

## **Sustainable Development and Gross National Happiness in Bhutan:**

**Jayanta Kumar Dash,**

Phd Scholar, P.G. Dept. of Political Science Utkal University, India

---

### **Abstract**

This study tries embrace a new type of development not only in the present era but also for the future generations. Liberalization, privatization and globalization are the basic opportunities of development in the recent times. But is it forever or sustainable? . is there any area of sustainability?. The question ends in the concept of gross national happiness, as an alternative. It is Bhutan, a land locked country in the south east Asia, who introduces a new formula of development not for the present generations but for the generations to come. It is the 4<sup>th</sup> king of Bhutan, Jigme Singe Wanchuk who developed the sustainable model of development interpreting that 'Gross National Happiness is more important than gross national product'. It is an alternative way of measure to the development which is a sustainable one.

**KEYWORDS:** Globalisation, Sustainability, Environment, Disinvestment

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the era of globalization, all the states especially the developing ones, are getting strained by the growing demands of the people for facilities, services, employment opportunities and better conditions of life etc . Therefore, 'development' has been sought after by the states in order to meet the soaring expectations of the people. However, the efforts for development have not always brought good results. The excessive dependence on the nature for development has raised many questions to contemplate with. One of them is whether the efforts and means for development are sustainable or not. Sustainable development demands an economic development that is conducted without undermining the sustainability of natural systems and the environment for the use of future generations. It is a process which argues for development which is capable of meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising it with that of the posterity. Thus it advocates for a desirable state of human society where the living conditions and the resource use need to be durable to an infinite period. This is a paradoxical situation that the developing countries are facing today. **(Edwards A.R and McKibben,2010).**

There is a growing demand for development on the one hand and on the other, there are forces that oppose it. The present century is a witness to the mad race for development in the so called 'Third World'. But the process of development too faces challenges from the environmentalists. This divergence of trends emerges due to various interpretations of development. To strike a balance between the prospects of the present generation and that of the future has remained as an enigma of the concept of development. The balance is otherwise known as sustainable development.

## FROM DEVELOPMENT TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A LONG JOURNEY

Some scholars trace the genesis of 'development' in the states in the opening of borders, flow of capital and technology, international trade linkages, sharing of natural resources, industrialization, globalization, free trade agreement and interaction between and among the international actors in trans-national scenarios, development in science and technology and their exchange and sharing etc. Some find rapid industrialization as the main source of development. Development, according to the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), broadly means improving quality of life which incorporates the basic need of the individuals including better education, high standard of health and nutrition, less poverty, a cleaner environment, more equality of opportunity, greater individual freedom and a rich cultural life. (Mishra K. Girish, Mathr. G. C., Mohanty. L.N.P, 1997) These aspects have gone beyond the implications of today's development. Present generation is in the path of development causing a great threat to the sustainability of future generations. Development is sought at the cost of nature and the fate of the future generations. We cannot overlook the future prospects of prosperity. Our successors need to survive but if we overexploit the nature, the future of the race is uncertain. Hence, the question of checks and restraints in regard to the use and utilization of the environment has been much debated now-a-days. It hints at what is popularly called "sustainable development". A sustainable development project must be based on a better-developed mode of consultation between the community and the members it comprises. The success of such a policy also depends on consumers accepting certain constraints and citizens observing certain requirements with regard to transparency and participation. (Rogers, P. K.F. Jalal, and J.A. Boyd, 2007).

The Brundtland Report 1987 while admitting that "Sustainable development is the development that satisfies the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations" (World Development Report, 2003) insists on the need to protect the diversity of genes, species, and all terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in nature. There is the essentiality of protecting the quality of the environment by the restoration, development, and maintenance of habitats of the species which implies the sustainable management of the use of the animal and plant populations which are being exploited. It asks for the rational management of human, natural, and economic resources that aims to satisfy the essential needs of humanity forever. It maintains the accomplishment of several conditions such as preserving the balance in nature, reverence for the environment, preventing the exhaustion of natural resources, and reduced production of waste, rationalization of production and implementation of the energy consumption. (Huesemann, M.H., and J.A. Huesemann, 2011). It is presented as a more or less clean break from other modes of development, which have led and are still leading to worrying social and ecological damage on both a universal and a confined level. In order to be sustainable, development must combine three main elements: fairness, protection of the environment, and economic efficiency. (Padmanabhan, K.K; Krishnadas V.R.; Kumar Pradeep, 2004)

Sustainable development is an organizing principle for human life on a finite planet. It possesses a desirable future state for human societies in which living conditions and the natural resources meet the needs of the society without undermining the sustainability of natural systems and the environment. It ties together concern for the carrying capacity of natural systems with the social, political, and economic challenges faced by human civilization. In the early 1970s, 'sustainability' was employed to describe an economy "in equilibrium with basic ecological support systems". (Atkinson, G. S. Dietz, and E. Neumayer, 2009).

Sustainable Development, to an Economist means an economic progress in which the quantity and quality of our stocks of natural resources like forests and the integrity of bio-geo-chemical cycles like climate are sustained and passed on, unimpaired, to future generation. (Baker Susan, 2006). For a logging company it may mean sustained projects, for an environmental economist it may mean sustained stocks of natural forests; and for an environmentalist it may mean a clean heritage for our children. However, the concept of sustainable development is not an entirely new one. It has been with us for well over 100 years. Until the very recent past however, it had not crept into conservation strategy. Today the word 'sustainable' is tacked on to every major facet of human activity. In its modern form, 'sustainable development' was born and developed in the shape of the World Conservation Strategy produced jointly in 1980 by International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). (<http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/sustainabledevelopment/overview>). Its objective is "to help advance the achievements of sustainable development through the conservation of living resources". It declares that "conservation like development is for the people and thus implicitly assigned to all other species – plant or animal. It refutes the status of existence which is primarily for human use. That is the way all future development was to take place and be judged. But today's economic development may be making future generations worse by over exploitation of the natural resources and polluting the earth's environment. Now-a-days environmental degradation has already been massive. The natural resources are being exploited without much consideration for the future generations and world is already on a critical threshold because of the holes in the ozone shield with the accumulation of green house gasses.

However, sustainability can never be absolute. It is not plausible that all natural resources can or even need to be preserved. Sustainability is a function of social, economic, technological and ecological themes. Successful development will inevitably involve some amount of land clearing, oil-drilling, river-damming and swamp-draining. However economic development and sound environmental management are complementary aspects of the same agenda without adequate environment protection development will be undermined and without development, environmental protection will fail. (Rashid. S. M., Hashia Haseena, 2001)

The development theories have been very much focused on the economic dimension of development. The universal use of Gross National Product (GNP) is the only means for measuring national wellbeing and growth. But GNP as an indicator of development has certain criticisms. It is an economic measure which does not take into

account non market activities that influence wellbeing such as housework, child care, and volunteer work. It also forgets about the effects of environmental pollution and its detrimental social impacts. It ignores to distinguish the distribution of income within the country and its people in a way where economic growth does not necessarily mean equal increase in wellbeing. **(Peet, Richard and Elaine Hartwick, 1999)**

In 1990 the UNDP Human Development Program (HDP) measured life expectancy, adult literacy and adjusted GDP as the new indicators of development. In 2001 the European Union Sustainable Development Strategy emphasized the importance of qualitative factors such as health, awareness, inclusion and environmental quality. **(Singh. R. B ,2002).**

Therefore strong public institutions and environmental protection policies seem to be essential. Though the agenda for reform is large and comprehensive, accepting the challenge to accelerate development in an environmentally responsible manner involves substantial shifts in policies and priorities and cost, failing to meet the challenge is also costlier. Although the value of this challenge becomes clear only when we realize that humanity is not distinct from nature but a part of it.

Following the Rio conference of 1992, the environmentalists have drawn up a general policy for sustainable development which requires serious strategies to meet the political and economic development. The issues appear at every level and influence basically every area of nationwide strategy. The various approaches may be constrained as free market practices, a desire to place people at the heart of the economy, the greater or lesser determination of the various countries in the world, and the balance between short, medium, long, and very long-term interests. Upadhaya Shashi (2004). Besides the intertwining of economies demands that environmental problems must be dealt with not individually but on a global level, which does not stand in the way of the required means and strategies in different phases of development. It combines the economic, social and environmental aspects of human activity considering the communities, companies, and individuals. It finds a consistent and enduring poise to those aspects in the process of good governance in the measurement of good administrative practice. It is a set of transformations whereby the use of natural resources the choice of type of investment and direction of systematic and institutional modifications harmonize with present and future needs. **(Sinha. P. C, 1998).** It is based on a set of requirements providing basic needs of present and future generations. It improves the quality of life, involving easier access to medical care, social services, culture, and social well-being. It also tries to lessen the gaps between rich and poor countries. **(Singh Ranvinder, 2001)**

#### **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS IN BHUTAN:**

In context of the discourses and models of development across the globe, Bhutan, “a small Himalayan State”, **(Mohapatra, 2008)** has something new to say in this regard through its propagation of a new approach i.e. the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH). It was propounded by the fourth king of Bhutan Jigme Singye Wangchuk in the year 1972. It was a new concept to eradicate various problems what the developing countries are facing in their economic growth as a means for increasing overall wellbeing. The king introduced this developmental approach to provide the sole need of Bhutan. According to him the per capita income does not determine the wellbeing of his

people but the happiness of people that matters despite their economic possession or prosperity. The model of GNH is a living and vibrant illustration to fight against the challenges of development vis-à-vis environment. **(Brooks , 2008)** Development carrying nature with it, is the essence of Bhutan's concept of GNH. GNH was an attempt to redefine the developmental philosophy away from material centric focuses and towards a more holistic and non material one. Originally it is a concept of Buddhist cultural consciousness of happiness introduced by the Royal Government of Bhutan. **(Royal Government of Bhutanm, 1991)**. But happiness itself is a controversial one as everybody wants to be happy even at the cost of others. Besides the measure of economic progress of a country in the scale of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and high rate of per capita income it fails to calculate the happiness of the people when the cottage dwellers hesitate to purchase and satisfy their basic amenities of life. However the GDP and the per capita income of a country show the income of few people where the universal statistic fails to capture the actual economical condition of all. As a result of which people are dissatisfied to cope with their present situation. From the above discussion it is found that neither GNP nor GDP gives the actual parameters of happiness. In this type of condition it is Bhutan which shows an alternative way to get the actual taste of happiness to its people. **(Wangchuk, Tashi and Anne Muller, 2008)**.

The GNH model of Bhutan is supported by four pillars, namely the achievement of equitable and sustainable development, the preservation and promotion of local culture, the protection of environmental health and diversity and the upholding of good governance. The Centre of Bhutan Studies has also identified nine other domains for GNH centered development to emphasis on happiness in a different way. They are psychological wellbeing, physical health, time use and balance, education, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, and the living standards. It is the policy of the planning commission that while economic performance is directly linked with the increasing standard of living, its importance should be on the spiritual and emotional growth and development. GNH seeks to resolve the conflict between the various competing goals and involves the simultaneous pursuit of economic prosperity, environmental quality and social equality. Simultaneously the technological advancement also plays a vital role to achieve all these objectives. It is a means to realize a more satisfactory, intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual aspects of development in human life. It is a pattern of human behavior in which their needs are fulfilled by preserving the environment not only in the present but also for generations to come.

GNH is directly proportional with the living standard of the people. It deals with health, education, eco-system, bio-diversity, community vitality, interdependence, cultural preservation, good governance, time use and a balanced emotional wellbeing. From the above domains it is clear that the sustainable model of Bhutan aims to maintain its rich heritage and culture not only for present but also for its future. In Bhutan Happiness of the people was made the guiding principle of development. Bhutan's unique concept of gross national happiness contemplates not only development but sustainable development giving equal emphasis to all the nooks and corners of individuals. Buddhist text 'Tripitaka' describes cultural values, traditional belief, religious feelings and all its environmental conditions as the dynamic phenomenon which is interlinked tightly with each other. The interrelatedness of being, none being and be

comings contributed to a healthy, sound and polluted free environment. When the world is struggling with the negative impacts of globalization like deforestation, industrialization, mass degradation, pollution and the consequences of the vicious circle of poverty, at that time Bhutan is making sincere efforts to check and eradicate these problems through the panacea of GNH.

### **CONCLUSION:**

From the above discussion it is heartening to note that eventhough Bhutan is a Least Developed Country (LDC), it has a development model which is worthy of emulation as an alternative model of sustainable development . The model as reflected in the advocacy of GNH is not only useful to Bhutan but also for several of such countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America which are grappling with the problem of development. It is applicable to many such countries which are confronting with the problems coming under the impact of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG). The question of LPG must ensure happiness to the people during the reign of market forces which claim economic prosperity due to their intervention. The means such as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), Disinvestment policy of the government, Industrialization and Urbanization policy etc. are not sufficient to make all happy. Against this background, GNH in Bhutan seems to have enough potential to antidote the evils of the contemporary western models of development while providing a viable and valuable model of development which is not only sustainable but also useful in promoting happiness.

### **REFERENCES:**

- Atkinson, G., S. Dietz, and E. Neumayer (2009). *Handbook of Sustainable Development*. Edward Elgar Publishing, .
- Baker Susan (2006), *sustainable development*, Abingdon: Routledge. Bakari, Mohamed El-Kamel. "Globalization and Sustainable Development: False Twins?" *New Global Studies* 7.3: 23-56, November 2013.
- Boyle Alan and Ereestone David (Eds.) (1999), "*International law and sustainable development: Past achievements and future challenges*", Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brooks. C. Arthur (2008), "*Gross National Happiness: why happiness matters for Americans and how we can get more of it*", New York: Basic books.
- Edwards, A.R., and B. McKibben (2010). *Thriving Beyond Sustainability: Pathways to a Resilient Society*. New Society Publishers
- Huesemann, M.H., and J.A. Huesemann (2011). *Technofix: Why Technology Won't Save Us or the Environment*, Chapter 6, "Sustainability or Collapse?", and Chapter 13, "The Design of Environmentally Sustainable and Socially Appropriate Technologies", New Society Publishers,
- Meadwcroft James, Keeny Michel (1999), "*Planning sustainability*", New York: Routledge publication.
- Mishra K. Girish, Mathr. G. C., Mohanty. L.N.P. (1997), *sustainable urban development*, New Delhi: Uppal publishing house.
- Mohapatra Anil Kumar (2008), *small states in South Asia – A security perspective of the Himalayan states*, Bhubaneswar: Panchashila education publishers.

- Mohapatra Anil Kumar (May 2008), *Bhutan's prospective of SAARC*, World Focus, pp-197 to 199.
- Padmanabhan, K.K; Krishnadas V.R.; Kumar Pradeep (2004) "*Book on essays*", New Delhi: Spectrum Books Pvt. Ltd.
- Peet, Richard and Elaine Hartwick(1999), "Theories of Development: Contentions, Arguments, Alternatives", New York/London: Guilford Publications.
- Rashid. S. M., Hashia Haseena (2001), *environment, resource and sustainable development*, Rawat publications, New Delhi:
- Royal Government of Bhutan. Planning Commission (1991) Seventh Five Year Plan (1992-1997) Vol 1. And 2.Thimphu.
- Rogers, P. K.F. Jalal, and J.A. Boyd (2007). *An Introduction to Sustainable Development*. Routledge.
- Singh. R. B. (2002), *human dimension of sustainable development*, New Delhi: Rawat publications.
- Singh. Ranvinder (2001), *sustainable human settlement the human experiences*, New Delhi: Rawat publications.
- Sinha. P. C. (1998), "*sustainable development*", New Delhi: Anmol publications Pvt. Ltd.
- Wangchuk, Tashi and Anne Muller (2008), "Gross National Happiness of Bhutan", Wyoming: Pursue Balance
- World Development Report (2003), "*Sustainable Development, in a dynamic world*", London: Oxford University press.
- World Commission on Environment and Development (1987). *Our Common Future*. Oxford University Press.