Another apparent misunderstanding or controversy is in the area of self-determination. The right of self-determination of peoples cannot be simply ignored, as Sri Lanka is legally binding to respect and promote this right by virtue of its ratification of two international covenants (ICCPR and ICESCR) on human rights. Self-determination is a basic principle of democracy that allows different peoples to "pursue their economic, social and cultural development." It does not necessarily mean the right of peoples to form separate states unless they are under colonialism. The said international law (covenants) does not confer the right of self-determination to nations but to peoples. This distinction is important. Peoples are composed of several cultural nations within countries as well as within regions of countries. What is important is to achieve self-determination as far as possible within viable and rational political divisions (regions) through devolution, autonomy or federalism.

It is true that not only the LTTE but also many Tamil groups consider the demand for "homeland" to be somewhat sacrosanct. But this cannot be the case. This demand does not satisfy the modern standards of human rights except in the case of indigenous people where they may require territorial protection to preserve their culture or other interests. This is an issue that the moderate Tamils should seriously reconsider. There are possibilities of preventing a threat of "ethnic cleansing," if there is any, without recognizing a homeland concept. The recognition of a homeland of one group in a particular region would amount to the denial of equal rights of other groups in the same region. The rights and the status of the Muslims and the Sinhalese in the North-East should be taken into account seriously in this respect.

In terms of political structures, the two extreme positions have traditionally been between federalism and unitary state. However, the divided nature of the Supreme Court decision on the thirteenth amendment had already indicated, the Sri Lankan constitution is at the verge of a federal system. It is true that the PA government has offered more in terms of a "union of regions" and eliminating the ambiguity between the "provincial functions" and the "central functions." However, the recognition of a federal structure would undoubtedly go a long way in reassuring the Tamils about their rightful rights. Federalism has been their key demand since independence although it was raised and interpreted in different ways. A clear-cut acceptance of the federal principle also might facilitate any necessary re-drafting of the constitution without leaving any ambiguities as at present.

Another area of structural consideration is the unit of devolution. The best policy for any practical settlement is to follow the existing demarcations as far as possible. This means the existing nine provinces. The Tamils may need to re-consider their demand for merger of the two provinces on the basis of more autonomy for provincial parliaments under federalism. The demarcation of units purely on ethnic grounds would betray the highest intentions of the equality of cultural nations and the application of self-determination on the basis of peoples. What might in addition be necessary is the "devolution within devolution" to mean the strengthening of local government institutions within provinces to reassure the minorities within minorities. This type of a policy will go a long way in reassuring, particularly the Muslims in the Eastern Province and the Hill Country Tamils in the Central Province.

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DEVELOPMENT AS A HOLISTIC PROCESS: LESSONS FROM THE LAST FIVE DECADES

W.D. Lakshman

Many of us have been trained in the traditions of learning, which developed in Europe over the last two centuries and later had spread to other parts of the world. Under these traditions, knowledge remains divided into different faculties and departments and transferred so from generation to generation. This compartmentalisation of knowledge probably facilitates specialisation. But at the same time, it makes our knowledge about the world rather partial and incomplete.

This departmentalisation of knowledge has affected our understanding and perceptions about human development, as well as our conceptualisation of policies and strategies for its achievement. Development is studied in many subject areas, from distinctive disciplinary points of view, which are separated from one another by arbitrary but rather rigid boundaries. Even if the focus here is limited to that part of knowledge called 'social sciences,' we will find the disciplines of economics, sociology, political science, anthropology, geography and so on, having their own distinctive analyses and interpretations of development and development strategies. The extent of cross fertilisation among these different analytical perspectives has been limited.

Disciplines like sociology, political science, geography and demography, to mention only a few, have their contributions to the analysis and interpretation of development. Yet it would be broadly correct to say that the dominant paradigm in development discourse remains economics-based. Similarly, policies and strategies recommended for the achievement of development are informed largely by 'economic analysis,' or that sub-discipline of economics called 'development economics.' After the end of World War II, in scores of developing countries, development was planned and development policies worked out in accordance with dominant 'development economics' perspectives. As there was extensive failure of this development effort all round the world, there was increasing concern expressed, since around the 1970s, about limitations of the economic analysis of development. Increasing interest was seen in what other disciplines offer towards understanding and management of development.

Some pioneering authors of 'development economics' abandoned their concentration on economics. One of these pioneers described this as 'trespassing' from economics to other social sciences.[1] Today very few theorists and practitioners of development would believe that development can be analysed or development policies designed from just one disciplinary perspective. That development must be viewed from a multi-disciplinary perspective as a holistic process is widely accepted. However, no genuinely multi-disciplinary approach to development (or for that matter, any other socially significant subject) has yet been developed. Moreover, a person trained in one discipline is likely to have limited analytical skills in or awareness of other relevant disciplines. Because of these reasons, most available discussions of development or the lack of it are exercises in economics or sociology or political science, depending on the disciplinary specialisation of the person presenting the discussion. This is often not because he/she believes in uni-disciplinary explanations of development but because of his/her limitations in expertise and/or the cumbersome nature of combining several disciplinary inputs in the same analysis.

The dominance of 'economic' explanations of under-development and development has been noted. So has been the fact that 'economic' variables occupy the pride of place in development strategies. The point is not that 'non-economic' variables are totally ignored in development strategies. While 'economic' variables are explicitly taken into account, the 'non-economic' variables are often placed in subsidiary positions, using the familiar *ceteris paribus* or *mutatis mutandis* assumptions. The more dominant or the more widely used development policy packages – e.g. the so called 'market friendly policies' – indeed constitute basically configurations of 'economic' variables. In the implementation of such development strategies, often the *ceteris paribus* or the *mutatis mutandis* assumptions are forgotten. The authorities would entertain the hope that, by adjusting the 'economic' variables according to the policy model at least approximately, the desirable development outcomes can be achieved. In the process, however, the variables in 'non-economic' spheres, not explicitly addressed in the policy model can become binding constraints, defeating the developmental objectives underlying the policy model.

My intention is to explore some of the above ideas using Sri Lanka's post-independence experience as a case study. My focus will be restricted to the *development policy side*. The message I will try to convey is that some very important 'non-economic' variables or factors have received no attention at all or very scant attention in our plans, policies and strategies. I will argue that the anti-development impacts of some of these non-economic factors have gradually acquired such high proportions that, *even from the narrow point of view of 'economic development,'* our development has been significantly inhibited.[2]

Development Policy: Neglect of 'Non-economic' Factors

During the post-Independence period, Sri Lanka has had several exercises in development planning and many more official and semi-official statements about development strategies. Planning documents like the Six Year Programme of Investment (1955), the Ten-year Plan (1959) and the Five-year Plan (1972), to

name a few, are well known. When we were practising what was called 'rolling planning,' there were the annual Public Investment Programme documents. We are quite familiar with the annual budget speeches, the Central Bank annual reports, various 'vision' papers and many other official documents, which deal extensively, though not exclusively, with development issues. Concepts derived from economic analysis are found in abundance in these and other similar policy-oriented literature.

Development policy packages adopted in Sri Lanka since independence varied according to the dominant development ideologies and 'fashions' of the day. They varied from systems of extensive state controls to significantly liberalised market regimes. The development strategies adopted have had varying degrees of inward – and outward – orientations. I am not going to examine any of these predominantly 'economic' strategies of development. But it is useful for my purposes to note the changes in development strategies over time. Having gone through one particular policy regime, we have tended to reject it politically after some time in favour of a different strategy. Once rejected, weaknesses of the abandoned policy package and the strengths of the new policy regime would be highlighted. What I wish to stress here is that all the different policy regimes we have gone through over time, however, have had significant development potential. This is clearly shown by post-war development successes of many developing countries.

Sri Lanka, however, failed to gain the maximum development potential from every one of the different policy regimes adopted in the country in the post-independence period. My contention is that this was because we failed to work out our development policies from a holistic perspective. Factors other than those explicitly brought into the policy calculus were neglected wholly or substantially. The effectiveness of development policy under different regimes suffered as we could not identify, develop and sharpen the instruments that could guide, control and manage not only 'economic' but also other important factors behind development.

Politics and Governance

W e take great pride in the fact that we, as a society, have had 'democratic' traditions operating in Sri Lanka from the latter part of the British colonial rule. A factor highlighted is the experience the Sri Lankan electorate has had in the exercise of universal adult suffrage from 1931. From this period onwards, we have gone through five constitutional systems:

(i) The system of partial self-government with an elected State Council, Executive Committees and the Board of Ministers (1931-48);

(ii) The Parliamentary Cabinet government under the first post-independence constitution, with the British Queen continuing as the Head of State (1948-72);

(iii) The Parliamentary Cabinet government under the first Republican Constitution with an appointed President as Head of State (1972-78);

(iv) The second Republican Constitution with an elected Executive President as Head of State and Government and a new electoral system based on proportional representation (1978-87);

(v) The same Republican Constitution in (iv) above with some devolution of power through a Provincial Council system (1987).

The Sri Lankan society has thus gone through a long process of constitutional and political evolution. In this process it has operated within an electoral democracy, whatever were its limitations in actual practice. One would therefore expect Sri Lanka today to have a mature democratic system, conducive to sustained growth and development. One could argue that the society has achieved progress during this period from the angle of purely political change.[3] Without trying to belittle the value of progress achieved at the political level for broader human development, let me turn to some significant anti-development biases of how political processes developed in the country.

Ethnic Disharmony

T he most far-reaching anti-development trend embodied in Sri Lanka's post-independence political process has been its failure to develop an environment in which all ethnic, religious and linguistic groups could live and work in harmony. This is how we lived in this country for centuries, until the colonial rulers and later we ourselves started doing things to erode the fundamental conditions of harmony and goodwill among different ethnic and religious groups. We have failed to build up a Sri Lankan nationalism, recognising the multi-ethnic and multi religious nature of the society. The proportionate distribution of the electorate into different ethnic groups, mainly the fact that the Sinhalese constitute about three-quarters of the electorate, has been of great significance in this regard.

Every major political party with its support base among the Sinhalese has been conscious of the potential of forming a government with a majority of votes from the majority community, with or without support from other communities. During the colonial period too, in the country's march towards independence, questions of how power would be distributed in a future independent state among the Sinhalese and the Tamil communities, were debated. Minority community leaders expressed fear of possible Sinhalese domination of future independent governments. Yet during this period, leaders of all communities could work together in the independence struggle, as there was then a common enemy to fight against in the form of the colonial ruler. Within a short period after independence, however, the safeguards of minority rights introduced into the Soulbury constitution were inadequate to prevent political parties from being enticed to work according to the clear logic of the electoral calculus. This is clearly shown by the shifts of political opinion on the so-called official language issue in the 1950s. Strong communalistic trends in politics, which commenced within a mere decade after independence, gradually developed into a separatist war in the northern and eastern parts of the country a little after three decades from independence.

The political processes have thus thwarted the development of a widely held perception of Sri Lankan nationalism, based on the acceptance of ethnic, religious and linguistic pluralism. There was no conscious policy of nation building whether on the basis of devolution of powers, or on the basis of a policy of gradual voluntary assimilation of diverse groups into one dominant cultural tradition. World history is replete with interesting cases, in which the strong guiding force of nationalism pushed societies toward successful development, in material as well as in other spheres.

From the introduction of parliamentary government, political parties have gradually become important. In more recent times, they have acquired overarching significance, in electoral politics, post-election activities of government and generally in many aspects of life in the society. Sri Lanka might be a very peculiar country indeed in terms of the unusually weighty and often disruptive role the political party system plays in the country's elections, governmental decision making and also in people's day-to-day lives. This peculiar political culture in Sri Lanka has become a major factor in the development process exerting probably more anti-development than pro-development pressures.[4]

Party Politics

F irstly, the political party system has gradually become, probably since the 1970s, a potent divisive force in the country. Strange though it may appear, divisions based on political party affiliations appear often to acquire a somewhat permanent character. This may not be that prominently observable in large urban communities. But in small rural communities, which still embody a large proportion of our population, divisions based on political party lines appear to have a life of their own, dividing the activist families in an almost indelible manner as caste or ethnic divisions do. A political party system can be an effective mechanism for mobilisation of people. But when it becomes a near permanent source of division, it is likely to seriously disrupt any developmental effort. One of the major reasons for this state of affairs is the strongly antagonistic nature of the practice of politics in this country. The comment is often heard that, since 1994, there is agreement between the two major political camps on fundamentals of development policy. This has not however, reduced the contentious and antagonistic nature of political play between these two camps. Sri Lankan proclivity to carry partisan politics to extremes has produced a corrosive divisiveness in Sri Lankan society, preventing the emergence of the desirable features of consensual politics.

Increasing Violence

S econdly, there is a point of immense significance, related in many ways to the point about antagonistic politics discussed above. This is the gradual increase in politically instigated violence in the society and militarisation and criminalisation of political activity. Violence at election times and related electoral malpractices have had a long history in Sri Lanka, extending to as far back as the State Council days. But prior to the 1970s, observed political violence consisted generally of isolated incidents surrounding the electoral process in regionally restricted space. The insurrection of 1971 is often referred to as an episode, which fundamentally changed the way the game of politics is played in Sri Lanka. Whatever the historical truth or otherwise of this interpretation, since the 1970s, political violence has become an important factor behind deaths, destruction of property and violation of fundamental rights. Conditions surrounding the ethnic war and also the second JVP-led insurrection and its violent suppression (1987-89) enhanced the degree of militarisation and criminalisation of political processes. The adverse impact all this has had on development cannot be over-emphasised.

Expansion of Bureaucracy

T hirdly, for various socio-economic, political and cultural reasons, there has been gradual expansion of the bureaucracy, starting from the 1950s. The expansion of the size of the bureaucracy, including its higher levels, continued unabated under different governments to the extent of clear over-manning of the government services. In response to many criticisms and complaints of leading politicians of the time against the high echelons of the bureaucracy, recruited and trained under the colonial rule, a process called 'indigenisation' of the bureaucracy, whatever that term meant, was commenced as from the late 1950s. Public service was described at some state "as the highest worldly prize as well as the surest guarantee of worldly security." At that time, the service, particularly the elitist Ceylon Civil Service, could attract and retain the top talents in the country. Things have changed with the process of expansion in the size of the service.

Along with the gradual politicisation of other societal activities, the bureaucracy too has been politicised. This was partly the result of the desire of politicians in power to see that the affairs of the state are run exactly according to their political perspectives. Partly, this politicisation of the bureaucracy was due to opportunism, defensive attitude and inaction of the upper rungs of the bureaucracy itself. The conflict between political control over the administrative process (in a democracy the political leadership has to answer the people) and the necessary neutrality of the bureaucracy is something familiar to liberal democracy. This conflict has been resolved in Sri Lanka, gradually after the 1960s, by permitting political control over administrative process with virtually no consideration given to neutrality of service provision. Bureaucracy has become almost completely subservient to political leadership. Complaints about senior public servants not taking decisions without ministerial approval and Ministers directly taking day to day administrative decisions are commonplace nowadays.[5] The liberal democratic view presupposes that parliamentary legislation and governmental decisions must be implemented without political favouritism. It is for this purpose that a neutral bureaucracy operating under well-defined rules and regulations is needed. To ensure neutrality of bureaucracy requires service continuity, irrespective of changes of government. Every government since the 1970s has violated this rule. The whole concept of neutrality of service provision has undergone fundamental change in Sri Lanka, further promoting the process of divisive politicisation discussed above.

Efficiency

The other direct effect of this erosion of the autonomy of the bureaucracy is the much talked of drop in its efficiency. As already noted, there was a time when public service was highly respected and attractive. This exalted position of the public service has gradually declined. The bulk of the best talents in the country are not any more entering the service, in the way it used to be several decades ago. But the complained 'inefficiency' of the bureaucracy is not entirely due to this. Still a proportion of the best talents in the country, passing out from local universities, ends up in the SLAS, the planning service and other services of relevance to development. It is a well known fact that it is the top 2 per cent of the relevant age group, as determined by the prevailing system of national examinations, who obtain admission to local universities. This is often described as the 'cream of the society.' The complaint that our bureaucracy is inefficient, without trying to understand the real reasons for it, would amount to condemnation of the cream of the society as inept, incapable and inefficient. As things are, this inefficiency argument may be correct, depending of course on the comparison base that is used. I would not however, agree with the argument that the responsibility to this state of affairs lies with the individuals concerned manning the services or the local educational and training institutions, which trained them. The responsibility lies squarely on some of the systemic weaknesses. To briefly mention some of these:

* Excessive politicisation of the bureaucracy,

* Dependent attitude that competence in English and efficiency are somehow synonymous,

* Unrealistic expectation that the new generation of public servants can work in English as well as their counterparts some decades ago – as I see it, a totally unnecessary thing,

* Continued dependence of the system on retired officers or those parachuted from outside the system, thereby creating disincentives to those in the service and also closing up their opportunities for training to perform better.

Perhaps through learning from the experience of dealing with various rogue regimes in the Third World, governance issues have begun to loom large in economic advice to developing countries coming from international agencies and generally from the donor community. There is a tendency to define and conceptualise conditionality too in terms of good governance – mainly transparency and accountability. There was the mistaken belief several decades ago that bribery and corruption, lack of transparency and accountability on the part of politicians and public officials arose from excessive governmental controls. Having lived through the last quarter of a century, the hallmark of which has been liberalisation, people in Sri Lanka are today more enlightened on the subject. The opportunities for bribery and corruption are probably more extensively available and in larger volume under conditions of liberalisation than under dirigisme. Bribers and commissions lead to wrong (obviously from a social point of view)

and anti-developmental decisions in place of the correct pro-development decisions. Stories about such cases are rampant today.

Social Culture

The first point I wish to discuss concerns issues of business culture. In a capitalist system business operations are obviously guided by the profit instinct. There are, however, historical cases of countries where, in addition to this normal profit instinct, the business community had allowed their business activities to be guided by a common objective of achieving national greatness through economic growth and development. Sometimes, such national objectives were defined in terms of defeating a competitor country or a group of such countries. The Japanese business objective of "catching up with the West" in the immediate post-war era of reconstruction was a clear case in point. I do not harbour any illusion that business is an altruistic operation, when I refer to these 'national' objectives of business communities. In fact the formulation of such national objectives by a business community could itself be viewed as a method for facilitating profit growth. The Sri Lankan business community, however, so far in the history of growth of private capital in this country, has not espoused objectives of achieving national greatness or catching up with some other nation. It was argued as long ago as the 1930s, in works such as the Report of the Banking Commission and other publications, that the Sri Lankan capitalist class had a strong predilection for short-term gain and that its activities are governed by a merchant capital mentality. These things have changed to some extent during the last few decades, when manufacturing investments expanded, along with gradual diversification of the private sector industrial base. While official statistics maintain the position that this gradual process of industrialisation continues, there are arguments from independent researchers and consultants as well as some industrialists themselves that there are signs of de-industrialisation in the country. A comment I heard recently is that business acumen and skill is turning now more and more to cutting deals for a quick buck rather than to make long-term industrial investments. Along with these points about Sri Lankan business culture, I wish to reiterate the absence of any objectives of promoting national greatness through business growth among our business community.

In industrial relations too, antagonism and conflict occupy more dominant position than conciliation and harmony. As many aspects of life in Sri Lanka, this pattern of industrial relations too is a legacy from the British. There are two different types of perspectives on which capital-labour relations can be built up. In one perspective, both capital and labour would be viewed as likely to lose or gain together. In the other perspective, capital will be viewed as gaining at the expense of labour. The former perspective, on which labour relation systems of some East Asian countries are built, appears to be the more pro-development than the latter. Industrial relations in Sri Lanka, however, continue to be based on the principle of antagonism, thus contributing to the general climate of conflict and disharmony among different social groups that prevail in the country.

The Place of English

As many of my foregoing arguments indicate, we have failed to make development a common endeavour, carried out with the participation of the whole society. Large sections of the society have remained sidelined, because of numerous reasons – ethnic conflict, antagonism among political parties, capital-labour conflict etc. Let me discuss one additional point – directly a social culture issue – which produces this result. This concerns the place of English in our society. The star class businesses in Sri Lanka always thought that the competence in English was indispensable for a person to achieve success in their companies. With the advent of globalisation and outward-orientation as well as the Internet and other IT innovations, most people of any significance in this country today seem to consider competence in English as essential for success in life. The public sector, which used to provide the *swabasha*-educated the access to opportunities for social advancement, is now seen also insisting increasingly on competence in English.[6] The impact of this undue insistence of high levels of competence in English, whether it is in private sector or in public sector, is to refuse to integrate a large proportion of the society into the project of development.

Subsidies and Free Lunch Culture

In terms of the overall attitude to life, the Sri Lankan society exhibits certain peculiarities. Most people in Sri Lanka, not only the poor but also some sections of the middle class and sometimes even the rich, think that the government should provide them things/services either free of charge or at subsidised rates. The point that is not understood is that the supply of these things costs money to somebody. Every society has the right to practise systems of free or subsidised distribution of some goods and services, according to socially accepted policy norms. In conditions of natural or man-made disasters, the public authorities everywhere provide people with humanitarian assistance.

The Sri Lankan condition, which I refer to here, is of a different nature. It is a condition produced and reproduced by politicians and policy makers. The society has been trained to enjoy free or subsidised services; and also to tolerate low levels of wages and salaries or income levels, particularly in the public sector. One sees a vicious cycle in operation. Policy makers try to retain the 'low wage equilibrium trap' and as long as wages are low, people resist increases in prices of consumption items. As long as they don't pay cost recovery fees for the services, they would also tolerate poor services. Those who do not like the poor quality service go for alternatives, thus reducing incomes of the service providing agencies concerned in the public sector. As revenues generated are low, the government will have to use part of its revenues to subsidise the services. This would promote the government's inclination to maintain the low wage equilibrium. So the cycle continues. One can replace the word 'service' in the above sentences with 'railways' or 'bus services' or 'university education' or the name of any other important subsidised service.

The free lunch culture is the result of social welfare policies of the past and the policy makers' wish to maintain wages low. If the free lunch culture were to be corrected, the low wage policy must be abandoned. The populist left wing political parties and groups are known to be a barrier to reforming this free lunch culture. To change this culture, reforms in three things must go hand in hand – incomes, service quality and service prices. I am opposed to changing one leaving the others unaffected. If subsidy policies were to undergo fundamental change, there is also the need for managers of public services to be economical and efficient in their expenditure patterns. Extravagance on the part of the government and public organisations, on the one hand, and policies of 'cost recovery,' on the other, are two incompatibles in the Sri Lankan electoral democracy. So reforms in this 'free lunch' culture require paying attention simultaneously to several things. If the *status quo* continues, however, the poor in society will continue to obtain poor quality services free of charge or under subsidy, while the rich and the prosperous will manage anyway to get better quality services. The irony is that the latter will obtain better quality services even from the 'freely served or subsidised public sector.' The attitude of dependence on free and subsidised services among the poor is not difficult to understand in any society. What is most anti-developmental is the mentality of dependence also among the rich and the middle classes. Most vocal opposition to change in this subject area might arise from this class of people.

Work Ethic

There are other important aspects also of our social culture, which work in an anti-development manner. These may be listed and only briefly examined:

* Poor work ethic conditions. The general work environment, conditions of low pay and prevailing remnants of traditional culture are some of the factors responsible for poor work ethic among Sri Lankan workers. The behaviour of many Sri Lankans at work, considered in contrast to workers' behaviour in countries with higher general efficiency levels, shows up important aspects of culture-based inefficiency. The average Sri Lankan worker, operating in his/her own cultural environment,[7] exhibits clear inability to work without supervision. He/she cannot be depended upon, generally speaking, to fulfil work targets, working on his/her own. Work in modern industrial enterprises, in the first two decades or so after independence, was quite new and unusual to Sri Lankan workers. With the growth of modern industry from around the 1960s, more and more persons have gradually learnt factory work practices. Yet, even today, many persons newly joining modern industrial and other establishments are likely to be in transitional conditions between tradition and modernity. It is not surprising therefore, for industrialists to be complaining of poor work habits among their workers – e.g. high absenteeism, failure to turn up for work without prior notice and so on.

No Meritocracy

* Lack of a culture of meritocracy. Favouritism and nepotism, as influenced by traditional kinship and caste relationships, cannot be called rare exceptional practices even today. In addition we have come to hear increasingly of instances of politically instigated violation of merit-based rules. These have increased, probably sharply, during the last three decades. Many are the cases of dissatisfaction because the suitable on merit grounds are not appointed or promoted, while the unsuitable persons are.

No Apologies

* Lack of culture of regret when mistakes or errors of judgement occur or one's wrong doing is exposed. People in different cultures do experience and express regret and remorse at varying degrees of intensity at their genuine mistakes, and about their actions later found to be wrong. Actions taken by way of showing regret vary from the maximum sacrifice of suicide in cultures like the Japanese to at least minimum forms of verbal expression of apology.

We ourselves had this culture of regret in the past. There were leaders who resigned from their public positions by way of expressing regret even at their political mistakes. Nowadays however, this has become very rare. I have heard a Japanese friend of mine, with extensive experience of living in Sri Lanka, casually observing that the Sri Lankans rarely apologise. Political and administrative leaders would only rarely acknowledge mistakes and wrong-doing even when exposed. Also very rarely do they appear contemplating even the courtesy of resignation from public positions held, even when the misdeed exposed involves personal misconduct of the type not tolerated by civilised society from those holding public office.

The three points above all have very adverse impacts on the level of general productivity in a society. Some of them affect it directly and others indirectly by lowering the morale of honest workers. I have had the habit, when I am abroad, of comparing employee behaviour in average work place conditions in Sri Lanka with average employee behaviour in countries of higher productivity. However unpalatable it may be, we must admit that our whole social culture embodies elements which discourage productivity.

Conclusion: Required Institutional Innovations

The foregoing discussion, while critically looking at some aspects of Sri Lanka's political and social culture, has pointed out how these could operate in anti-development ways, defeating the objectives of even a very well formulated development plan. Though many points were discussed, the main theme developed is that for the achievement of sustained development from a holistic point of view, the organised society must ensure that all segments of the people participate enthusiastically in the development project. To put it differently, successful development requires as a precondition social cohesion and unity of purpose in the commitment to achieve. Social capital this generates would be as valuable as physical and human capital, if not more. Indeed we have invested a great deal in physical capital formation and human capital development since independence. Yet Sri Lanka lagged behind many countries in developmental achievement. Innovation is needed to devise policies of consensus to promote cohesion, peace and unity in society.

Recognition of anti-development elements of political and social culture is one thing; how to correct these to promote development is yet another. Some of the factors identified in the foregoing discussion will transform themselves through economic missing words solutions to development is that market reforms will address these issues of politics, governance and social culture as well in an indirect manner. To leave the reform of the country's political and social culture to socio-economic change and market forces would amount to acknowledging societal helplessness in this rather difficult reform exercise. To address some of these issues headlong is possible. Hence the need for innovative policy-making.

Many political and cultural problems hindering development can be handled through education. We are today in the midst of a wide-ranging educational reform effort. I am, however, not sure whether the type of problems discussed above were taken account of to inform and guide the educational reform agenda.

What is most important is to devise suitable and effective institutions to correct the anti-development elements in our political and social culture. One cannot leave things to the goodwill of individuals in society, exhortations of political leaders or simply market forces. Sri Lanka already has a good stock of democratic institutions, some inherited from the colonial past and others newly introduced. Many international conventions have been ratified – including those of debatable national benefit. The problem, however, is that those in power are not reined in by these institutions. The innovation required therefore, is to devise institutional reforms and new institutional mechanisms that will be adhered to by all, including, most importantly, the government in power.

End Notes

1. I am referring here to the title of the book, Albert O. Hirschman, *Essays in Trespassing: Economics to Politics and Beyond*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. The unifying characteristic of the essays in this book, as the author himself describes, is "the propensity to trespass from one social science to another and beyond."

2. I will not be examining the post-Independence development history in any detail or in any systematic manner. I will be merely referring to a few historical trends or episodes during this period to support some of my arguments. My idea that different 'economic' and 'non-economic' factors should be combined in our development strategies is not presented here in the form of any systematic 'model.' Instead, I will describe my presentation here as some random thoughts about certain important 'non-economic' factors behind Sri Lanka's relative failures in terms of socio-economic development.

3. For, example, the Sri Lankan electorate has gained greater understanding, sophistication and maturity, as shown by the steady increase in the percentage of people voting in elections. The training people have received in mass movements, at first under the leadership of Marxist political parties and subsequently also under the leadership of right wing political groups, has gone a long way to improve electoral maturity of the people.

4. A widely discussed point is that the multi-party system in Sri Lanka has led to coalition governments to become the norm rather than the exception. All governments since 1956, with the exception of the 1977-94 governments, were coalitions. Although the 1977-94 governments were called governments of the UNP, there were other political groups as well in those governments. This tendency to make coalition government the norm has been strengthened by the post-1978 proportional voting system. The policy inconsistency impact of coalition governments is well known.

5. Ordinary people also are to be blamed for this. Because of the prevailing scarcities, people have developed the habit of expecting politicians to do things, in which there would be hardly any involvement of the local politician in most other countries. Every one in Sri Lanka knows how people seek the assistance of politicians – Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament, party organisers, private secretaries of politicians etc. – to find jobs, school places etc. for themselves or their relatives/friends. The problem appears to be that Sri Lanka had moved into a system of electoral democracy, while the bulk of social behavioural patterns of a feudal nature remained intact in the country.

6. My view on this subject is very different. In spite of the risk of falling into a minority in this regard even among my colleagues in the academia, let me express this position. To me, the nature of language competence required in Sri Lanka, from a developmental point of view, is clear. There are two languages spoken in this country and our educational system must, even at this late stage, begin to provide facilities in school for everybody to learn both languages, so that those who complete the secondary school will have at least some working knowledge of his/her non-mother tongue language. As educationists everywhere recommend, people learn most effectively in their mother tongue and facilities for learning in mother tongue in secondary and tertiary levels must be further developed. People must be given facilities to acquire competence to read and understand English. There will however, be a small group of people in the society who would require a high level of achievement in English and may be a few other international languages, i.e. high level of competence in all three branches of language usage. To provide the required facilities to them would be manageable whereas the project of teaching English to everybody – a stated objective of recent educational reforms – is an unrealistic objective, though perhaps a vote winning populist stunt. In the long-term, however, this would be counter-productive even from an electoral point of view. By promising but failing to achieve universal competence in English, the government would lose popularity. A tongue-in-cheek comment, which I heard recently in private conversation, is that in today's context, it would be better to try to teach Arabic rather than English on a universal basis.

7. These very same people, made to work in foreign work environments, exhibit excellent work ethic and very high levels of efficiency.

UNHOLY MADNESS

Several thousand years of human history and artistic achievements, 80 years of archaeological excavations by European and Afghan teams, are being destroyed in a matter of days. While the world looks on. It was the same, not so long ago, when thousands of Tibetan monasteries, repositories of 1300 years of an unique human civilisation, were destroyed. Protests are voiced, but those who voice them do not have the power to stop the destruction. While those who have the power keep silent. Because Buddha statues are not relevant to the big powers, or lucrative, in the way oil and natural gas are. Where oil and natural gas are threatened, reactions are different...

The invaluable key which Afghanistan holds for understanding Buddhism and Buddhist art in India. Central Asia and China is being systematically destroyed by the Taliban. This is not the first time in history that Buddhism, ironically the most pacific of world religions, is being viciously targeted. This does not make the present mad and senseless action of the Taliban any less abominable and heartrending, The pious statements of India and Pakistan have litttle meaning. It is common knowledge that the Taliban is the creation of Pakistan, while the RSS, to which the Indian Prime Minister belongs, has a list, Babri Masjid apart, of 2000 mosques in India awaiting destruction because there are supposed to be temples beneath. The RSS/BJP/Sangh Parivar are the flip side of the same coin as the Taliban. Their statements count for nothing. They share the same unholy madness in the name of religion.

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