

The Sustainable Peace and Development through Reconciliation: Shift in Paradigm

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Ayuboowan, Wanakkam, AssalamAleikum, Good evening most respected public sector leaders, respected secretary Mr. Lalith Weerathunga, Vice Chancellor of General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, members of the head table, distinguish members of the audience, ladies and gentlemen. First of all I would like to pay my great respect and salute for the great soldiers who liberated our nation under the eminent leadership of His Excellency the President and the Defence Secretary.

Now after the 30 years of war the next challenge is peace building and economic development, so there are no short term solutions for this. So my topic is sustainable peace and development through reconciliation via shift in paradigm. Lot of people haven't understood the importance of the paradigm that is why I'm going to highlight. So the definition of sustainable development, for human sustainability is potential for long term benefits, which has environmental, economic and social dimensions. Sustainable development is that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation.

The definition of reconciliation rests on mutual respect between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. So our challenge is long lasting peace and development through restoring mutual respect between people from different cultural background. So that is the biggest challenge we are facing now on in the next two three decades. Nelson Mandela stated, "no one is born in hating other person, people have learned to hate, therefore they can be taught to love and love comes quietly naturally for human beings".

So there are various components of reconciliation as the social reconstruction, security, freedom of movement, rule of law, access to education, justice and conflict resolution. Now what is our challenge? As you can see from 1972 to 2010, environment has been changed but the problem is sometimes our thinking processes, all going as it is. According to environmental change we are not changing. That means you have to have a strategic approach. So one of the biggest challenges we are facing organizationally, thinking wise, when the Environment is changing, Are we? Organizations fail because they haven't responded to the environmental changes and now it is high time for us to think and change.

So I'm going to introduce effectiveness and efficiency which are more important concepts in management, Efficiency is do the things right, effectiveness by definition do the right thing. So our challenge is to do right thing in right way.

What is the percentage do the right thing in right way. So that is the challenge, what we have done for ten years, might not correct now, as for example we used land phones or analog technology but now if our thinking is based on analog thinking is quiet outdated. Declaring the national language was a right thing but Sinhala only is a wrong way and could have done declaring national languages Sinhala and Tamil both. It was the right thing in right way, So that kind of historical mistakes has gone long way because of somewhere wrong in paradigm. So the question is what is paradigm?

When you take decisions especially the effectiveness: doing the right thing is mainly depending on paradigm and as a nation we should shift in paradigm that is why people make lot of resistance, therefore this is not an easy task. Even higher education is having the same problem, even we won the war by turned to shift in paradigm, I can remember when Norechhole and Upper Kotmale started by the previous President, people came with placards and then stopped due to the social pressure, but the new President and the leadership did it because their paradigm was stronger than earlier. As soon as you stop learning you stop leading, therefore all the leaders should continuously learn otherwise they will do the wrong thing believing it is right.

Paradigm means perceptions, assumptions, framework, theory or the lenses through which you view the world and it is like a map of territory how hard you try to find your destination or how positive you are, you would stay lost. So I will give you an example: once foreigner came to Sri Lanka during the Tsunami time, he wants to go to Galle, he bought a one inch map and searching for Galle but he never found Galle instead he found Kegalle. The bookshop owner has given Kegalle therefore the map should be corrected. There are two types of changes, if you want to do a minor change you have to introduce it in incremental way when the environment is predictable but if you want to make significant or quantum change need to break the paradigm.

We cannot do still incremental change when there is drastic environmental change but then we come to the flux. So the gap between the environment and existing pattern of practice. Therefore we have to think and understand the importance of paradigm and do the things correctly. So how do you think and how you act? In Sri Lanka also we have as far as the species concern, Sinhala- Buddhist paradigm, Tamil- Hindu and Moor-Muslim paradigm and now need to shift into Sri Lankan multi ethnic, multi religious paradigm and finally to come into center of this concept of Sri Lankan paradigm. So education has major role to play like introducing new approaches in teaching, revision of text books, research and development so that is the message I want to send. Finally if you understood the paradigm you could win.