

# The Necessity of Changing the Concepts for a Real Development

**A**fter establishing peace and harmony in the country, the big challenge we are facing today is economic development. I am sure Buddhism can make a great contribution even in this regard, as done in the peace movement over the past decades. According to Buddhism, the first and the foremost requirement for any kind of successful action is making mental basis of people who engage in that action. The mentality of people is influenced by various factors related to their political, religious and cultural backgrounds. The first step to be taken for the success of national development in the country is to build up a concept of unity in diversity. The second step is to create a new concept of development, because there is no common agreement among the people even in regard to this concept due to various reasons mentioned above. So, this article concentrates on how to build up a common concept of unity and development, while explaining the psychological process of changing concepts according to Buddhism.

Although we emphasise the economic aspect in defining the concept of development, there are some other important factors to be considered in this regard. To achieve a real development of the country, we should have a well-defined concept of development. We have to create our own concept relevant to the cultural and environmental background of the country, without relying much on the concepts introduced by the other countries. The first important step in this regard is to develop such a unique concept of development. I very much believe that the country in the ancient period of time enjoyed much freedom and economic satisfaction by following the principles based on Buddhist ideals.

"All human activities are directed by the mind. World is led by

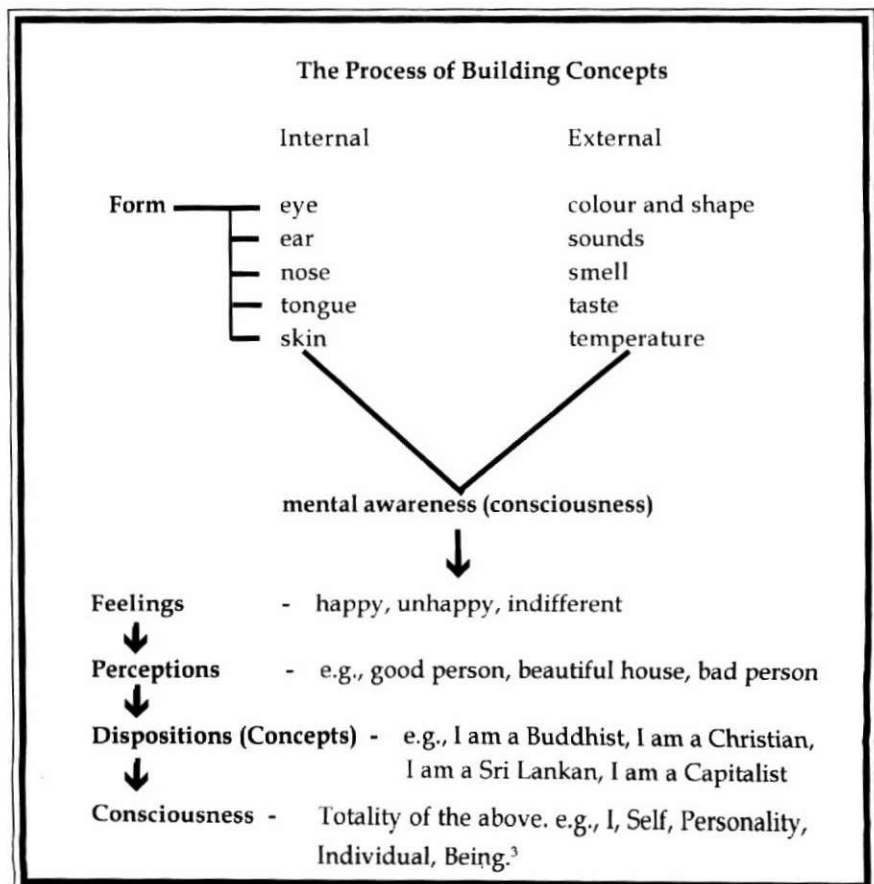
the mind."<sup>1</sup> The final result of mental activities is the origin of various concepts. Concepts play a prominent role in moulding the physical and verbal behaviours of human beings.<sup>2</sup> People, through their sense-faculties, contact with external objects and create concepts. After creating various concepts, they are guided by them towards every action verbal, physical or mental. The following diagram indicates in brief how concepts are created in human personality.

So, it is my considered opinion that we should change our existing concepts of development and create a new concept of our own to achieve a real development relevant to the cultural background of the country. To achieve this purpose, all media, government, people, religious leaders and the scholars should devote their full

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strength to enlighten the people by providing them with necessary information. This will lead to create a national concept of development in the hearts of the people. It is extremely difficult to develop a country unless making this evolution of the concepts at the very beginning of any kind of developmental programme. So, my intention is to provide some information from Buddhist point of view which, I think, may be useful in creating a national concept of development. If we are acting without



such a concept, all programmes or plans will be like a leaderless caravan.

According to Buddhism, not only the economy, but several other factors should be taken into consideration to define the concept of development or the concept of well-being. The reason is that Buddhism denies one-cause theory and causeless theory and emphasises that everything in the world comes into being due to many causes and conditions. So, the development also comes into being due to many primary and secondary causes and conditions.

The totality of human development in any given society is summarised in the following stanza:

*Ārogyaparamā lābhā* (physical well-being through health)

*Santuṭṭhiparamam dhanam* (mental well-being through wealth)

*Vissāsaparamā nāti* (Social well-being through good relationship among people)

*Nibbānaparamam sukham* (Spiritual well-being through the understanding of the real nature of the world).<sup>4</sup>

As we experience today, the environmental pollution due to the industrial developmental programmes has become a threat to the physical well-being of people. Further, the conspicuous consumption is becoming a determining factor of physical illnesses. So, in planning the developmental programmes, the concept of health should be given a prominent place. Without physical fitness, there will not be people to enjoy it.

According to the information that appears in the media, stress, depression and dissatisfaction are some of the main problems of many people in Sri Lanka today. All human efforts are made to achieve the mental well-being of people. So, the developmental programmes should be planned to create happiness in the minds of people, but not to develop the country for the sake of achieving theoretical development.

The social harmony is one of the important characteristics of development in any given country. We know, according to our experience over the past three decades, that the country was affected very badly with the social disharmony. So, every effort should be taken to prevent such problems among all kinds of people in the island in the future.

Although we are able to achieve economic, mental and social well-being through our righteous efforts, no one can stop birth, old-age, disease and death. These are the eternal truths in life. Everyone has to face these realities one day. This reality affects everyone day by day. Almost all religions in the world have been created mainly to solve the problems related to these truths. So, in order to confirm happiness in the society, spiritual measures should be taken by encouraging religious activities in the country. In this regard, Buddhism provides a detailed way of spiritual progress based on mental development. Unless this spiritual development is confirmed, any society or country cannot be considered as developed.

Spiritual development is essentially based on ethical development which is related to the external behaviour of people. Unless there is a restraint or control over the human behaviour, the developmental programmes will not provide satisfaction for the people. So, the following Buddhist principles are also worthy to be included in the developmental programmes.

1. There should be limits to the luxurious life. The habits of conspicuous consumption should be controlled.

2. Limitless expansion of development should be controlled.

3. Involvement of limitless experienced leaders should be controlled.

4. Unnecessary education should be controlled.

(*lābhaggamahattatā, vepullamahattatā, rattaññumahattatā, bāhusaccamahattatā*)<sup>5</sup>

The *Kūḍadantasutta* presents a very good and simple plan for the development which is extremely suitable to our country. It has the following three stages:

i. Should encourage the farmers in the country and they should be provided with infra-structure facilities and way of living (production)

ii. Should encourage the traders (businessmen) in the country and they should be provided with capital (distribution)

\* Trading becomes an economic problem without production.

iii. Should encourage the officials of the government by providing salary and way of living.<sup>6</sup>

\* The production and business activities in the country become useless if the officials do not govern the country properly.

As a result of the above simple programme, the following effects can be obtained:

i. Eliminating poverty

ii. Establishing social harmony and security

iii. Establishing happiness in family-life

iv. Eliminating the unemployment problem.

According to the foregoing observation we can conclude that a conceptual change of the mentality of people is necessary to achieve a real development of any country.

#### Footnotes :

<sup>1</sup> *Dhammapada*, tr. Ven. Narada Thera, Taiwan 1993, p. 1

<sup>2</sup> *Saṃyuttanikāya*, Buddhajayanti Publication, vol. 1, p. 42

<sup>3</sup> *Sumanapala Galmangoda*, *Early Buddhist Philosophy and Social Concepts*, Singapore, 2001, p. 8

<sup>4</sup> *Dhammapada*, op.cit., p. 177

<sup>5</sup> *Sumanapala Galmangoda*, *Buddhist Social Philosophy and Ethics*, Kandy, 2006, p. 70

<sup>6</sup> *Dighanikāya*, *Kūḍadantasutta*