

A comparative study of the development indicators of Sri Lanka, Singapore and Malaysia

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When it comes to development, Singapore, many of us say, must be a role model for Sri Lanka. In this study, the development indicators of Sri Lanka is critically analysed in comparison to those of Singapore. Since Singapore's population is only 4 million, which is much less than Sri Lanka's population of 19 millions, the development indicators of Sri Lanka is also compared with those of Malaysia which has a population of about 23 millions. To many, development of a country means just the economic development, measured mostly by the gross national product (GNP) per capita and the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita. By both of these indicators, Sri Lanka would be considered the least developed of the three, since Malaysia is two times more economically developed as Sri Lanka, and Singapore is seven times more developed than Sri Lanka.

Nevertheless, this comparative study shows that the histories of the indicators of human well being, such as adult literacy, life expectancy at birth, immunization of children under 12 months, primary and secondary school enrolments, have been much superior in the case of Sri Lanka, despite its low economical development indicators and the high rural population, than in the cases of Singapore and Malaysia. Further more, this study also shows that the indicators of environmental well being, such as carbon dioxide emissions per capita, and the indicators of consumption pattern, such as commercial energy use and electric power consumption, in Sri Lanka are very much lower than those of Singapore and Malaysia.

All these observations indicate that the well being of the people and the environment of a country may be achieved via a path that is very different from the consumer-oriented economic development at the cost of environmental degradation that is advocated world-wide. Certain characteristics of such a path are identified in this study considering the Sri Lankan history and its predominantly Buddhist culture.

Key words: Development indicators; Buddhist culture; Sri Lanka