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#### From the Editor's Desk

It is a great pleasure to release Volume 1, Issue 1 of 270 Degree a peer reviewed, multidisciplinary, International Journal. This is the pioneer issue consisting papers from different countries. This issue consists the papers discussed is significant in its own way. We are very thankful to our contributors and readers of our journal worldwide, without whose patronage this wonderful journey may be impossible. We welcome innovative contributions from corporate members, academicians, and researchers across the globe to contribute and benefit from our journal.

Thanks and Regards

#### Editor

"A journal is your completely unaltered voice." - Lucy Dacus"

#### The role of values in pursuit of environmental sustainability: A possible way forward? Sashika Abeydeera\*

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#### Abstract

As one of the signatories of the United Nations' mandate on Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, Sri Lanka shows much commitment to collaborating with both local and international institutions. However, most of the development policies adopted by such institutions fail to address the diversity of context-related issues prevalent in the local setting. This conceptual paper explores the possibility of incorporating values into the development agenda in safeguarding ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural resources, including water and air. Literature on values, environmental sustainability, government policies of Sri Lanka and Buddhist philosophy are reviewed. The paper describes Sri Lanka's progress in achieving ecological sustainability, challenges ahead and the way forward. In doing so, universal environmental value taxonomies and worldviews and environmental values embedded in Buddhism are explored. The paper concludes with implications for national decisionmakers to re-evaluate existing value systems in enhancing environmental sustainability.

#### Keywords: Environmental sustainability, values, Buddhist philosophy, governmental policies, Sri Lanka

#### I. Introduction

Recent research on the South Asian region's environmental sustainability performance from 2001 to 2015 has shown that Sri Lanka has been ranked low among its counterparts (Sun et al., 2020). The study highlights that Bhutan tops the most region's energy secured and environmentally sound country. Sri Lanka's low score in environmental performance indicates that strengthening sustainability efforts in many different spheres are imperative (De Silva, Ranasinghe, & Abeykoon, 2016; Sandaruwan & Weerasooriya, 2019). While concerted efforts on policy and administration fronts are called for, it is paramount to build people's understanding of the need for environmental sustainability (De Silva et al., 2020). Taking a closer look at people's value orientations will be helpful in this regard, which is the foci of this paper.

With the dawn of peace after a thirty-year civil war, the Sri Lankan government has set forth its trajectory to achieve sustainable development aligning with the United Nation's mandate on

Agenda 2030. The set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) regained its momentum in providing a sound framework to Sri Lankan government in assuring sustainable development at all levels (national and regional) with the involvement of multiple stakeholders. A study conducted by Tilakaratne et al. (2017) on the national level implications of SDGs in Sri Lanka underscores the need for greater stakeholder coordination to ensure better implementation and monitoring of the seventeen goals. They highlight that the lack of awareness and erosion of social values among stakeholders, especially the general public, is a significant constraint in achieving SDGs. People's value orientation towards ensuring environmental sustainability is starkly inadequate, posing a threat to healthy coexistence with nature (De Silva et al., 2020; Gunatilleke, Pethiyagoda & Gunatilleke, 2017; Tilakaratne et al., 2017). Despite the prevalence of research exploring the need for environmental sustainability focusing on many different spheres (Nhamo et al., 2020; Sandaruwan & Weerasooriya, 2019), the role of social values is minimal. This paper aims to fill that gap by exploring values in pursuing the environmental sustainability of Sri Lanka.

Being a South Asian Island, Sri Lanka is rich in biodiversity due to its topographic diverse climatic and heterogeneity (Gunatilleke et al., 2017). The legal and institutional framework of the country in preserving ecosystems is governed by many different policies adopted at both national and international levels. Some of these regulations are revised with time and implemented by various governmental agencies and civil society. Yet, the inadequate awareness and environmental understanding of conservation is a severe barrier to properly enacting such policies and laws (Gunatilleke et al., 2017). Ironically, Sri Lanka possesses a rich cultural and religious heritage inspired by the Buddhist philosophy instilled that strong conservation values in its people. Thus, it is unearth imperative to such values embedded in local culture and integrate them into national policies and laws enacted.

Relying on command-and-control techniques, including rules and regulations,

laws and punishments in their entirety, is ineffective. There is also another side of the coin that governments have to shed light on when seeking a reliable solution to ensure environmental sustainability at all levels the concerned country is about. Krishnamoorthy (2005) discerns that evaluating and re-evaluating the underlying values of a society is vital in searching for a home-grown solution to create selfdiscipline and consciousness towards protecting the environment at individual, organizational, governmental and national levels. Therefore, gaining society's acceptance for such ecocentric value orientations is vital for a government to ensure environmental sustainability.

# II. Method

This paper takes an analytical approach reviewing the literature on values individual and organizational), (both environmental sustainability, government policies of Sri Lanka and Buddhist philosophy. The paper describes Sri Lanka's progress in achieving ecological sustainability, challenges ahead, and the way out. Subsequently, the universal environmental value taxonomies and worldviews, ecological values in Buddhist philosophy are explored. Moreover, the review incorporates implications for national decision-makers to re-evaluate systems their existing value of organizational practices in enhancing environmental sustainability.

# Sri Lanka's position in pursuing environmental sustainability

The Sri Lankan government has taken many necessary steps to achieve environmental sustainability. For example, enacting the 'National Environmental Act' establishing in 1980. the Central Environmental Authority in 1981 to oversee environmental operations and services, and a Ministry for Environment in 1990 to formulate policies and regulations regarding ecological responsibility are some of them (Ministry of Environment of Sri Lanka, 2020). Furthermore, Ministry highlights that the country's conservation policy is based on the National Wildlife Policy initiated in 2000 and the National Forestry Policy, which commenced in 1995.

The country has embarked on many initiatives achieve sustainable to development through environmental sustainability. The of Ministry Environment (2020)designed has comprehensive programmes and initiatives requiring the establishment of a National Council for Sustainable Development and formulating a Action National Plan incorporating spheres many of environmental concerns containing clean climate change air. water, issues. land ecosystems, resources, waste management and creation of green cities.

To meet the United Nations' 2030 Agenda, Sri Lanka promotes renewable energy resources by introducing financial and trade policies (Murshed, Abbass & Rashid, 2021). National projects initiated by Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority, directed to provide solar-powered electricity for rural villages that do not have access to the national grid (Wijayatunga, 2014). This authority is the institutional body established to promote sustainable energy generation and consumption that steers the country to enhance the utilization of indigenous power sources and energy efficiency.

National Policy and Strategy on Cleaner Production for the agricultural sector is another critical initiative adopted by the Ministry of Environment to boost the quality and the number of products while promoting environmentally friendly farming practices in the country and optimal use of natural resources. In addition to these programmes and projects, Sri Lanka has also ratified several conventions to ensure the country's environmental sustainability.

#### Challenges and the way out

Sri Lanka, being one of the signatories of the United Nations' mandate Agenda 2030 for sustainable on development and the Paris Climate Agreement, shows a more significant commitment collaborating to with international and multinational agencies (De Silva et al., 2016; Murshed et al., 2021; Tilakaratne et al., 2017). However, some development theories proposed by foreign agencies fail to address the multiplicity of context-related issues prevalent in the local economies (Nhamo et al., 2020; Turnbull, 2004; United Nations General Debate of the Assembly,2010). Some development policies fail to take account of the societal and cultural values in society. Moreover, some of such approaches fail to promote environmental sustainability. Development policies that only focus on assuring economic growth overlook the need to safeguard ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural resources, including water and air. Tilakaratne et al. (2017) highlight the need to establish a holistic mechanism with the involvement of all stakeholders in integrating environmental sustainability into the development plan. The support extended by diverse communities in society is seen as crucial here.

Development assistance agencies attribute lack of capacity and a holistic approach to decision-making as causes for divergence environmental such in techniques adopted in developing countries Turnbull (2004)contexts. elucidates research carried out in Fiji Islands, a South Pacific archipelago and republic, showing how social structures, kinship, power relations within the state institutions, and decision-making processes shape the adopted environmental management techniques.

Lack of coordination in the absence of a well-integrated statutory framework for ensuring environmental sustainability and poor policies that are not catered towards assuring the quality of ecological decisions keep public participation away from ecological choices. Such challenges, in turn, result in inadequate monitoring and assessment of the environmental impact of adopted. Environmental techniques management practices adopted in most developing countries are not aligned with the underlying principles of such systems (such as environmental impact assessment, planning, environmental and natural resource conservation) due to prevalent socio-political and economic factors (Turnbull, 2004). Research carried out in

developing countries by Turnbull (2004) and Shafer (2006) explains that these issues are common to most developing countries due to differences in social factors such as value orientations, beliefs, and norms practised.

Providing a lot of attention merely on technicalities tend to overlook sociopolitical and moral aspects (Crane, 2000) that can affect environmental decisions made by authorities or governments relating to different contexts. Core values and belief systems embedded in a society through its culture are at the heart of the challenge (Fineman, 1998) of pursuing environmental sustainability along with economic growth.

# The pursuit of environmental sustainability through values

То properly integrate sustainability into environmental mainstream policies and programmes while overcoming the loss of ecological resources, the government should foster an ethical background to its decisions and practices. Environmentally friendly values should be inculcated among individuals involved in making and taking government Roth. (Bansal decisions & 2000). Environmental values should be highly promoted in government organizations and should be incorporated into training and development and employee evaluations at all governmental organizations.

The notion of values explains any attempt to ensure fairness, justice, or ethics becomes meaningful only concerning actions that affect an object valued by an individual or a group (Stern & Dietz, 1994). The concept of environmental sustainability that tries to assign a sense of fairness and justice to the environment and its species becomes realistic if such action falls within the span of consideration; we think that is of value. On the one hand, this ethical consideration could be viewed as the necessity to preserve the environment for the sake of humans or else for all nature's constituents like forests. animals. waterfalls, etc. Stern and Dietz (1994) discern that environmental responsibility revolves around three value orientations: egoistic, social-altruistic, and biospheric.

Egoistic values focus on meeting the needs and aspirations of humans even at the expense of the environment or other species belonging to nature. Socialaltruistic values emphasize balancing meeting human needs and paying attention to environmental concerns. The notion of ecological sustainability is promoted in such an atmosphere where there exists a balance of perspectives in achieving human goals while preserving nature. On the other biospheric values prioritize hand, protecting the environment and environmental considerations overachieving one's needs.

Schwartz (1994) developed a typology of values that map all humans against four clusters/orientations (as cited in Stern et al., 1999). The four values change, clusters are openness to conservatism, self-transcendence and self-Openness enhancement. to change emphasizes self-direction, stimulation and hedonism. On the contrary, conservatism highlights tradition. conformity and security in actions performed. Selftranscendence stresses universalism and benevolence, whereas self-enhancement revolves around power and achievement. These different value taxonomies influence individuals and groups to guide their actions and behaviour (Rockeach, 1968).

Values are formed and shaped through socialization and tend to change or vary depending on the person or social group. Neither are mutually exclusive. An individual may possess different value orientations within themself. Stern and Dietz (1994) discern those values affect individuals' beliefs and change attitudes and behaviour. People's attitudes are formed based on their expectations of a particular object. They build up their attitudes and how it affects what they value. Eventually, these attitudes will govern individuals' or collectives' behaviour. An individual's initiative or a social movement towards protecting the environment is driven through values, beliefs and attitudes towards environmental concerns.

A strong value orientation on the environment may influence an individual or a group to be attentive to information relating to the consequences of an object they value (in this case, the forests, ecological balance, etc.). In this manner, values assist in filtering information (Stern & Dietz, 1994). Hence, an individual who values economic wellbeing would promote growth-related strategies, and one who loves nature would boost an ecologically sound system.

Stern et al. (1994) apply Schwartz's moral norm activation theory developed in 1977 to attract public support for environmental sustainability movements. This theory reinforces the fact that the values of a person or a group form beliefs, attitudes, and norms relating to the object being valued, leading to individual or social movement towards environmental sustainability. This philosophical process will enable stakeholders of ecological sustainability and communities to identify root causes of environmental issues allowing a systemic view. In addition to individual or group values, worldviews people hold matter (Kearins, Collins & Tregidga, 2010).

# Impact of environmental worldviews on environmental sustainability

The cultural traditions influenced by dominant social worldview play a key role in influencing individuals' values in determining environmental beliefs and attitudes towards environmental issues (Kilbourne, Suzanne, & Thelen, 2002). Research shows that individuals who are more committed towards Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP) are unlikely to foster an ecological worldview or be sensitive to environmental issues (Kilbourne et al., 2002). Instead, the Dominant Social Paradigm (Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978; Shafer, 2006) underscores the economic prosperity alone. overlooking environmental concerns people or species confront. Developing countries are more vulnerable to economic growth as they aspire to be on par with their developed counterparts in economic prosperity, embracing the dominant world view (Shafer, 2006). Like most developing countries, most Sri Lankan corporates' decisions are taken in the sole pursuit of economic gains in line with growth theories.

	On	the	contrary,	the	New
Enviro	onmen	tal	Paradigm		(NEP)

emphasizes the importance of living in harmony with the environment to avoid environmental disasters approaching (Shafer, 2006). In this regard, researchers including Stern and Dietz (1994) and Starik underscore and Rands (1995)the importance of identifying and evaluating a society's value system that possesses environmental sensitivity and re-orienting behaviours of organizations (including the government) accordingly. Endless economic growth and materialistic gains pose a formidable challenge in achieving ecological sustainability without considering the planetary limits. However, this issue could be rectified by expanding our corporate value systems to incorporate pro-environmental values embedded in our indigenous value systems. Sri Lanka has a rich cultural-religious heritage that depicts deep philosophical a foundation of environmental ethics inspired by Buddhist values (Abeydeera, Kearins & Tregidga, 2016), explored in the following section.

## Environmental values and Buddhism

Krishnamoorthy (2005) states that a scholar named Engel (1990) claims that ethical stances tend to be more diverse in the case of related environmental issues. And he suggests how spirituality rather than a scientific perspective emphasizes practicality towards morality and ethics by highlighting the following: spirituality helps explain the role of human values, explains human motivations, gives moral guidance to alternative courses of action and helps resolve conflicts.

This paper emphasizes the notion of spirituality through the lens of Buddhist teachings (dhamma) that embeds value orientations towards ensuring environmental sustainability. **Buddhist** values aligned with ecological sustainability include interconnectedness, compassion, loving-kindness, equanimity (mind coming into harmony with laws of nature), and right-mindfulness (Abeydeera et al., 2016). Moreover, altruism (the practice of giving without expecting any return), humility (being modest towards nature and other living beings or not being egoistic), gratitude, and non-possessiveness of material wellbeing are ecological values Buddhist emphasized in discourses (Henning, 2002).

"Buddhism views people as a part of nature" (Henning, 2002, p.10). A Buddhist is self-contained in a mediocre lifestyle that hardly values material growth (Nanayakkara, 1992). "Buddhism offers a spiritual solution, a life of harmony with nature" (Henning, 2002, p.12). The discourse of Buddhism emphasizes that all things are connected and interdependent with each other. Hence, if humans consider themselves separate and superior to nature, they cause crisis and destruction to all. Progress, unregulated technology, and materialism lead to the environmental destruction that could be rectified through an elevated consciousness to coexist with nature rather than conquer it.

Moderating a self-destructive earthdevouring dogma will end with a new worldview supported by Buddhism that its ancient wisdom may prove post-industrial (Henning, man's salvation 2002). liberation of Buddhism's core states suffering and its causes of suffering requires looking things closely, at understanding or comprehending their true nature. Buddhism views people as part of nature and asserts that if humanity survives on earth, it should protect and care for the environment.

### Implications on government decisions

Development related decisions made by the government should consider nature as an important stakeholder. Expanding Sri Lankan values to incorporate environmental values shared in Buddhist literature will enable the government to successfully integrate the environment into mainstream policies to ensure sustainable development of the country, which is the top target stated under SDGs to ensure environmental sustainability. Environmental values like compassion, right-mindfulness, interrelatedness with nature will enable individuals and their organizations (including the government) to make and implement decisions that promote economic growth with a sense of environmental responsibility.

One of the government's tools to expand the value base to ensure environmental sustainability is to encourage public support to overcome cultural inertia and dominating interests of certain government officials and politicians supporting ecological movements. in Changes in public attitudes and behaviour are considered essential goals in conducting especially a country's such actions, government faces (Stern et al., 1999). movement Environmental goals that encompass changes in consumer behaviour such as efficient use of natural resources, saving energy, buying environmentally friendly goods and services signal government and the industry about consumer preferences and public concerns.

For example, the methodology of conducting an Environmental Impact Assessment incorporates forwarding a draft and empowering the public to the community and other stakeholders to participate in formulating and implementing environmental decisions, visualize the emphasis on ecological values and democracy in the prevailing political system (Turnbull, 2004). The value of justice is also upheld in such a situation. Promoting such ecological values help to obtain different perspectives of the environmental issue at hand and enable deploying the most effective techniques in making decisions. Manv western. industrialized countries ensure that they submit proposals and drafts to the general public in other instances where environmental planning and natural resource use are concerned (Turnbull, 2004).

Institutionalizing environmental management methods to promote а rationally based technical endeavour with a moral imperative divorced mainly from party politics (Turnbull, 2004) will enable to overcome corruption, establishing the rule of law that is a crucial precursor to environmental uphold sustainability. Progress towards mandated environmental reporting should be made in jurisdiction institutionalization once the process becomes accepted and practised in governments and other organizations. These practices should be recognized in the industry and service sectors as best

practices to ensure environmental sustainability in the long term.

## IV. Conclusion

As a developing nation, Sri Lanka has committed her available resources, including the human effort, to achieve SDGs by 2030. However, Gunatilleke, Pethiyagoda and Gunatilleke (2017) and Tilakaratne et al. (2017) state that greater priority is given to the government's technical fixes and capital infusion. environmental Ensuring sustainability remains challenging due to the lack of social and cultural understandings in the administration local context. Thus. ecological values play a significant role in shaping individuals and groups' attitudes, norms, and behaviours towards ensuring environmental sustainability. Dominant social paradigms, too, are influential in changing the behaviour of decision-makers. Studies conducted by Dunlap and Van Liere (1978), Shafer (2006), and Stern and Dietz (1993; 1994) are crucial in this regard. The prevailing cultural values of Sri towards Lankans preserving the environment could be enriched by the influence of Buddhism and its teachings (Abeydeera et al., 2016; Henning, 2002; Nanayakkara, 1992). Environmental values such as interconnectedness with nature and self-responsibility are well aligned with the goal government's of ensuring environmental sustainability in the long run. Embedding such values in the development plan of Sri Lanka will mobilize greater public participation institutionalization enabling of best practices.

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