
Editorial

The Concept of Sustainable Living

It is generally recognized that sustainable living is intricately linked with what is widely spoken as “Sustainable Development”. But what is connoted by the term Development? It is clear that the term development used in a colloquial context means different situations to different societies, and hence cannot be defined easily. Does it mean the achievement of a higher order of per capita income to satisfy peoples’ egocentricity, where man may be the servile robotic operator of sophisticated high-end techniques and technologies, or does it mean the achievement of an overall element of happiness or pleasure as conceived by the people of the tiny land-locked Kingdom of Bhutan, or does it imply the existence of a role model of a spiritually and non-materialistically advanced contended lifestyle as exemplified and enjoyed by our ancient non-anthropocentric ancestors in pre-colonial Sri Lanka?

Development should necessarily mean the achievement of the peoples’, or that of the community’s aspirations, which consequently means that the term development can have different connotations for different communities. It is in this context that we should appreciate the stance and courage of the Monarch of Bhutan to insist and make the point that what was more important to them (and perhaps for all human beings), was an “Index of Happiness” rather than a “Human Development Index”. Science for a sustainable lifestyle is the main focus of the current number of the Science Magazine Vidurava. This vital subject has been approached from a variety

of angles by the invited authors of articles in this issue. To quote a significant point from one of the articles, it is claimed that a Report compiled by the Stanford Centre on Poverty and Inequality, in 2018, is said to provide adequate evidence to the existence of substantial disparities and societal inequalities within even some of the most advanced countries in the world including the United States of America, thus establishing the fact that economic development as a way out for sustainable development and consequently for sustainable living is an outright fallacy.

Significantly, SDG-12 of the UN Agenda refers to “Responsible Consumption and Production” referring contextually to the fact that countries can manage the sustainable extraction of their natural resources more effectively, and also dispose of toxic waste more efficiently. These are one may say, just empty words with no meaningful and clear directions on how best this process could be scientifically and methodologically achieved, without having to face mishaps of the magnitude of the Meethotamulla holocaust.

In this context where does a small developing country like Sri Lanka stand, caught in a whirlpool of uncertainties in respect of economic progress, socio-political uncertainties, debt servicing and various other debilities and disparities? The question whether science and technology can retrieve and help in causing a U-turn for a better way of life (or lifestyle) for the people of Sri Lanka, currently seems to remain a tall-order.

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