UNDP, World Bank and International NGOs and Corporate philanthropists can be effective only if these are culturally acceptable and respond to the self-esteem of the developing communities of Asia, Africa and Latin America (Buil and Bergua, 1988). The work of Dr Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh and Roshanay Zafar of Kashf Foundation in Pakistan shows the importance of a synthetic strategy of poverty alleviation in this part of the world. Here

local cultural values and institutional frameworks bring tangible socio-economic benefits in the lives of the local communities. The financial contributions from global corporations such as Donne of France directly to the developing communities of Bangladesh through local institutional networks and cultural system has helped these communities achieve social esteem and economic autonomy, without becoming dependent on outside aid and development philosophy. Dr Yunus and Weber (2007) has presented the idea of "social business" which simply captures this synthetic strategy of GLKI for social uplift and economic growth of local communities.

Dr Yunus has also launched the concept of microfinance in the form of small credits on minimum interest rates to the rural Bangladeshi women to mobilize them to achieve social progress and economic autonomy. The concept became an effective social reality in the form of Grameen Bank of Bangladesh. This bank now operates throughout Bangladesh and caters to economic and social needs of the poor rural communities (Yunus and Weber, 2007). The effectiveness of Yunus lies in his pragmatic application of Western economic philosophy of credits and borrowings trimmed and sensitized according to the cultural and psychological context of the local communities. Somewhat similar results have been achieved by a Pakistani woman entrepreneur, Roshany Zafar, who through her NGO "Kashaf Foundation," transformed the lives of women in rural communities of Punjab, Pakistan, applying again this microfinance social strategy to change their age old social and economic roles. In urban centers such as Lahore, one can witness the steady rise in non-governmental organizations supporting subsidized and even at times free education to students (both boys and girls) hailing from the rural areas of Pakistan. One such NGO operating in educational sector is Institute of Leadership and Management trust which was inspired by the social egalitarianism of Muslim intellectual Khuram Jah Murad. He founded the trust from his philanthropic contribution of PKR 500,000 (approximately $5,000) in 1990 to spread education to those segments of society who cannot pay and support their education at high quality and expensive institutions of the country. His ideal of social egalitarianism in education was picked up by his son Hasan Sohaib Murad, an American and UK qualified management scientist (he holds a PhD from Wales University, UK and MBA from USA). He turned social egalitarianism of Khuram Murad into living reality by his dynamic commitment to social uplift of poor classes through education. Here again one can notice a synthesis of global educational concepts within the local cultural context (Raza, 2009).

Finally a brief mention of Agha Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) in the Northern Areas (now Gilgit-Baltistan province) of Pakistan would not be out of place. The development strategy of AKRSP clearly reflects the GLKI as discussed above. AKRSP provides financial and technical resources to the local community councils in different villages of Gilgit-Baltistan by their own chosen representatives. These communities then select and choose an area of development and then implement the project through financial contribution of AKRSP. The AKRSP teams regularly visit the project sites, monitor progress and finally hand over the project to the community on its successful completion. The development is achieved by an effective synthesis of global knowledge and local cultural knowledge without negotiating self-esteem of local communities.

Collective commitment (CC)
The third dimension of community centered KBD concerns itself with the concept of CC. It pertains to the social ontology of poverty, culture and knowledge-based economic development. The efficacy of KBD as domain of theoretical and empirical

investigation as well as applications of KBD induced poverty management strategies largely depend on the CC of individual's at all social levels, local, regional and global. The emotional energy can be effectively shared at all levels, to build a more secure, just and peaceful world. But the issue of KBD is trickier in its essence. Why should people abandon their donkey carts in favor of laptops? Will adoption of KBD make life happy and satisfying for people? It is argued that KBD as autonomous discipline on development have to look beyond the "Eurocentric" and "Americanized" epistemologies of development (Gibson, 2005). The dominant paradigm does not allow other worldviews on human development to contribute toward global development philosophy. A simple reading of global statements of development such as Millennium Development Goals and UN Global Compact reveals that alternative discourses on human development are hardly responded and incorporated into these strategic documents. Most of the epistemological as well as sociological discourse of these documents is rooted in West European and North American objectivist and prescriptive methodologies of development (Gibson, 2005). There is an epistemological necessity for indigenization of methodological applications of western sociological knowledge (Yan and Cheung, 2006). These global documents talk of human rights, empowerment, clean drinking water and literacy. None of these, however, look at the diversity of spiritual and psychological capital of the human communities of the developing countries. The entire epistemology is rooted in evolutionary social scientific discourse, wherein Western model is legitimized as the only of possible strategy of human development (Gibson, 2005; James and Etim, 1999). One can underscore the absence of Asian, African and Latin American development discourses from these global documents. KBD therefore have to be responsive to this "objectivist" illusion and incorporate plurality of worldviews on development in its methodological core. It is argued that KBD cannot dissociate itself from the complex global politicization of development discourse by policy and development experts of the developed industrial nations of the world (Zhang, 2003). Moreover, it is suggested that KBD does not constitute another "evolutionary" layer in the Western epistemological hierarchy of economic development. It is just a "different" method of dealing with problems of social uplift and economic satisfaction among the human communities. Retrospectively, it is argued that KBD need to engage itself with the possibilities of "social democratization of knowledge" as epistemological tool of inquiry regarding development issues such as poverty, culture, communication and ecology (Raza *et al.*, 2007; Raza and Murad, 2008).

KBD cannot disentangle itself from the cultural context. Culture not only shapes development discourse but also human cognition (Raza *et al.*, 2006; Lewis, 1965). Modern western culture, value system and its legitimizing social science happens to be the consequence of industrial revolution (Gibson, 2005). It is competitive and exclusive in outlook. It has a history of 300 years of world domination and ascendancy. Its cultural achievements are profound. But it is not the only way of managing issues of human development. The world can learn from the concept of human development in other, different and non-western culture (Sen, 1982). For example development experts can assess the worth and relevance of deep vedic spirituality, Buddhist zen, Christian austerity, Judaic intelligence, Chinese ethical order and Muslim compassion. History of all of these cultural traditions goes back thousands of years. Still billions of people interpret and organize their lives on the principles given by each tradition. In short development has a moral context to its understanding.

The problem of world hunger and world poverty cannot be isolated from the world political discourse (Simon and Simon, 1973; Scalapino, 1989; Van Ufford and Giri, 2003). Similarly the vulnerable segments of the human communities such as women and children needs to reintegrated in the poverty and development discussions (Roy, 2003; James and Etim, 1999). The ecological consequences of modernization and industrialization such as carbon emissions, CFC, toxic waste, air and water pollution have also assumed a new challenge for the future of human civilization on earth (Jackson and Pearson, 1998). There is a growing critique on the ethical consequences of modern development model for human societies and a quest for the safe, sustainable and alternative ways of development (Van Ufford and Giri, 2003; Hajer, 2001).

Results and implications
One can clearly derive two significant results from this critical constructivist analysis of the processes of KBD, poverty and culture. First, poverty and culture studies can be genuinely grounded within the epistemological field of inquiry of KBD. This can broaden the indispensable constituents of the sub-domains of "social continuum" and "cultural-economic continuum" of emerging KBD theoretical framework as proposed by Carrillo (2009). Second, KBD approach to poverty and culture studies should not ground itself in dominant West-centric cultural epistemology of development. It should not seek an epistemological legitimacy as a viable and autonomous field of inquiry within the dominant Western social scientific discourse on development. This can in turn create an epistemological justification and academic space for alternative worldviews and cultural and spiritual discourses on human development.

Three propositions are presented, which outline the methodological and strategic import of the clinical implications of community centered KBD model as a new and emerging development strategy for developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America can be summarized in three propositions. In the first place, International development agencies such as UN and World Bank, NGOs and civil society organizations and governmental agencies working for urban and rural development in the developing countries should bank upon the local cultural and spiritual capital of these communities. They can enable and invoke change, rather than impose one from the branded versions of development economics and sociology textbooks, which produce reaction and resentment among the primary stakeholders. Second, KBD practitioners and policy makers originating from the South need to boldly construct a critique of West-centric development discourse and propose development strategies which are culturally resonating to the local knowledge bases and cognitive systems. Third, KBD researchers can apply community centered KBD model to real-time urban and rural social, economic and technological events and processes to construct a sound database of reliable and testable body of development knowledge. For example as suggested above the community centered KBD model can be effectively experimented through internet "social kiosks," whereby educational capacity of the poor rural communities of the underprivileged regions can be enhanced in a very cost-effective manner.

Conclusion
This paper contextualizes the concepts of poverty, culture and KBD in a critical constructivist discourse. The dominant approach to define and construct poverty and culture applying an objectivist evolutionary cultural epistemology of Western social science has proved deficient as shown by historical experience of development in

developing countries given the geopolitical context of political economy of development aid in these regions. The notion of poverty may mean different things to human agents in divergent cultural contexts. It may have some positive cultural meaningfulness as a being mode of existence (Fromm, 1967) for certain human social groups. Furthermore, it argues that community centered model of KBD is most relevant to the cultural and spiritual capital of local communities of the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The social and economic meaningfulness of emerging KBD paradigm for rural and urban communities in developing countries of South largely depend upon the "lateral" application of KBD infrastructures, instead of linear and advanced strategic uses of complex social systems such as K-cities and urban planning and control, prevalent in the developed North. One such application can be the launching of wireless internet "social kiosks" in the far flung and remote villages of developing South to reduce educational poverty. This strategy can radically reduce the cost of development geared toward infrastructure projects such as roads and buildings and divert those financial resources toward literacy, health and environmental issues awareness leveraging "social kiosks" as KBD tool in the underprivileged communities. This will reduce their perpetual social hardships and economic alienation. Finally, poverty and culture studies can genuinely be researched being part of "social continuum" and "cultural-economic continuum" of the broader field of inquiry of KBD (Carrillo, 2009).

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