Buddhist Philosophy and Community Action: The Sarvodaya Experience in Sri Lanka

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Overview
- Sarvodaya – An Introduction
- Sarvodaya approach to development
- Philosophy & Action
- Ecovillage Experiment
- Challenges
- Future Prospects

Philosophy

Sarvodaya = Awakening of All

Individual
Family
Village
City
Nation
World

Spiritual
Moral
Cultural
Social
Economic
Political

Strategy

Spread the philosophy
Initiate process of self-development

Support those who pick it up as best as we can

Sarvodaya Expansion over 50 Years

SARVODAYA DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Key Programme Areas

Evolve from Awareness to Embodiment
We encourage the participation of every segment of the community to build a new society founded on Self-governing Village (Community) Republics (Grama Swarajya).

Path to Paurushodaya – Personality Awakening

Four Brahma Vihara’s (Sublime Abodes)
1. Metta – Loving Kindness
2. Karuna – Compassionate Action
3. Muditha – Altruistic Joy
4. Upekkha - Equanimity

Path to Family/Group Awakening

Satara Sangraha Vastu
(Four principles of social conduct)
1. Dana - Sharing
2. Priyavachana – Pleasant Language
3. Arthacharya – Constructive Action
4. Samanathmata - Equality

Village Development as a Continuing Process

- Sharing with neighboring villages
- Income & employment generating and self-financing
- Satisfaction of basic human needs and institutional development
- Social infrastructure development and training
- Psychological infrastructure development

Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka

District Centers 33
Divisional Units 345
Villages 15,000
Awakening through meeting Basic Needs

1. A clean and beautiful environment
2. Clean drinking water
3. Adequate supplies of clothing
4. Adequate and balanced nutrition
5. Simple housing
6. Basic health care
7. Basic communication facilities
8. A minimal supply of energy
9. Holistic education
10. Satisfaction of spiritual and cultural needs

Activities involved in Village Development

1. Capacity building in the community
2. Early childhood development
3. Community Health
4. Relief and rehabilitation
5. Development of village
6. Infrastructure
7. Environment and biodiversity
8. Communication development
9. Development of integrated education
10. Applied research
11. Peace and Conflict Resolution

Tsunami – December 2004

- Tsunami disaster struck Sri Lanka on 24th of December 2004
- Over 40,000 people killed and over 500,000 left homeless
- Sarvodaya playing a leading role from relief to long term recovery

Building the first post-Tsunami Eco-Village

Location

Eco Village at Lagosawatte-Kalutara District

Legend
- Green: Kalutara District
- Yellow: Village

How we think about ourselves, our inner being, our spiritual lives, our interactions with others

How we maintain our physical existence and obtain our basic needs

How human beings govern other’s behavior for the good of all (politics)
Unique Opportunity

Lagoswatta provides Sarvodaya with an important opportunity to create a model village which demonstrates best practice design principles in its built environment, ecological, and social elements. It is an ideal site to introduce innovations in housing design which are practical and economically and environmentally responsible. The introduction of earth wall techniques such as rammed earth; the collection of potable rainwater; better treatment of wastewater; and better ventilated and cooler housing are prime candidates.” (Max and Lloyd)

“Damniyangama”

“The Village which preserves the Buddhist concept of Pancha Niyama Dhamma; five-fold orders or processes operative in the organic and inorganic physical phenomena as well as in the mental phenomena of the universe”.

These are;
1. Bijaniyama (germinal order),
2. Utuniyama (caloric order),
3. Kammaniyama (fixed law pertaining to the fruition of wholesome (kusala) and unwholesome (akusala) volitional activities of the individual,
4. Dhammaniyama (laws governing natural happenings)
5. Cittaniyama (fixed psychological laws).

The Process; Community Consultation

The Process; Expert Inputs – International & Local

The Layout

- Greenfield site of 8 acres containing 55 approx 10 perch blocks located about 5 km from the main Road in one of the worse Tsunami districts.
- 55 self contained houses
- One Multipurpose Community Centre
- Landscaped green site

Extensive On-site planning
Comprehensive physical and social plan

Site assignment and participatory building

Construction involving the future residents

Constant technical guidance

Construction Process

Construction completed in 12 months
Multipurpose Community Centre

The First Eco-village in Sri Lanka is Born

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Multi-purpose Community Centre

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Exhibitions on Nature & Environment

Training on permaculture

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Learning Site for Young Architects

Revival of Spiritual, Cultural & Social Values

Challenges

- Maintaining cohesion amongst a diverse community
- Practical difficulties of sustaining some of the practices and technologies (ie. Solar)
- Economic self sufficiency in an “open economy”
- Countering forces (eg. Media) that promotes a non-sustainable life style
- Unexpected natural disasters
Stuck by natural disaster - Floods

Response – Building Village Resilience through an Integrated Approach

Future Prospects

• Promising results of Damniyangama attracting interest of other villages to follow suit (traditional villages to adopt ecovillage principles)
• Extending to all Sarvodaya villages starting with Gram Swaraj (self-governing villages)

ECONOMIC Resilience
1. Livelihood Training, appropriate Technologies
2. Introduction of Disaster Resistant Livelihoods
3. Improving Market channels

PHYSICAL Resilience
1. Disaster Resistant Infrastructure Planning
2. Disaster Preparedness planning
3. Coastal Resource Management Planning
4. Bio shield Establishment
5. Canals for flood mitigation

KNOWLEDGE Resilience
1. Village Information Centres and Library
2. Developing Content to address local information needs
3. ICT services to Community

From vertical facilitation to horizontal cooperation
Information-Knowledge-Wisdom

- Information is expected to help communities build their sustainability
- As interconnectedness of the world increases, there is more need to cooperate with like-minded organizations in other countries.
- New technologies make this possible to an extent never witnessed before.

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- Extending to all Sarvodaya villages starting with Gram Swaraj (self-governing villages)
- Post-war reconstruction offering similar opportunities to build more ecovillages in Sri Lanka.

Thank You!