CHAPTER IV

Environmental Ethics in Buddhism

"Yassa rukkhassa chāyāya, nisīdeya sayeyya vā, na tassā sākhāṁ bhaṁceyya, mitta dubbo hi pāpako."¹

Even the branch of the tree must never be cut where beneath the shade have ever sheltered, taken a rest or slept. It would be betrayer of his friend.

Aṅkura Petavatthu

At the very outset it seems proper to mention that it is difficult to trace out the threads of ‘Environmentalism’ or ecological concern in early or later Buddhism. The reason is simple. The environmental problems such as ecological disorder, pollution, population blast, hole in ozone layer, acid rain, global warming and many other catastrophes of today were not existent during the Buddha’s time or even 1000 years after his death. Hence, he or his disciple did not ponder over these problems. These are the modern problems born out scientific developments, industrialization, deforestation etc. which were unknown to the people in 600 B.C. Hence to search their proper solution in the antiquity of ancient religion and philosophy and frame out a theory environmental concern appears, at a glance, problematic rather impossible. However, it does not mean that we should not seek the solution of modern problems from the ancient seers. It is again a fact that environmental perspective is not totally lacking in the Buddhist literature. The Tipitaka texts reveal the fact that stray references of ecological concern are very much available there. Hence it is possible to work out environmental theories and inquire into the directives relating to

¹ Khuddaka Nikāya. Petavatthu, verse, 154. (Petavatthu includes Khuddaka Nikāya. The stories of petos are graphic accounts of the miserable beings who have been reborn in unhappy existences as a consequence of their evil deeds. There are fifty one stories divided into four vaggas, describing the life of misery of the evil doers, in direct contrast to the magnificent life of the devas. U Ko lay. Guide to Tipitaka, p, 177.)
the solution of modern environmental problems from Buddha and Buddhism. For that it is essential to interpret Buddha’s teaching in modern light which may in turn result in articulation of Buddhist environmentalism. The present chapter aims at reinterpretation and correlation of some of the Buddha Vacana and Buddhist concepts in the light of present ecological problems as well as to arrive at some tentative direction, if not complete solution, to overcome the environmental predicaments of the day. For the purpose of brevity and clarity this chapter intends to reveal the problem in the widest perspective and make an in-depth study of the reason that have precipitated the woeful predicament of the day and thereby present a solution to it even if that may appear tentative.

In order to explain Buddhist theory relating to environment it seems essential to explain the concept of environment, ecology, pollution and the environmental problems we are facing today.

Environment and Environmental Ethics

Environment comes from the French word “environner”. “Environ” means surroundings and “ment” means achieving. Therefore, literally speaking, environmental science deals with the study of physical, chemical and biological conditions that surround and influence the living organisms internally and externally. Environment is defined as the sum total of the physical and biological condition within which as organism lives. Our environment is made up of four major components—land, water, air and living organisms, including plants and animals. Environment is defined as, “conditions, circumstances, etc., that affect the lives of people, animals and plants.” Environment is the complete range of external conditions under which an organism lives, including physical, chemical, and biological factors, such as temperature, light, the availability of food and water, and the

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2 Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, p. 403
effects of others organisms. This term has a wider connotation. It includes not only earth, water and air but whatever is seen living and non living on this planet constitute environment.

**What is environmental ethics?** Environment ethics consists of the study of normative issues and principles relating to human interactions with the natural environment and to their context and consequences. It forms a crucial area of applied ethics – crucial for the guidance of individuals, corporations, and governments in determining the principles affecting their policies, lifestyles and actions across the entire range of environmental issues. It is equally crucial for the appraisal of such actions, lifestyle and policies.

Sometimes the phrase “environmental ethics” is used, contrary to the previous definition, to refer simply to the quality of people’s behavior insofar as it relates to the natural environment. However, if this were held to be the central meaning of “environmental ethics” the implication would be that ethics consists of behavior, that ethical principles are invariably manifested in people’s conduct, and perhaps also that no critical study of normative ethics is possible. While the usage just mentioned has to be acknowledged, it is important ethics” which concern not just such behavior, but also the normative principles applicable to it and their critical study. This critical study is standardly known as “environmental ethics,” the subject of this overview.

Environmental ethics is sometimes defined instead as the kind of approach to environmental issues which finds independent value to be located not only in the interests of sentient creatures—creatures which can feel pleasure or pain—but also in natural living creatures in general, or in the natural world in general. While many influential philosophies are committed to this approach, many others are not, and base their justifications on the interests of sentient creatures only. Since the latter

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kind of approach is the approach of many environmentalists, and undeniably offers both specifications of environmental problems and solutions to them, it is advisable not to adopt a definition of "environmental ethics" which treats this approach as lying outside environmental ethics. In this way, the debate about the location of independent value can continue to take place within environmental ethics, and the boundaries of the subject or discipline of environmental ethics avoid being treated as themselves a battleground about values. Also environmental ethics can be allowed to be a neighbor of, e.g., health-care ethics or business ethics, concerned about a different sphere, but not rival discipline with essentially different values of its own.

Environment can be divided into two parts (a) the physical world and (b) the world of the living beings including man. For its proper understanding a brief description of these two is needed.

Nature of physical world: according to Buddhist cosmology the world is made of rūpakkhanda. Rūpa means colour and shape or form. It comprehends all material elements which constitute sense organs and the physical objects of the surrounding world. According to the Dhammasaṅgaṇī, the rūpakkhanda comprises of four primary elements (būta) and eleven secondary matters derived from the primary elements. The fundamental constituents of matters are the elements (dhātu) of earth, water, fire and air. Hence, the four have been considered as simple primordial dhamma of immateriality each one carrying its own specific kind of activity. Thus they establish each one in the fundamental state which can affect any of the objects of material world. The activities as exercised by each one keeps one another in perfect state of equilibrium. This is brief the basic foundation of physical environment in Buddhism.


5 Abhidhammatthaśāṅgaha. Rupakkanda, Myanmar edition, p. 96. (Pathavīdhātu, āpodhātu, tejodhātu vāyodhātu bhūtarūpaṃ nāma)
Nature of the living beings: according to Buddhism all living beings, whether human or non human, are made up of rūpakkhandha and arūpakkhandha. They have basic characters i.e. form, warmness and consciousness. In absence of any these a living beings is just like a wood or a dead body. Explaining the nature of human beings Buddha analyses the total personality of a man and say that it is composed of five elements namely rūpakkhandhā—aggregate of corporeality, vedanakkhandhā—aggregate of feeling, saññakkhandhā—aggregate of perception, sañkhārakkhandhā—aggregate of disposition and viññakkhandhā—aggregate of consciousness. In this connection it seems relevant to mention that ‘pañcakkhandhā’ is the distinctive feature of human being only. It is not found in other living beings of the world. That is why man is a rational and moral animal. The sañkhārakkhandhā, which is an aggregation of good and bad qualities, decides human nature from moral point of view. These qualities are reflected in man’s action which establishes his relation with nature good and bad. The saññakkhandhā makes a man a rational animal.

On the contrary the non human being such as animals, insects, plants, tree etc are not composed of pañcakkhandhā. Though they are composed of rūpa and rūpakkhandhā they are devoid of saññā and sañkhārakkhandhā. They comprise of rūpakkhandhā, vedanakkhandhā and viññānakkhandhā only. Since they are devoid of saññā and sañkhārakkhandhā they cannot transmit their knowledge to the next generation and are incapable of creating any culture and its environment. They are different from man due to their physic-psychological formation. Since both are made of rūpa and arūpa dhātu both have same characteristic of form, warmness and consciousness. This is how Buddhism explains the similarities between man and the environment. The only thing that is other living beings are neither moral nor rational. Hence, it is the

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responsibility of men to have good relation with them. Secondly due to their (man and the environment) same origin (*rūpa and arūpa dhātu*) they are interrelated interdependent upon each other.

**Ecology and Ecosystem**

The term “ecology” was first used a German writer named Ernst Haeckel in 1869. According to him, in the 1870, the ecology is defined as the science study of the relationships of living organisms with each other and with their environment. Ecology is a study of the relationship among various organisms as well as the relationship between organism and their environment. It studies the interdependence among human beings on each other on the one hand and between human beings and environment on the other. The interdependent nature of the study of ecology becomes obvious from the literal meaning as the term as it is derived from the Greek word ‘oiko’ (s) meaning ‘house’, as animate and inanimate things together likewise the ecology also keeps itself in a specific order by way of giving importance to everything in the world.\(^7\) Ecology is the science of biological systems and communities and is the kind of concern or activism that focuses on interactions between humanity and the natural environment or ecological systems.\(^8\)

The term ‘ecosystem’ was first coined by the British ecologist Arthur Tansley, 1935. The ecosystem is the basic function unit in the ecology, since it includes all the living organisms in an area interacting with the physical environment. Hence, an ecosystem includes populations, communities, habits and environments, and it particularly refers to the dynamic interactions among all components of the environment focusing specially on the exchange of materials between the living and non living components. Eugene Odum (1971) defined ecosystem or ecological system

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\(^7\) Neelima Sinha. Ethics at the Core of Globalization, p.52.

as any unit that includes all of the organisms in a given area interacting with the physical environment, so that a flow of energy leads to clearly defined trophic structure, biotic diversity and material cycles within the system.

**Ecological interdependence and Buddhism**

As a species in the ecosystem, man is inseparably interrelated to his environment. So man's actions in whatever way—good or bad—undoubtedly have a tremendous impact on environment. In the reciprocal manner, the environment also influences man in various ways, especially the physical environment, which consists of the sun, the moon, the sky, the wind, the vegetation and the earth. Buddhist ecological ethics clearly points out that human conduct, moral or immoral, has significantly affected the course of nature. The world passes through alternating cycles of evolution and dissolution, each of which endures a long period of time. Though change is inherent in nature, Buddhism believes that natural processes are affected by morals of man. If man is to act with sense of responsibility to the natural world, he has also to find appropriate environmental ethics. Today, to prevent further aggravation of the present ecological problem, one must adhere to the ideological approach of Buddha in dealing with the environment and ecology. For the sake of human friendly nature in today's life certain ethics of ecology needs to be emphasized.

Buddhism lays an emphasis on the close relationship between man and environment, and thereby the responsibility man has towards environment. Buddhist concept of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* deals with interdependence in term of both—internal as well external ecology. The internal ecology aims at mental well-being whereas external ecology deals with physical well-being. It shows that the theory of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is a cardinal doctrine of Buddhism. Doctrine of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* is applied to the solution of the question regarding the origin of misery as well as that regard the removal of misery. In the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha says that
if one under this doctrine then one grasps the truth \textit{(Dhamma)} and if one grasps the truth then one understands it – \textit{Yo paṭiccasamuppādaṁ passait so dhammam passati, yo dhammam passsati so paṭiccasamuppādaṁ passait}. The doctrine of \textit{Paṭiccasamuppāda}, which is derived from the second and the third Noble Truths, explains the causal relationship in the empirical world, in the mental world, and between mental and physical worlds as well as vice-verse these realms. The \textit{Dhammapada} puts this very aptly as follows:

Mind is precedes all this. Mind is supreme, produce by mind are they, if one should speak or act with mind defiled, suffering will follow, just as wheels follows hoofs of the drawing ox. \textit{"Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā, manasā ce paduṭṭhena, bhāsati vā karoti vā, tato naṁ dukkhamanveti, cakkamva vahato padaṁ."} \textsuperscript{10}

Mind precedes all things. Mind is supreme, produced by mind are they, if one should speak or act with purified mind, well-being will follow like a never parting shadow. \textit{"Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā, manasā ce pasannena, bhāsati vā karoti vā, tato naṁ sukkhamanveti, chāyāva anapāyini"} \textsuperscript{11}

In brief the basic point of the doctrine is that the twelve links of Dependent Origination are causally fused together as single organic unit. They represent mental as well as physical realms of the past, present and future.

A Korean Buddhist thinker Dong-hawa Kim interprets the causally fusion of twelve links as the ‘logical interdependence’. He state,

"The phrase, ‘when this exists, that exists. When this arises, that arises’, is the fundamental meaning of the theory of Dependent Origination. The first part means the relationship in space of all things in

\textsuperscript{10} Dhammapada, verse, 1.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid. verse, 2.
the world. On the other hand, the second part refers to the relationship in the time of things. The formula, 'when this exists, that exists, 'when this arises, that arises'. "When this does not exist, that does not exist". "When this disappears, that disappears", explains the meaning of Dependent Origination. Everything in the world is in formula dependence. There is nothing independent. This first passage in the formula refers to a relation between things from the perspective of space, while the second refers to a relation from the perspective of time.12

The Buddha taught that all things in the universe come into existence, 'arise' as a result of particular conditions. Majjhima Nikāya Mahātaṇaṇkhaya sutta describes this theory as follows:

 equipment. avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā. Saṅkhārapaccayā viññānaṁ... Imasmiṁ asati idam na hoti, imasu nirodhā idam nirūjhati. Yadidaṁ avijjāniruddhā saṅkhāraniruddho. Saṅkhāraniruddhā viññānaniruddhoṁ...13 That being thus this becomes; from the arising of that, this arises. That not being, this does not become; from the ceasing of that, this ceases.

In the above paraphrase of the doctrine of dependent origination, the term 'idam' stands for normative as well as locative denotations. And, therefore, it has been argued that the causal relationship in the Paṭiccasamuppāda holds both ways, i.e., if p causes q then q causes p. in other words, A is dependent on B, and B is dependent on A. It this way that the theory has been interpreted as basically a dictum of interdependence.

The Buddha preached the dependent origination of each and every phenomena of universe. The realization that everything in the universe is mutually interdependent also shows that the man cannot keep itself unaffected from its ecology. As everything is dependent on the other things, therefore, an existence bereft of ecological ambience is

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12 Neelim Sinha (Kali Charm Pandey). Ethics at the Core of Globalization, p. 56.
impossibility. That is, one is doomed to live in one’s own ecology. As human existence affects ecological status, the ecology also affects human well-being. If human existence disturbs ecological equilibrium, the ecology definitely, sooner or later, adversely affects not only human well-being but also its survival. As described, man forgets its dependence on ecology and takes it for granted which results into the deterioration of the ecology. And then when ecology starts affecting man, he realizes the importance to give due regard to its own ecological surroundings. It is this reason that the need of living in co-existence with the ecology is nothing short of a categorical imperative. The Buddha did quite early realize this interdependence and therefore relevance of his teachings has been realized much more today as compared to the past when actually ecological imbalance was not so severely affected.

Here it is also important to note that the Aggañña Sutta of Dīgha Nikāya shows how man and nature are interdependent and inter-influential. When man became greedy, the nature became deteriorated due to man’s over-exploitation of nature.¹⁴ The Adhammika sutta of Aṅguttara Nikāya¹⁵ throws more light on the mutual relationship between man and environment. According to the Sutta, the adverse occurrences of phenomena are due to the moral degeneration of man. It describes a chain of moral crisis starting from the kings (rulers) down to the ordinary people. And this moral crisis of man has a great impact on the patterns of environment.

The questions arise that if everything is interdependent on other things then how we so easily forget this fact and ignore ecological perspectives and why is the occurrence of so much ecological imbalance? For an answer to this question we have to delve into Buddhist distinction

between two levels of reality: the conventional truth (*samuti saccā*) and the ultimate truth (*paramattha saccā*). We forget the interdependent nature of things because of our ignorance. The ignorance (*avijjā*) causes us to treat former as the latter which results into the anthropocentric behavior of mankind.

Thus we clearly see that Buddhism establishes that there is an interdependence relationship among all the constituents of the World. There is nothing in the world which is independent from any other thing. Everything is dependent on others. The World is a bounded whole as here everything is related to other things through cause and effect relationship. As there is nothing uncaused, everything is dependent on something else. The significance of Buddhist theory of interdependence can be understood from the fact that it shows that one happiness or suffering originate from one’s realization or non-realization respectively of the dependent nature of everything. It is obvious, even without emphasis, that in context of deep ecological crisis of today there is a need to infuse the consciousness of interdependence. When we understand the nature of ourselves and the world we are free from the instinctive idea that we and other things somehow exist in our own right, independently and separately from everything else. One of the Buddha’s earliest disciples said, “For one truly sees the pure and simple arising of phenomena and the pure and simple continuity of conditioned, things there is no fear. When with wisdom one sees the world just like grass and wood, not finding any selfishness, one does not right grieve with the idea, this is not mine.”

**Pollution**

The Oxford English Dictionary has defined the word ‘pollute’ and ‘pollution’ as follows:

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Pollute: To destroy the purity or sanctity; To make (air, water etc) foul and filthy. Pollution: act of polluting. Pollution is any damaging or unpleasant change in the environment that results from the physical, chemical or biological side effects of human activities. Pollution can affect the atmosphere, river, sea and the soil.

Now “Environmental pollution may be described as unfavorable alternation of our surroundings which occurs mainly because of man’s action” and physical constituents and abundance of organism. “Pollution has dangerous, often disastrous, effects on the environment. It befouls the air poisons and aquatic animals, barrens the land and makes life difficult. The other environmental pollutants, odour and noise… can also be sometimes dangerous for health. With the invention of nuclear power and nuclear weapons radioactive materials find their way into the atmosphere and water course, which leads to matagenetic effects. The effects of pollution on our biosphere are numerous and increasing tremendously, unless otherwise checked, they can make the whole planet uninhabitable.”

Recently the World Health Organization’s (WHO) International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) declared air pollution as carcinogenic—a major cause for cancer among humans. The IARC statement said, “There is sufficient evidence that exposure to outdoor air pollution causes lung cancer with a positive association with an increased risk of bladder cancer. Particulate matter, a major component of outdoor air pollution, was evaluated separately and was also classified as carcinogenic to humans. Air we breathe has become polluted with a mixture of cancer-causing substance. We know that outdoor air pollution is not only a major risk to health in general but also a leading environmental cause of cancer deaths. The studies indicate exposure levels have increased significantly in some part of the world, particularly in rapidly industrializing countries with large

17 Neelima Sinha. Buddhist Ethics: Some Modern Perspectives, p. 59. (N. Manivaskam. Environmental Pollution, 5.)
populations in the recent years. The most recent data indicates 2.23 lakh deaths of lung cancer worldwide resulted from air pollution in 2010."\textsuperscript{18}

Now look into India’s air pollution. With the World Health Organization’s (WHO) International Agency for Research on Cancer declaring air pollution as a major cause of cancer, its findings have put the focus on Indian hot-spots such as Delhi, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Jharkhand, which showed high concentration of life-threatening air pollutants. “Air quality data of the government’s pollution watch-dog, Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), for 2010 the last one in the series of such report on air quality across the country—shows that Kolkata and Delhi are among the worst affected cities in terms of air pollution. Quoting Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) data which showed that highest numbers of lung cancer cases were reported during 2009-2011 in Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata, noted environmentalist and director general of Center for Science and Environment (CSE) Sunita Narain said: “It is a worrying development. We need to take urgent steps to find ways to deal with the menace of air pollution which directly affects our health.” A CSE report pointed to a forecast of the National Cancer Control Programme which said more than 1-4 million people would suffer from some form of cancer in India by 2026. It also said that out of the total cases reported during 2009-11 in Kolkata for 20 types of cancers, lung cancer had the highest shared of 12%.\textsuperscript{19} WHO’s finding’s is “wake up call” not only for India but also for other countries. This is the first time for scientists who evaluate the air people breathe for its cancer-causing potential.

Pollution and Buddhism

Environmental pollution has assumed such vast proportions today that humanity has been forced to recognize the presence of an ecological crisis. We can no longer turn a blind eye to the situation as we are already threatened with new pollution-related diseases. The extent of air and water

\textsuperscript{18} The Times of India. Air Pollution Cause Lung Cancer, p. 16. (Issue Date -18/10/2013).
\textsuperscript{19} The Times of India. Air Quality Poorest in Kolkata, Delhi, p. 10. (Issue Date - 19/10/2013)
pollution has reached dismal proportion. The air has become alarmingly toxic and water is found to contain high percentage of arsenic.

In the Buddhist tradition pollution is of two types, mental and physical. When mind functions negatively with the evil and selfish end in view it is called mental pollution. The pollutants are greed, lust, sexual desire, anger, craving and many other impurities. For the Buddha citta is of two types of Kusala and Akusala. Kusala citta is pure state of mind, untouched by any sort of defilements, while akusala citta is under the spell of lobha, moha, dosa, kodha, tanhā etc. The akusala citta or a polluted mind causes pollution in the external world which may be called physical and social pollution. Since mind is the fountain head of all the good and bad action, whatever type of pollution or turmoil is found in the environment they have sprung out akusala citta. Saṃyutta Nikāya has rightly said “World is led by the mind – cittena niyati loko."20

The current environmental pollution is dangerously graver than ever before. Water pollution is also a very serious matter. Rivers, lakes and the sea, have been polluted by humans to such an extent water is not fit even for human consumption. According to environmentalists' estimation, nearly 1.5 billion people lack safe drinking water and at least 5 millions die each year due to water-borne diseases.

Though the phenomena of environmental pollution and the ecological crisis were unheard in 600 B.C., the Buddha was not unaware of it. There is sufficient evidence in the Pāli text. That is why he asked the monks to pay attention on cleanliness of environment. Cleanliness, both in the person and in the environment, was highly commended. He framed rules to prohibit the monks from polluting the green grasses and water with urine, saliva and fasces –Na harite aghilāno uccāraṁ vā passāvaṁ vā kheḷaṁ vā karissāṃsītisikkhā karaṇiya. Na udake aghilāno uccāraṁ vā

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passāvām vā khelaṃ vā karissāmitisikkhā karaṇiyā. 21 These were the common agents of pollution known during the Buddha’s day. Rules about keeping the grass clean were prompted by ethical and aesthetic consideration as well as the fact that it is food for many animals. In Cūḷavagga, the Buddha extols the eight wonderful qualities of the ocean. 22 This indicates that the Buddha was interested in the qualities and cleanliness of the ocean. It should be noted that water is one of the most precious gifts of nature to humans. Water, whether in a river, pond or well, was for public use and each individual had to use it with proper care so that others who followed could use it with the same degree of cleanliness.

At present day, noise is recognized as a serious personal and environmental pollutant troubling everyone to some extent. It causes deafness, stress and irritation, breeds resentment, saps energy and lowers efficiency. The Buddha was conscious of noise pollution hence he expressed his strong disapproval for noise whenever occasion arose. 23 Once he ordered a group of monks to leave the monastery for noisy behavior, 24 and asked to maintain undisturbed silence and his disciples maintained it. Even in their choice of monasteries the presence of undisturbed silence was an

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important quality the Buddha and his disciples looked for—\textit{idha bhikkhave senāsanāṁ nāṭidurāṁ hoti nāccāsannāṁ gamanāgamanasampanāṁ divā appākinnāṁ rattim appasaddaṁ appanigghosām}.\textsuperscript{25}

Silence invigorates those who are pure at heart and raises their efficiency for meditation. But silence overawes those who are impure with ignoble impulses of greed, hatred and delusion. The \textit{Bhayabherava Sutta} beautifully illustrates how even the rustle of a falling twig in the quiet of the forest sends tremors through an impure heart.\textsuperscript{26} This may perhaps account for the present craze for constant auditory stimulation with transistors and cassettes. The moral impurity caused by greed, avarice, acquisitive instincts and aggression has made people fear silence which lays bare the reality of self-awareness. They prefer to down themselves in loud music.

The psychological training of the monks is so advanced that they are expected to cultivate a taste not only for external silence, but for inner silence of speech, desire and thought as well. The sub-vocal speech, the inner chatter that goes on constantly within us in our waking life, is expected to be silenced through meditation.\textsuperscript{27} The sage who succeeds in completely quelling this inner speech is called a \textit{muni}, a silent one.\textsuperscript{28} The inner silence is maintained even when speaking!

It is worth noting as well the Buddhist attitude to speech. Moderation in speech is considered a virtue, as one can avoid four unwholesome vocal activities, namely, falsehood, slander, harsh speech and frivolous talk. In its positive aspect, moderation in speech paves the way to self-awareness. Buddhism commends speaking at the appropriate time, the truth, speaking gently, speaking what is useful, and speaking out of loving-kindness; the opposite modes of speech are condemned—\textit{kālena ca bhāsitā hoti. Saccā ca bhāsitā hoti. Sañña ca bhāsitā hoti. Atthasamhīta}\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{28} \textit{Sutta Nipāta. verse, 207.}
The Buddha’s general advice to the monks regarding speech was to discuss the *Dhamma* or maintain noble silence—*Sannipatitānāmaṃv bikkhave dvayaṃ karaṇīyaṃ dhammī vā kathā ariyo vā thūṇhībhāvo.*

The silence that reigned in vast congregations of monks during the Buddha’s day was indeed a surprise even to the kings of the time. King *Pasenadi* of *Kosalla* walking about in the park land saw the root of trees that were pleasing, noiseless, away from humans and suitable for seclusion and thought of the Buddha. He thought, on account of these root of trees that are pleasing, noiseless, away from humans and suitable for seclusion, I should associate the Buddha. *Addasā kho rājā pasenadi kosalo ārāme janghāvihāraṃ anucankamāno anuvicaramāno rukkhāmulāni pāsādikāni pasādanīyāni appasaddāni appanigghosāni vijanavātāni manussarāhasseyakāni patisallānasāruppāni.*

Disvāna bhagavantanyeva ārabbha sati udapādi ‘imani kho tāni rukkhāmulāni pāsādikāni pasādanīyāni appasaddāni appanigghosāni vijanavātāni manussarāhasseyakāni patisallānasāruppāni.* Alos King *Ajātasuttu* was surprised by the silence of thousands of *bhikkhus* in Jīvaka’s mango forest when he approached to the Buddha on the full moon day of *tasaungmon*—*Raṅgī māgadhassa ajātassattussa vedehiyattassa avidūre ambavanassa ahudeva bhyaṃ. Ahu chāmbhi tattaṃ. Ahu lomahamso. Kathāṃ hi nāma tāva mahato bhikkhusamghassa adḥhotejasānaṃ bhikkhusatānam neva khipitassaddo bhavissati. Na ukkāsītassaddo. Na nigghoso.* Silence is serene and noble as it is conducive to the spiritual progress of those who are pure at heart.

Even Buddhist laymen were reputed to have appreciated quietude and silence. Carpenter *Pañcāṅgika* can be cited as a conspicuous example—*addasā kho uggāhamāno paribbājakāo samanamunḍhikāputto*

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Once Mahānāma, the Sakyan complained to the Buddha that he is disturbed by the hustle of the busy city of Kapilavatthu. He explained that he experiences calm serenity when he visits the Buddha in the quiet salubrious surroundings of the monastery and his peace of mind gets disturbed when he goes to the city. Though noise to the extent of being a pollutant causing health hazards was not known during the Buddha’s day, we have adduced enough material from the Pāli canon to illustrate the Buddha’s attitude to the problem. Quietude is much appreciated as spiritually rewarding, while noise condemned as a personal and social nuisance.

The Problem

It has already been discussed above that the elements of the life supporting system-air, water, earth flora and fauna as well as other living and non living beings are interrelated and interdependent. The entire process is self generating and auto-sustainable. As long as man, as part of this system worked in harmony with nature and used the resources for his normal sustenance, it caused minimal damage to the ecosystem. With the rise of physical science dissection nature for the purpose of examining and reassembling it according to human specification began. Human activities assumed such enormous dimensions that the life supporting system could no longer sustain these. The industrial revolution accelerated this process. Accordingly the waste generated through human activities was much more

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than the system could absorb. This in turn resulted in pollution and ecological imbalance.

However, the Buddha had foreseen the environmental catastrophes more than 2500 years ago. In Majjhima Nikāya it is said, “A time will come. When external earthly elements will rise in fury and ... ... the external earthly element will disappear... ... and sweep away village and town and city and province and kingdom... And time will come ... there will be no more water left in the great ocean that will cover one joint of the finger – Yaṃ bāhirā āpodhātu pakuppati. Antarahitā tasmiṃ samaye bāhirā pathavidhātu hoti. Yaṃ bāhirā āpodhātu pakuppati. Sā gāmmpī vahati. Nigamaṃpi vahati. Nagaramppi vahati. Janapadaṃpi vahati. Janapadesamppi vahati. Hoti kho so āvuso samayo. Yaṃ mahāsamudde yojanasatikānīpi udakānī ogacchanti. Dviyojanasatikānīpi udakānī ogacchanti. Ti, catu, pañca, cha, sattayojanasatikānīpi udakānī ogacchanti. Yaṃ mahāsamudde aṅgulipabba tenamattamppi udakaṃ na hoti.”

A time will come when fiery element will rage furiously and devour village, town, city, province and kingdom, and spreading over meadows and pastures, jungle and plain and pleasure-grove, will only cease when there is naught to devour... –Yaṃ bāhirā tejodhātu pakuppati. Sā gāmmpī dahati. Nigamaṃpi dahati. Janapadaṃpi dahati. Janapadesamppi dahati. Sā haritataṃ vā panthantam vā selantar vā udakantar vā ramaṇiyam vā bhūmibhāgaṃ āgama anāhāra nibbāyati. Hoti kho so āvuso samayo. Yaṃ kukkuṭapattenapi nārudaddalenapi aggim gavesanti.”

A time will come when the external airy element will range in fury and carry away village, town, city, province and kingdom, and there will be also come a time, when in the month of the hot season, not a blade of grass stirring in the water-courses, men will seek to make a little wind with a fan made from palm stalk –Yaṃ bāhirā vāyodhātu pakuppati. Sā gāmmpī

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The Reason

“Environmental problems are really social problems. They begin with people as the cause, and end with people as victims. It is people who create bad environment and a bad environment brings out worst in people.” Hence the reason and solution of above mentioned environmental problems has to be searched in the human nature itself. As we all are aware, environmental problems created by human activities, have caused the natural disasters, which are menacing the very survival of ours. The modern sciences and technology are also indirectly responsible for the present pathetic ecological conditions. The twenty first century is remarkably characterized by the advancement of information and technology. Ironically the century also marks the increasing severity of environmental problems or eco-crisis. The Buddha, after making a through psycho-analysis of human mind, presented a detailed description of cause of suffering in his second noble truth. Identifying the cause of suffering he says “It is carving which leads from rebirth to rebirth accompanied by lust and passion, which delights now here now there. It is the craving for sensual pleasures, for existence and for annihilation.... wherever in the world there are delightful and pleasureful forms, there this craving arises, there it takes it root... such is said to be the cause of suffering –Yāyaṃ taṁhā panobhavikā nadīrāgasahagatā tatratrābhīnandinī. Seyāṭhīdam kāma taṁhā, bhavatatanhā, vibhavatathāya yaṁ loke piyarūpam sātarūpam etthesā taṁhā upajjamānā upajjati, ettha nivisamānā nivisati – idaṁ vuccati bhikkhave dukkhasamudayam ariyasaccam.”

Tanha literary means ‘thirst’ and refers to demanding desires which are ever on look out for gratification. It is an urge for an object. This urge may be of basic needs and comforts in the life or for the luxurious life. This urge prompts men to invent ever new commodities of our basic needs, comfort, entertainment and luxury. It is a well known fact that human wants are unlimited and limited resources cannot meet with all of them. Hence, this gives birth to industrialization and rapacious exploitation of nature.

Now the question arises how this carving arises? Majjhima Nikaya traces back to its causal origination. According to it, “When perceiving a visible form, a sound, odour, taste, bodily touch or an idea in the mind, the object is pleasant, one is attracted and if unpleasant, one is repelled. Thus, whatever kind of feeling one experience —pleasant unpleasant and indifferent one approves of and cherishes the feeling and cling to it. And while doing so, lust originate, but lust of feeling means cling to existence; and cling to existence depends upon kamma process; on the kamma process rebirth depends; and depending on rebirth are decay and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. Now it is apparent that the wheel of suffering revolves round causative and motive force. Action means human action. Hence it is morally imputable. In this connection it seems proper to make it clear that all sorts of kamma are not the source of suffering. Only ‘Akusala Kamma’ that are rooted in or conditioned with ignorance (avijja) creates problems.39 The Buddha has presented a standard

formula of twelve links which begins with ignorance and culminates in suffering. It runs as follows:

"Dependent on Ignorance arise Activities. Dependent on Activities arises Consciousness. Dependent on Consciousness arise Mind and Matter. Dependent on Mind and Matter arise the six Spheres of Sense. Dependent on the Six Spheres of Sense arises Contact. Dependent on Contact arises Feeling. Dependent on Feeling arises Craving. Dependent on Craving arises Grasping. Dependent on Grasping arise Actions (Kamma bhava). Dependent on Actions arises Birth. Dependent on Birth arise Decay, Death, Lamentation, Pain, Grief, and Despair. Thus, does the entire aggregate of suffering arise. Avijja paccayā saṅkharā, saṅkharā paccayā viññāna, viññāna paccayā nāmarūpa, nāmarūpa paccayā salāyatana, salāyatana paccayā phasso, phassa paccayā vedanā, vedanā paccayā tanhā, tanhā paccayā upādāna, upādāna paccayā, bhavo, bhava paccayā jāti, jāti paccayā jarā maraṇa soka parideva dukkha domanassupāyāsā saṁbhavanti. Evametassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti."40

These twelve links are interconnected and arranged clock wise. However, ignorance is the first link. It is the natural function of life process hence it is called root or base of above mentioned twelve links. It is pervading cause as well as underlying condition of all the causation both individual and universal. It is primary and most original and has been placed as the first link of the revolving chain of dvādasayatana. In the piṭaka, ignorance is defined as ‘not knowing the four noble truths.’ This is of two types: mundane ignorance (physical ignorance) and supramundane ignorance (metaphysical ignorance).

Both are the cause of environmental crisis. The former can be defined as lack of information regarding the mundane existence and deep seated misconception of reality. In physical world, ignorance blinds up regarding the interconnectedness of entire phenomenon. We do not know

that there is no isolated and autonomous existence. We are unaware of the
fact that if anything wrong happens in one part of the nature it affects the
entire cosmos adversely, including the wrong doer. For the Buddha this
ignorance is rooted in our own consciousness and attitudes which accepts
the phenomena and above mentioned contents as facts of existence. Now
this \textit{avijjā} and \textit{tanha} destroys the mutual relationship between man and
the environment. This results in unwise and merciless exploitation of
nature and natural objects that creates ecological imbalance.

Metaphysical ignorance creates basic confusion about the notion of
self "I" (\textit{atta}). Attachment of this gives birth to personality or egoistic
colour. Egocentric speculation convinces one of one's superiority in relation
to the things and being of the world. A materialistic approach develops
where in the basic relation between the man and environment is of the
ruler and the ruled, the enjoyer and the object of the environment. The
natural objects, both living and non living, are degraded to the mere means
of human environment and are shaped as per the human specifications. In
this sense man is said to be the creator of the environment. This attitude
gives birth to anthropocentric ethics where in nature is meant to serve the
needs, greed and interest of mankind and man, in return, does not feel his
responsibility to care and share it. The greed based human activities,
whether individual or collective, have exposed many parts of natural
environment to a considerable risk. Science and technology are used to
understand and harness the world’s resources for human benefits, are not
always for the greater good for mankind. Short term economic gains often
become dangerous for the future.

In general, climate change is the long-term fluctuations in the Earth’s
climate. More particularly the term is used to describe a significant change
from one climatic condition to another on a global scale; for example the
shifts from ice ages to warmer periods that have taken place during the
Earth’s geologic history. Such changes occur naturally, sometimes abruptly
but at other times over considerable timescales, from changes, for
example, in the Earth’s orbit, the energy output from the sun, volcanic
eruptions, orogeny, meteor strikes, or lithospheric motions. Over considerably shorter timeless more recent climate changes include the period of warmer-than-average temperatures and cooler than average periods. More recently, the study of climate change has sometimes been dominated by the concept of Global Warming and other climate changes caused by human activities. Look at the figures.

Figure 1 Human-caused Global Warming

(There are a number of fingerprints which are either indicates or consistent with what we expect from global warming caused by an increased greenhouse effect. There are many other examples of human global warming fingerprints. Summary of observation evidence the human carbon dioxide emissions are caused the climate to warm. I got the picture from www.skepticalscience.com)

The greenhouse effect often gets a bad rap because of its association with global warming, but truth is we cannot live without it. The greenhouse effect rise in temperature of the Earth’s atmosphere due to the presence of certain gases that allow light to penetrate the atmosphere, but do not let heat out, in much the same way as the glass of a greenhouse does. Solar radiation passes easily through the atmosphere and is absorbed by the Earth’s surface. It is re-emitted in the form of infrared radiation, which is absorbed by water vapor, carbon dioxide, methane, chlorofluorocarbons (CFCS) and so-called greenhouse gases in the atmosphere with consequence increase in the atmospheric temperature.

Recent UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report said “There is more certainty than ever before that the Earth is warming under ‘human influence’ warming that only ‘substantial and sustained reduction’ of greenhouse gas emissions will limit the disaster of climate change. IPCC raised the likelihood of human activities causing global, warming from ‘very likely’ in its 2007 reports to “extremely likely” – moving from being 90% sure 95%. IPCC scientists said global warming had

42 I got the picture of greenhouse effect from www.afraidoftree.blogspot.com
resulted in an average sea level rise of 19cm since 1901 and an increase in surface temperature by 0.85 degree Celsius between 1880 and 2012. Global warming is unequivocal. Many observed changes since 1950s unprecedented over millennia. 1983-2012 periods are likely the warmest in 1,400 years. Global temperature rise may exceed 1.5c by 2100. Oceans will continue to warm, affecting circulation. Alarming retreat of Arctic sea ice, north snow covers down 11.7% per decade. 0.19m rise in sea level during 1901-2010 rises likely to be 0.26-0.98m by 2100. Frequency and duration heat waves are likely to increase.\(^{43}\) Figure three is impact on climate change. Look at the figure three that is easy to understand.

Figure 3 Impact on Climate Change\(^{44}\)

\(^{43}\) The Times of India. Global Warming Blame on Humans, p. 12. (28/09/2013)

\(^{44}\) I took the illustration of impact on climate change in www.climate-change-knowledge.org.
Over population blast is one the most important reasons of ecological imbalance. At the beginning of twenty first century world population is more than 600 millions. The world population is increasing at a record breaking rate. In the last decade of twentieth century the annual rate of increase of world population is estimated to be 100 millions. During the nineteenth century annual increase of population was 100 million per year which was much higher than it was over the preceding five centuries. In the preceding five centuries the rate of increase of world population was around 1 million per year. The present world population has crossed 6 billion marks. The Population Division of the United Nations predicts that at the present growth rate the human population will reach 8.47 billion in 2025 and 10.02 billion in 2050. The UN’s estimate assumes that human population will peak and stabilize at 11.6 billion in 2200. Over population and waste are the two biggest problems before our generation. Other issues tend to stem directly from these problems. These are unavoidable issues of the 21st century and beyond and these have to be taken care of. Figure two is impact of climate change.

Population growth is another factor in global warming, because as more people use fossil fuels for heat, transportation and manufacturing the level of greenhouse gases continues to increase. As more farming occurs to feed millions of new people, more greenhouse gases enter the atmosphere. Look at the world population.

Table 1 World Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2050</th>
<th>change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia &amp; Oceania</td>
<td>6,916,183</td>
<td>5,220,935</td>
<td>+1,018,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>1,031,084</td>
<td>2,393,175</td>
<td>+1,362,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>942,692</td>
<td>1,227,767</td>
<td>+285,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>740,308</td>
<td>709,067</td>
<td>-31,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,916,183</td>
<td>9,550,944</td>
<td>+2,634,761</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Buddhist culture, particularly in Myanmar, nature was considered sacred. Buddhist's respect for life is not only in the preservation of animals, birds and others creatures but also plants and trees. There is the popular ritual of *Bodhi puja* on the full moon day of May every year in all Buddhist countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Lao and Cambodia, etc... and the day –full moon day of May, is holiday in all Buddhist countries. On the full moon day of May, we pay respect to the *Bodhi* tree under which the Buddha attained Enlightenment by pouring water onto the foot of the tree. We have extended to other species of trees. In the times of drought, trees kept alive by the practical ritual.

Buddhism stresses the importance of environmental factor in the spiritual development of the people. From the very beginning, the Buddha established the organization or brotherhood of monks and soon later of nuns in order to provide the adherents with a suitable environment for their spiritual development. Upon request, the Buddha allowed his lay disciples to build monasteries for the *saṅgha* but not too close to hurly burly of the city, instead at a convenient distance where monks and nuns can get about with their food and practise meditation without being disturbed by the hustle and bustle of the city.

Meditation is Buddhist tradition. The practice of meditation is possible only in the proper environment, which is favourable for the cultivation of mind. The natural environment, uninhabited by humanity, was also respected as the idea place for cultivating spiritual insights. The places mentioned as very favourable for meditation are: a remote wilderness (*arñña*), the foot of a tree (*rukkhamūla*), a mountain range (*pabbata*), a rock cave (*giriguha*), a cemetery (*sussāna*), a secluded place (*vanapattha*) away from human habitation, an open space (*abbhokāsa*), a heap of straw (*palālapuñja*).\(^\text{45}\)

The Buddha often sued examples from nature to teach. A mind, flickering, difficult to guard is compared to ‘a fish drawn out of water.’ A fish that is taken away from its watery home jumps here and there – Vārijova thale khitto okamokata ubbhato, pariphandatidam cittam. On the one hand the simile evokes the fickle condition of the mind and on the other it suggests the sad end of the fish snatched away from its environment. In Buddhist stories, the plants and animals world is treated as part of our own inheritance. The stories tell how animals and plants could once talk and respond to human beings. The healthy rapport between plants, animals and human, underline by boundless compassion, was the basis of Buddhist life. As Buddhism is a fully fledged philosophy of life reflecting all aspects of experience, it is possible to find enough material in the Pāli Canon to delineate the Buddhist attitude towards nature.

The Buddha and Nature

Nature had been very close to the Buddha in all the important occasions of his life: he was born in Lumbinī garden, modern day Nepal that was full of majestic Sāla trees with blossom. It is said that Mayādevi was spellbound to see the natural grandeur of Lumbani. While she was standing, she felt labour pains and catching hold of a drooping branch of a sāla tree, she give birth to a baby, the future Buddha. Again, well before attaining Buddha hood, Prince Siddhattha, accompanied by his father, went to a village to witness the proceeding of the ploughing festival where he happened to find an attractive Jambu tree. The prince sat under the tree and soon got absorbed in a trance and meditated. The tree under which

46 Dhammapada, verse, 34.
47 Lumbini is at the foothills of the Mimalayas in morden Nepal. In the Buddha’s tiem Lumban was a beautiful garden full of green and shady sala trees. The garden and its tranquil environs situated between Kapilavatthu and Devadaha. It belonged to king Suddhodana, father of Gotama Buddha. A pillar is installed by the King Asoka as a token of his visit to Lumbini in 249 BC, the birth place of the Buddha. There is inscription on the pillar which recorded that the people of Lumbini placed this pillar to celebrate King Asoka’s visit to this holy place. Now it is a Buddhist pilgrimage site in the Rupandehi district of Nepal and Buddhist people from Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Lao, Japan, and China... etc visit the place every year.
Buddha attained Buddhhood came to be known as Bodhi tree. The Buddha spent seven weeks of which four weeks near the Bodhi tree after Enlightenment. To be precise, Buddha had an intuitive charm for not only trees but also places calm serene and surrounded by nature. In the fifth week he went to the Ajapāla banyan tree that the goat-herds were rest for a while, in the sixth week at the Mucalinda. In the seven week the Buddha came to the Rājāyatana tree. Siddhattha Gotama selected a very nice place for meditation before his Enlightenment at Uruvela Senānigama and he accepted milk-rice from Sujāta under the banyan tree. It provides shelter to many birds and insects, providing ecological balance. The Buddha preached his first sermon to the five disciples in the Deer Park at Isipatana, woodland.

The tragic story of the Buddha’s mahāparinibbāna is depicted in the Mahāparinibbāna sutta of Dīgha Nikāya. While on his way to Kusināra, the Buddha stayed in the mango grove of Cunda. Next day, Cunda provided a meal for Buddha and the bhikkhus. The Buddha accepted his meal. Lastly the Buddha praised Cunda for the lunch and taught the Dhamma. Cunda was a Sotāpanna. The Buddha said to have taken Sukaramaddva as his meal. According to Dr. Bela Bhattacharya, “Opinion differs on the nature of the food surakamaddva. It may not have been pig’s flesh. It may have been some sort of a mushroom. It may be assumed that the small mushroom also become graceful associated with Buddha’s Last Meal. Thus Buddha’s Last Meal is associated with Cryptogamous plant.” She added more sentences regarding with nature, “Even during the last hours of Buddha’s life. He showed his great love of trees by asking Ānanda to prepare his last bed in such a fashion that he could eye them. He liked his bed to be between two Sāla trees. This was duly complied with, the twin Sāla trees showered their blossoms on Buddha’s body as a token of love and respect for him. Not only had the Sāla trees bloomed, but the other trees also.

48 Sotāpanna: sota+äpanna, the stream-winner is the lowest of the eight noble disciples. Three kinds are to be distinguished: the one with seven rebirths at the utmost, the one passing from one noble family to another, the one germinating only once more.
Different kinds of lilies appeared to pay homage to Lord Buddha."^{50} Thus we find at every important step in his life, he showed an extraordinary zeal in spending time amidst natural surroundings. On one occasion, when internal dissent divided the community of monks, the Buddha spent his time peacefully in the forest with the wild animals. The Buddha said, "Forests are delightful —Ramaṇiyāni araṇāni."^{51}

After his enlightenment, the Buddha lived most of his life with nature, at the foot of trees, in caves and in open space. He also preached most of his discourses in open space or under trees. The Buddha spent his first vassa —vassavāsa^{52} at Deer Park, Isipatana, second, third, fourth, seventeenth and twenty was Veluvana —bamboo grove at Rājagaha, fifth was Mahāvana —large forest at Kuṭāgāra, sixth was Makula mountain, eighth was Bhesakala forest at Bagga division, tenth was Pālileyaka grove, thirteenth, eighteenth and nineteenth Cāliya mountain, and from twenty first to forty five his vassa spent Jetavana (Jeta is a person’s name and vana is forest). In other word we call Jetavanārāma) and Pubbārāma (Pubba+ārāma) at Savatthi. The term ārāma generally used in the sense of ‘monastery,’ as in the case of Jetavanaārāma, Ghositārāma, Nīgrodhārāma or Pubbārāma, that literally means “a place that delights the mind.” The Buddhists venerate the Bo-tree as it was under this tree that the Buddha attained enlightenment. Reverence, gratitude and kinship with nature are part of the nature orientation in Buddhism.

**Nature and Law of Nature**

At the very heart of Buddhist teaching I find important idea which has been much emphasized in the modern day ethical theories, i.e. concern for nature. The common word of used in Buddhist discourse is ‘Dhamma’

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^{50} Ibd. p, 217.
^{51} Dhammapada, verse, 99.
^{52} Vissavāsa means rain retreat period. Observing the rains retreat period; confining oneself to a specific monastic dwelling for the three month rainy period.
or 'Dharma'. For the Buddhist the 'Dhamma' does not simply mean the teaching of the Buddha but also means 'nature' and 'law of nature'. Dhamma, the Buddhist word for the truth and the teachings, is also the word for nature. That is because they are the same. Nature is the manifestation of truth and of the teachings. When we destroy nature we destroy the truth and the teachings. When we protect nature we protect the truth and the teachings. So at its very essence, Buddhism can be described as ecological religion. Buddhism views nature as dynamic interconnection of all things. Everything is ever changing or impermanent. One thing arises out of other and decays into yet another thing continuously without a beginning or an end. Everything is a continuous stream of cause and effects, thus self does not actually exist.

According to Buddhism, changeability, expressed by the Pāli term anicca, is one of the basic principles of nature. The world is dynamic and is therefore defined as that which disintegrates (lujjati palujjati'ti loko⁵³). There are no static and stable 'thing;' there are only ever-changing, ever-moving processes. Solidity, liquidity, heat and mobility, recognized as the building blocks of nature, are all ever-changing phenomena. Rain is a good example to illustrate this point. Though we use a noun called 'rain' which appears to name a thing, rain is nothing but the process of drops of water falling from the skies. Apart from this process, the activity of raining, there is no rain. Even the most solid looking mountains and the very earth that supports everything on it are not beyond this inexorable law of change. One sutta explains how the massive king of mountains, Mount Sineru, which is rooted in the great ocean to a depth of 84,000 leagues and which rises above sea level to another great height of 84,000 leagues and which is the classical symbol of stability and steadfastness—also is destroyed by heat, without leaving even ashes, at a time when multiple suns appear in the sky—Sineru bhikkhave pabbatarājā caturāsītiyonanasahassāni āyāmena,

⁵³ Loka: 'world' denote the three spheres of existence comprising the whole universe, i.e. (1) the sensuous world –kāmaloka or the world of the five senses; (2) the fine-material world –rūpaloka, corresponding to the fine-material absorptions; (3) the immaterial world –arūpaloka, corresponding to the four immaterial absorptions. But the term loka is not applied in the sutta to those three worlds.
Concern for the welfare of the natural world has been an important element throughout the history of Buddhism. Recognition that human beings are essentially dependent upon and interconnected with their environments has given rise to an instinctive respect for nature. Although Buddhists believe humans have a unique opportunity to realize enlightenment, which other creature do not, they have never believed humanity is superior to the rest of the natural world. This respect for nature is clearly revealed in the following exchange between the Buddha and his disciple Mahā Moggallāna when the monks’ custom of receiving their daily food as charity from local people was undermined by famine.

The venerable Mahā Moggallāna went to the Buddha. He said: “meal is hard to get in Veraṅjara now. There is a famine and food tickets have been issued. It is not easy to survive even by strenuous gleaning. The earth’s under-surface is rich and as sweet as pure honey. It would be good if I turned the earth over. Then the bhikkhu will be able to eat the humus that water plants live on.”

But, Mahā Moggallāna, what will become of the creatures that depend on the earth’s surface? I shall make one hand as broad as the Great Earth and get the creatures that depend on the earth’s surface to go to it. I shall turn the earth over with the other hand. Enough, Mahā Moggallāna, do not suggest turning the earth over. Creatures will be confounded.

The words Dhammatā and Niyāmatā are used in the Pāli canon to mean “natural law”. According to Aṭṭhasālinī Aṭṭhakathā, there is theory of five natural laws (Pañca Niyāma Dhamma):

1. Utu Niyāma –law of seasons,

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2. *Bija Niyāma* – laws of the seeds,
3. *Citta Niyāma* – the laws of the mind,
4. *Kamma Niyāma* – moral law, and
5. *Dhamma Niyama* – the lawful nature of phenomena. ⁵⁶

They can be translated as physical laws, biological laws, psychological laws, moral laws and causal laws, respectively. While the first four laws operate within their respective spheres, the law of causality operates within each of them as well as between them.

This means that the physical elements, i.e. earth, water, air, conditions of any given area affect the growth and development of its biological component, i.e. flora and fauna. This in turn influences the thought patterns of the people who interact with the flora and fauna. These thought patterns determine moral standards. The opposite process of interaction is also possible. The morals of humanity influence not only the psychological make-up of the people but the biological and physical environment of the area as well. Thus the five laws demonstrate the humanity and nature are bound together in a reciprocal relationship with changes in one necessarily causing changes in the other.

To understand five natural laws, it is much better to mention *Narada*’s explanation. It has more details. According to Buddhism there are five orders or processes which operate in the physical and mental realms. They are:

1. *Utu Niyāma* physical inorganic order; e.g., seasonal phenomena of winds and rains, the unerring order of seasons, characteristic seasonal changes and events, causes of winds and rains, nature of heat, etc. belong to this group.
2. *Bija Niyāma* order of germs and seeds (physical organic order); e.g., rice produced from rice seed, sugary taste from sugar-cane or honey,

and peculiar characteristics of certain fruits. The scientific theory of cells and genes and the physical similarity of twins may be ascribed to this order.

3. Citta Niyama order of mind or psychic law; e.g., processes of consciousness, constituents of consciousness, power of mind, including telepathy, telesthesia, retro-cognition, premonition, clairvoyance, clairaudience, thought-reading, and such other psychic phenomena, which are inexplicable to modern science.

4. Kamma Niyama order of act and result; e.g., desirable and undesirable acts produce corresponding good and bad results. As surely as water seeks its own level, so does Kamma, given opportunity, produce its inevitable result—not in the form of a reward or punishment but as an innate sequence. This sequence of deed and effect is as natural and necessary as the way of the sun and the moon, and is the retributive principle of Kamma. Inherent in Kamma is also the continuative principle. Manifold experiences, personal characteristics, accumulated knowledge, and so forth are all indelibly recorded in the palimpsest-like mind. All these experiences and characters transmigrate from life to life. Through lapse of time they may be forgotten as in the case of our experiences of our childhood. Infant prodigies and wonderful children, who speak in different languages without receiving any instruction, are note-worthy examples of the continuative principle of Kamma.

5. Dhamma Niyama order of the norm; e.g., the natural phenomena occurring at the birth of a Bodhisatta in his last birth. Gravitation and other similar laws of nature, the reason for being good, etc. may be included in this group.

We see then that the fivefold Niyama is presented in the commentaries as five "laws of nature" in the sense of ways in which things necessarily happen, or fixed orders of things. The "law of the seasons" (utu-niyama) refers to the observable cyclical regularity of seasonal and diurnal phenomena, such as trees, winds and lotus flowers. The "law of seeds" (bijā-nyāma) is the observable reproductive continuity of plants, resulting

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57 Narada Thera. The Buddha and His Teaching, pp.344-346.
in identical characteristics through the generations. I would suggest that these two kinds of law or necessity represent kinds of pre-scientific observation made in an agricultural society. The law of karma (kamma-niyāma), by contrast, is not an observable regularity but an expression of how consequences inevitably follow actions, a law known through religious belief, and illustrated through cautionary tales. The law of the mind (citta-niyāma) is similarly not an observable regularity but here refers to the unvarying sequence of mental events as described by Abhidhamma theory. The law of nature (dhamma-niyāma), finally, refers to normal yet necessary supernatural happenings in the life-stories of Buddhas, which we might describe as narrative regularities.

If humans follow the natural laws understanding these laws, they have the potential to live in harmony with the environment. If we explore the theory of dependent origination, we get a wider cosmic setting to understand human behavior and its impact on the environment.

**Nature and Morals**

Buddhist ecological ethics clearly points out that human conduct, moral or immoral, has significantly affected the courses of nature. The world passes through alternating cycles of evolution and dissolution, each of which lasts for a very long time. Though change is inherent in nature, Buddhism believes that natural processes are affected by the morals of humanity. If we are to act with a sense of responsibility to the natural world, to our fellow human beings and to future generations, we must find an appropriate environmental ethic.

This is vividly illustrated in the *Aggañña Sutta*,\(^{58}\) which tells the Buddhist texts' about the evolution of the world. In the texts, the first beings were self-luminis, subsisted on joy and flew through the skies, until greed entered their minds. This caused the gradual loss of their radiance.

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and of their ability to subsist on joy and to fly. The moral decline affected the external environment as well. At the time, the entire earth was covered by a very flavoursome, fragrant substance similar to butter. When the first beings began eating this substance with increasing greed, their subtle bodies became coarser and coarser while the flavoursome substance itself started to diminish. As the bodies of the beings solidified, differences of form appeared; some were beautiful while others were homely. Thereupon conceit developed in the beautiful ones and they started looking down upon the others. As a result of these moral blemishes, the delicious edible earth substance completely disappeared. In its place, there appeared edible mushrooms and later another kind of edible creeper. In the successive generations who subsisted on this vegetation, sexual differentiation developed and the former method of spontaneous birth was replaced by sexual reproduction.

Self-growing rice appeared on earth and, out of laziness, people began to hoard food rather than collect each meal. As a result, the growth rate of food could not keep pace with demand. Therefore land had to be divided among families. After private ownership of land became the order of the day, the more greedy people started robbing from others’ land. When they were detected, they denied that they had stolen. Thus, through greed, vices such as stealing and lying developed in society. To curb the wrong-doers and punish them, a king was elected by the people and so the original simple society became much more complex. It is said that this moral degeneration of humanity had adverse effects on nature. The richness of the earth diminished and self-growing rice disappeared. People had to till the land and cultivate rice. This rice grain was coated in chaff; it needed cleaning before it could be eaten.

The point I wish to emphasize by citing this sutta is that Buddhism believes that, although change is inherent in nature, humanity’s moral deterioration accelerates and shapes the changes bringing about circumstances which are adverse to human well-being and happiness.
The *Cakkavattisīhanāda Sutta* predicts the future course of events when human morals degenerate future. Gradually people’s health will deteriorate so much that life expectancy will decrease until the average human life-span is reduced to ten years and marriageable age to five years. At that time all delicacies such as ghee, butter, honey, etc. will have disappeared from the earth; what is considered the poorest, coarsest food today will become a delicacy.

Buddhism holds that morality and mental culture are the best precautionary measures man can do to preserve nature. For immorality and polluted mind are the root causes for all environmental problems. The *Paloka Sutta* of *Aṅguttara Nikāya* says when lust, greed and wrong values, grip the heart of humans and immorality becomes widespread in society. When immorality becomes widespread, even rain does not fall in proper season. When rain does not fall in proper season, crops do not yield good harvest. Through lack of nourishing food, human lifespan becomes short — *Etarahi brahmṇa manussā adhmmarāgarattā visamalobhābhībhūtā micchādhammaparetā. Te adhammarāgarattā visamalobhābhībhūtā micchādhammaparetā tiṇhāṇi satthāṇi gahetvā aṇṇamaṇṇāṃ jīvitā voropenti. Tena bahū manussā kālaṃ karonti. Puna ca paraṃ brahmṇa manussā adhmmarāgarattā visamalobhābhībhūtā micchādhammaparetā. tesaṃ adhmmarāgarattānaṃ visamalobhābhībhūtānaṃ micchādhammaparetānaṃ devo na sammādhāraṃ anuppaveccheta. Tena dubbhikkaṁ hoti dussassaṃ setaṭṭhitām salākāvatām. Tena bahū manussā kālaṃ karonti.*) The moral degeneration also gives rise to changes of the entire weather pattern.

Thus several suttas from the *Pāli* Canon show that early Buddhism believes there is a close relationship between human mortality and the natural environment. One place where nature exhibits life in its pristine as well as its mutual dependence is the natural forest. The Buddha in particular had great respect for the forest. Retirement into the forest had

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two specific goals. One was therapeutic, the other aesthetic. It may be remembered that before his enlightenment the Buddha, after leaving the two contemplatives, Alāra Kalama and Uddaka Rāmaputta, and wandering around Magadha, arrived at a village called Uruvela. There he found a delightful piece of land, a pleasant forest grove with a river of clear water flowing by and surrounded by a village where he could go for food. He considered it an ideal place for a person desirous of striving. He attained enlightenment and freedom here. (Tatthaddasam ramanīyam bhūmibhāgam pāsādikaṇca vanasaṇḍam. Nadiṅca sandantaṁ setakam supatittham ramanīyaṁ. Samantā ca gocaraṁmaṁ. Tassa mayhaṁ bhikkhave etadahosi, “ramanīyo vata bho bhūmibhāgo pāsādiko ca vanasaṇḍo. Nadi ca sandati setakā supatitthā ramanīyā. Samantā ca gocarāmo. Alam vatidam kupaluttassa padhānatthikassa padhānāya. So kho bhikkhave nīsīṁaṁ alamidaṁ padhānāyā”ti.)61

The therapeutic value of retiring to the forest is highlighted in a discourse delivered to a monk named Girimananda.62 At some point the Buddha was informed that Girimananda had taken ill. Realizing that mental ill health can often to physical ailment, the Buddha advised Girimananda to retire to a forest (arañña) or seek the shade of a tree (rukkhamula) in order to develop the awareness of impermanence (saññā anicca), nonsubstantiality (ānatta), impurity (asubha), ill effect (ādīnava), renunciation (pahāna), passionlessness (virāga), cessation (nirodha), nondelight (anabhīrati), impermanence of all dispositions (sabbasaṅkharesu anicca), and the awareness of breathing in and out (ānāpānasati). These ten forms of awareness pertain to the nature of the world as well as oneself. The forest was the ideal environment for the development of such awareness not only because of the solitude it afforded, removed from the humdrum of urban life, the so-called world, but also because it certainly exhibited the characteristics of becoming, such as impermanence and nonsubstantiality. In that sense it is the best resort

for one in need of psychological therapy. The Buddha took his son, Rahulā to these natural surroundings for instruction when he realized that the latter was ready for the attainment of enlightenment and freedom. Remaining atop a mountain and having an aerial view of nature’s beauty, a monk was able to tear asunder the veil of ignorance created by a world of artificiality.

The commentary on the Cakkavattisīhanāda sutta goes on to explain the pattern of mutual interaction in more detail. When humanity is demoralized through greed, famine is the natural outcome; when moral degeneration is due to ignorance, epidemic is the inevitable result; when hatred is the demoralization force, and widespread violence is the ultimate outcome. If and when humanity realizes that large-scale devastation has taken place as a result of its moral decline, a change of heart takes place among the few surviving human beings. As morality is renewed, conditions improve through a long period of cause and effect and humanity again starts to enjoy gradually increasing prosperity and longer life. The world, including nature and humanity, stands or falls with the type of moral force at work. If immorality grips society, people and nature deteriorate; if morality reigns, the quality of human life and nature improves. Thus greed, hatred and delusion produce pollution within and without. Generosity, compassion and wisdom produce purity within and without. This is one reason the Buddha has pronounced that the world is led by the mind, cittena niyati loko. I would like to mention Citta sutta. A deva asked the Buddha:

Now by what is the world led around? By what is it dragged here and there? What is the one thing that has all under its control? Kenassu niyati loko, kenassu parikassati, kissassa ekadhammassa, sebbeva vasam anvagūti?

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64 Theragāthā, verse, 544.
The Buddha answered: the world is led around by mind —citta. By citta —mind it is dragged here and there. Mind is the one thing that has all under its control. Cittena nīyati loko, cittena parikassati, cittaassa ekadhammassa, sebbeva vasaṁ anvagūti 65

This sutta shows us the power of citta. Citta is an element which experiences something, a reality which experiences an object. It is the chief the leader in knowing the object which appears. The world of each person is ruled by his citta. When a man has accumulated a great deal of wholesomeness he can be full of loving kindness, compassion and sympathy. On the other hand when a man belongs to unwholesomeness, he may have anger, hatred and displeasure. It is the human mind that causes all the problems. Hence, man has to purify his mind and act with the best of intention and responsibility.

**Human Use of the Natural Resource**

Natural resources are nature’s gifts and they are environmental assets, economic fortunes and sources of wealth. But there are many important questions and issues related to natural resources include land, water, forest, mineral, marine and all kinds of biological resources. Some of these are renewable and some are not. Biological resources such as forest, wild animals, fish and birds are renewable resources and if sued sustainably, these resources will perpetually renew themselves. Resources such as tin, iron, copper, gold, silver, coal, petroleum, natural gas, precious stones and gems are non-renewable. Once utilized, they cannot be replenished. However, their life can be extended, by recycling, by using less of a resource to make a particular product, or by switching to renewable substitutes where possible. Unfortunately, many of these natural resources are rapidly depleting world wide as result of human activities such as over exploitation and over extraction. Man depends on nature for sustenance

because all beings subsist on food – *sabbe sattā āhārathitikā*, clothing, shelter, medicine and other needs. For maximum benefit, humans have to understand nature so that they can use natural resources while living harmoniously with nature, by understanding the working of nature – for example, the seasonal rainfall pattern, methods of conserving water by irrigation, the soil types, the physical conditions required for growth of various food crops – humans can get better returns from their farming. But this learning has to be accompanied by moral restraint if we are to enjoy the benefits of natural resources for a long time. Humanity must learn to satisfy its needs and not feed its greed. The resources of the world are not unlimited whereas human greed knows neither limit nor satiety. Modern humanity in uncontrolled greed for pleasure and acquisition of wealth is killing the goose that laid the golden egg.

Buddhism tirelessly advocates the virtues of non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion in all human pursuits. Greed breeds sorrow and unhealthy consequences. Contentment is a highly-praised virtue in Buddhism (*santuṭṭhiparamāṃ dhanam*).\(^66\) The person leading a simple life with few wants easily satisfied is held up as an exemplary character. Miserliness and wastefulness are equally deplored as two degenerate extremes. Wealth should only be a means to an end; it is for the satisfaction of human needs. Hoarding is a senseless anti-social habit comparable to the attitude of the dog in the manger. The vast hoarding of wealth in some countries and the methodical destruction of large quantities of agricultural produce to keep the market prices from falling, while half the world is dying of starvation, is a tragic paradox of the present affluent age.

The productive and effective use of natural resources is especially important. Environmental sustainability will be impossible unless excessive and wasteful use of resources are contained and prevented. Buddhism commends frugality as a virtue in its own right. Regarding the productive

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66 Dhammapada, verse, 204.
and effective use of resources, I would like mention one story from *Mahāvagga*. After completing his studying physic in *Taxilā*, physician *Jīvaka* go back to *Rājagaha*. On the way back to home, *Jīvaka* arrived at *Sāketa* Town. At that time, one rich lady in *Sāketa* had suffered severe headache for seven years. *Jīvaka* treated her. *Jīvaka* prepared medicine which was mixed with an ounce of butter. The medicine was poured drop by drop into her through nose. The rich lady asked her servants to take up the ghee that came back out of her mouth with cotton and to keep it for future use. *Jīvaka* looked upon the strange doing with awe. The rich lady then told him that she did not want to waste this ghee, however little it was, as she did not want to waste anything. She said that the ghee could be sued for the servants for rubbing their feet and poured out into a lamp.67

There was another interesting instance related to the fruitful use of resources. At one time, Venerable *Ānanda* stayed near the garden of King *Udena* in *Kosambi*. King *Udena*’s companions approached and offered five hundred robes to Venerable *Ānanda*. Knowing this, *Udena* criticized. Why did *Ānanda* accept this so many robes? Will he set up trade in woven cloth or will he sell in shop? Then the king approached venerable *Ānanda* and asked how to use robbs. The disciple *Ānanda* explained to King *Udena* the thrifty uses of robes by the monks. When new robes were received the old robes were used as coverlets, the old coverlets as mattress covers, the old mattress covers as rugs, the old rugs as dusters, and the old tattered dusters are kneaded with clay and used to repair cracked floors and walls.68 Thus nothing was wasted. These practices are indeed what the environmentalist’s today label as “Reuse” and advocating this good practice for reducing wasteful use of resources. Those who waste are derided as ‘wood –apple eaters –udumbarakhādivāyam’.69 A man shakes the branch of a wood-apple tree and all the fruits, ripe as well as unripe, fall. The man collects only what he wants and leaves the rest to rot. Such a wasteful attitude is certainly deplored in Buddhism as not only anti-social but

criminal. The excessive exploitation of nature as carried out today would certainly be condemned by the Buddha in the strongest possible terms. Buddhism advocates a gentle non-aggressive attitude towards nature. According to the *Siṅgālovāda Sutta* a householder should accumulate wealth as a bee collects nectar from a flower. The bee harms neither the fragrance nor the beauty of flower, but gathers nectar to turn it into sweet honey. 70 Similarly, a human being is expected to make legitimate use of nature so that he/she can rise above nature and realize his or her innate spiritual potential.

The above examples clearly show that personal or individual attitudes, behavior and practices are crucial for the productive and sustainable use of natural resources. People in different countries need to be persuaded and helped to change their behavior and styles in different ways.

**Animals and Plants in Buddhism**

The respect for trees, rivers, ponds, plants and other objects is not because of fear. Rather it reflects the belief that natural environment is not inert or passive, it also has life qualities and deserves equal status and respect. The notion that the qualities of organic life are shared by the non-human part of environment also puts man-environment relationship in a more viable and desirable perspective. This seems to be more relevant to the demands of post modern era where a need for globalized unit of social functioning is intensely felt. Irrespective of the fact whether we want or not keeping oneself unaffected by the happening in other parts of the world is no more possible. This rapidly changing reality demands change in the idea of liberalized individual.

The Buddha found out a threefold relationship amongst human beings, plants and animals and their function on ecology. Concern for

welfare of the natural world has been an important element throughout the history of Buddhism. Recognition that human beings are essentially dependent upon and interconnected with their environment has given rise to an instinctive respect for nature. Although the Buddhist believes that human beings have the unique opportunity to realize enlightenment, which other creatures do not, they have never believed humanity to be superior to the rest of the natural world. Respect for nature is clearly exhibited in their well-known five precepts (pañca sīla) which form the minimum code of ethics that every lay Buddhist is expected to follow. The first precept is non-injury to life (Ahiṃsa). It is explained as the casting aside of all form of weapons and being careful not to deprive a living thing of life. The Buddhist layperson is also expected to abstain from trading in meat (māṃsa vanijja).71

Here regarding with the first precept – non-injury (Ahiṃsa), it is noteworthy the father of Indian, Mahatma Gandhi’s notion of non-violence (Ahiṃsa). Mahatma Gandhi revives Buddha’s ethics of ahiṃsa and applies it to social, political and economic problems. He evolves a new outlook on life based on the doctrine of ahiṃsa and sees to solve all social, political and economic problems in the light of this principle. He gives a new contribution to the problems that face humanity today and offers a new solution. It is important to see that Buddhism and Jainism preached Ahiṃsa in India long ago. Hinduism also inculcated ahiṃsa for the attainment of liberation. But they did not apply it to the social, economic and political problems. Gandhi says: “My contribution to the great problem lies in my presenting for acceptance truth and ahiṃsa in every walk of life, whether for individual or nations.”72

What is the meaning of the word ‘Ahiṃsa’? To discuss this we find that in Gandhi the word ‘Ahiṃsa’ has both a negative and a positive import. The positive aspect of its meaning is more fundamental for Gandhi because it comprehends the negative aspect also and represents its essence. For

Gandhi, *ahimsa* is not merely a negative virtue of non-killing and non-injury, but a positive virtue of doing good to others. *Ahimsa* is supreme kindness and supreme self-sacrifice. It is non-violence in thought, word and deed. It is not only abstinence from killing and doing harm, it is also abstinence from causing pain through word or thought and resentment. It is non-violence in every form in thought word and deed.

In its positive aspect, *ahimsa* means non-injury and love. According to Mahatma Gandhi God is truth and love. And we realize truth by loving the whole animal word including mankind. In Gandhi’s views, “*Ahimsa* is the basis of the search of Truth. The search is in vain unless it is founded on *ahimsa* as the basis. The only means for the realization of Truth is *ahimsa*. A perfect vision of truth can only follow a realization of *ahimsa*.73

*Ahimsa* requires truthfulness and fearlessness. According to him, the doctrine of pursuit of truth is called *satyagraha*. Life should be ruled by the law of truth regardless of consequences. *Ahimsa* is the means. Truth is the end. *Ahimsa* is our supreme duty. According to him, *ahimsa* and truth are so intertwined that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. In fact non-violence and truth are inseparable and presuppose each other. *Ahimsa* does not simply mean non-killing. In Gandhi’s view, “Anger is the enemy of *ahimsa* and pride is the monster that swallows it up.” *Ahimsa* implies absence of hatred. Hate ought to be conquered by love. In its positive form, *ahimsa* means the largest love, greatest charity. Mahatma Gandhi clearly says: “If I am a follower of *ahimsa*, I must love my enemy. Active *ahimsa* necessarily includes truth and fearlessness. The practice of *Ahimsa* calls both the greatest courage. Non-violence is the weapon of the strongest and bravest.”74

*Ahimsa* is the opposite of cowardice. Mahatma Gandhi holds the view that it is better to be violent than to be coward. He clearly says; “My creed of non-violence is an extremely active force. It has no room for

73 Ibid, p. 190.
74 Ibid. p. 190.
cowardice or even weakness."\textsuperscript{75} Ahimsa implies restrained upon one’s desire for vengeance. Vengeance is weakness. It springs from fear of harm. Vengeance is better than helpless submission. But forgiveness is higher than vengeance. Ahimsa is impossible without fearlessness.

Non-violence is an active moral. It is not only a moral weapon of an individual but also a moral weapon of the masses. Organize and well-disciplined mass non-violence is an infallible moral weapon against all kinds of evil, social, economic, religious, national or international. Ahimsa has its practical importance in man’s practical life. The application of ahimsa to social, political, and economic problems is a rule to conduct not only in individual life but also in social, political and economic life. In fact violence breeds violence. It brings about chaos and it poisons the source of social life. Non-violence purifies an evil system of its evils. This is the greatest contribution of Mahatma Gandhi to the world’s culture and civilization.

Now go back to the Buddha’ teaching regarding with animals and plants. Buddhist monks and nuns have to follow an even stricter code of ethics than the layperson. They must abstain from practices which would even unintentionally harm living creatures. For instance, the Buddha made a rule against travelling during the rainy season because of possible injury to worms and insects that come to the surface in wet weather.\textsuperscript{76} The same concern for non-violence prevents a monk from digging the ground and monk do not ask someone to dig ground \textit{–yo pana bhikkhu pathaviṁ khaṇeyya vā khaṇāpeya vā pācittiyaṁ.}\textsuperscript{77} Once a monk, who was a potter before he was ordained, build himself a clay hut and set it on fire to give it a fine finish. The Buddha strongly objected to this as so many living creatures would have been burnt in the process. The hut was taken down on the Buddha’s instructions to prevent it from setting a bad example for later generations.\textsuperscript{78} The scrupulous non-violent attitude towards even the

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid. p. 191.
smallest living creatures prevents the monks and nuns from drinking unstrained water —yo pana bhikkhu jānāṃ sappāṇakaṃ udakaṃ paribuñjeyya pācittiyaṃ.79 If a monk uses water while knowing that it contains breathing creatures that will be killed by his action, it is against rule; to avoid this, a water-strainer —parivassāvāna is part of the traditional kit of a monk.80 Again, knowing that there are living creatures there that will be harmed by this, it is an offence to throw water on the ground and to ask someone else to do so — yo pana bhikkhu jānāṃ sappāṇakaṃ udakaṃ tīnaṃ vā mattrikaṃ vā sīṇjeyya vā sīṇāpeya vā pācittiyaṃ.81 It is no doubt a sound hygienic habit, but what is noteworthy is the reason which prompts the practice, namely, sympathy for other creatures.

In its positive sense the first precept of non-injury means the cultivation of compassion and sympathy for all beings —“pāṇātipātam pahāya pāṇātipātā pativirato samano gotamo nihitadaṇḍo nihitasatto lajī dayāpanno sabbapāṇābhatthātanukampī viharati.”82 In the Theravāda monastic code, monks are allowed to release trapped animals or fish, if this is from compassion rather than a desire to steal.83 Non-allowable food for monks are: the flesh of elephants or horses, as people regarded these animals as royal emblems; dog-flesh and snake-flesh, as people saw them as disgusting; the flesh of lions, tigers, panthers, bears and hyenas, as such animals would smell the eaters and attack them.84 The metta sutta prescribes the practice of mettā, loving kindness towards all creatures, timid and bold, long and short, big and small, minute and great, visible and

invisible, near and far, born and awaiting birth. Just as our own life is precious to us, so is the life of another precious to it. Therefore reverence must be cultivated towards all forms of life. Both humans and animals respond better to those who they feel are friendly, so that loving kindness is seen to protect a person. On one occasion, the Buddha was reported a monk was bitten by a snake and had died. He knew the reason a monk was bitten by a snake and had died was that a monk had failed to radiate loving kindness to the snakes and other wild animals. Therefore, I allowed monks to dwell with loving kindness to protect oneself. Even today, monks meditating in the forests of Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka radiate this quality to the forest animals, including prowling hungry tigers, as a protection.

Buddhist perspectives on animals went far beyond the precept of no harming living creatures. Humans and animals belong to the same sāṁsāric cycle and thus in this context, there is an important perspectives on animals in Buddhism that enhances the Buddhist perspective on the non-human world and its overall ecological integrity. When a female animal defends her young risking her own life, or a dog stays with the master in a moment of trouble, though we may not use the word “ethical” in this context, such animals display great virtues. A writer describing the numerous references to animals in the Dhammapada and the Jātakas observes: Animals are devoted to their offspring, sympathetic to their kindred, affectionate to their mates, self-subordinating to their community, courageous beyond praise. The Dhammapada refers to the elephant Dhanapāla who in captivity refused food, as a sign of protest, indicating the longing to be with the mother (Dhanapālo nāma kuṁjaro katukabhedaṇo dunnivārayo baddho kabalaṁ na bhuṇjati sumarati nāgavanassa kuṁjaro). The Nandivisāḷa jātaka illustrates how kindness should be shown to domesticated animals.

87 Dhammapada, verse, 324.
88 Jātaka. Nandivisāḷa jātaka. P.T.S, vol –I, p. 191. (Bodhisatta was born as a calf and a rich man bought the calf. He took good care of the calf; he named “Delightful—Nandivisāḷa”. One day his master contested the other rich man for pulling 100 heavily loaded bullock carts. In that competition, his master said “Pull you
Even a wild animal can be tamed with kind words. Pālileyya was a wild elephant who waited on the Buddha when he spent time in the forest away from the monks. Another elephant, the infuriated Nālāgiri, was tamed by the Buddha with no other miraculous power than the power of loving-kindness. Human and beast can live and let live without fear of one another if only humans cultivates sympathy and regard all life with compassion. Many of the great acts of virtue and courage relating to animals are often represented as one of the previous lives of the Buddha as a Bodhisatva.

The understanding of kamma and rebirth also prepares the Buddhist to adopt a sympathetic attitude towards animals. According to this belief humans can be reborn as animals. So it is possible that our dead relatives are now living as animals. Therefore, it is only right that we should treat animals with kindness and sympathy. The Buddhist concept of merit also encourages a gentle non-violent attitude towards living creatures. It is said that if someone throws dish-washing water into a pool where there are small creatures so that they can feed on the tiny particles of food washed away, that person accumulates spiritual merit even by such trivial generosity —Yehi te candanikāya vā oligalle vā pānā. Tatapi yo thālidhovanam vā sarāvadhovanam vā chaḍjeti ye tattha pānā ate tena yāpentuṭi. Tatonidānampāhaṃ vaccha puṇhassa āgamaṃ vadāmi. According to the Macchuddāna Jātaka, in a previous life, the Buddha-to-be threw his leftover food into a river to feed the fish, and by the power of the dumb, I command you to pull, you big dummy. Because of his master's bad words, Nandivasāla refused to pull the carts and he lost 100 gold coins. Another competition started again; at this time his master said, "he speak gently as if he were his own son; my son, please do me the honour of pulling these 100 bullock carts." Nandivasāla pulled with all his might and dragged the heavy carts and his master won and got 200 gold coins.

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89 Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā. P.T.S, p. 58. (The bhikkhu of Kosambi had formed into two groups. One group followed the master of Vinaya and the other followed the teacher of the Dhamma and they were often quarrelling among themselves. Even the Buddha could not stop them from quarrelling; so the left them and spent the vassa, residence period of the rains, all alone in Rakkhīta Grove near Palleleyaka forest. There the elephant Palleleyaka waited upon the Buddha.


merit he was saved from an impending disaster. Thus kindness to animals, be they big or small, is a source of merit— that human beings need to improve their lot in the cycle of births and to approach the final goal of Nibbāna.

Buddhism also expresses a gentle non-violent attitude towards the vegetable kingdom which provides us with all necessities of life. To destroy a tree that has contributed much to the cleaning of the air that we breathe and has provide delightful shade during the hotter part of the day is looked upon as the betrayal of a friend— *Yassa rukkhassa chāyaya, nisīdeya sayeyya vā, na tassā sākham bhañcicyya, mitta dubbo hi pāpako.* The *Kūṭadanta* of *Dīgha Nikāya* rejects the practice of slaughtering animals, cutting down trees and grasses for performing sacrifices by the Brahmins. The sutta said, “*Tasmīḥ kho brāhmaṇa yañīne neva gāvo haññīmsu. Na ajelakā haññīmsu. Na kukkanṭasīkarā haññīmsu. Na vividhā pānā saṃghātām āpajjīmsu. Na rukhā chijiṃsu yūpatṭhāya. Na dabbhā lūyīmsu barīhisaṭṭhāya. Yepissa ahesum dāsāti vā pessāti vā kammakarāti vā. Tepi na daṇḍatajjītā na ayatajītā na assumukhā rudamānā parikammāni akaṃsu. Atha kho ye icchīmsu. Te akaṃsu. Ye na icchīmsu. Na te akaṃsu. Yam icchīmsu. Tam akaṃsu. Ya na icchīmsu. Na tam akaṃsu. Sappiteianavanī tadadhimadhupāṇītena ceva so yañīno niṭṭhānagamāsi.*”

— “In this sacrifice, Brahmin, no bulls were slain, no goats or sheep, no cocks and pigs, nor were various living beings subject to slaughter, nor were trees cut down for sacrificial posts, nor were grasses mown for the sacrificial grass, and those who are called slaves or servants or workmen did not perform their tasks for fear of blows or threats, weeping and in tears. But those who wanted to do something did it, those who did not wish did not; they did what they wanted to do, and not what they did not want to do. The sacrifice was carried out with ghee, butter, curds honey, molasses.”

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Among Buddhist, large, old trees are particularly revered. The attitude, which is a legacy of pre-Buddhist animism, does not violate the belief system of Buddhism. The trees are called vanapati in Pāli, meaning 'lords of the forests'. The deference to trees is further strengthened by the fact that huge trees such as the ironwood, the sāla and the fig tree are acknowledged as Bodhi tree, trees under which former Buddhas attained enlightenment. It is well known that the fig species ficus religiosa is held as an object of great veneration in the Buddhist world as the tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment. There are monastic rules against harming trees and plants. It is an offence requiring expiation for a monk to fell a tree —bhūtagāmapātabyatāya pācittiyaṃ.⁹⁶ On tree-felling, after a reference to people’s concern over ‘one-facultied life’, the Buddha criticizes a monk who has cut down a large tree used as a shrine. How can you, foolish man, have a tree cut down that was used as shrine by revered by village, revered by little town, revered by town, revered by the countryside, revered by the kingdom? For, foolish man, in a tree are people are having consciousness as living beings —Kathāṃ hi nāma tvam moghapurisa cetiya rukkhāṃ chedāpassasi gāmapūjitam, nigamapūjitam, nagarapūjitam, janapadapūjitam, raṭṭhapūjitam. Jīvasaṅñino hi moghapurisa manussā rukkhasamiṃ.⁹⁷

The construction of parks and pleasure groves for public use is considered a great deed that gains much spiritual merit.⁹⁸ Sakka, the lord of gods, is said to have reached this position as a result of service such as the construction of parks, pleasure grove, ponds, wells and roads. Sakka, king of the devas, was in a previous existence a young man by the name of Māgha, in the village of Macala. The youth Māgha and his thirty-two companions went about building roads and rest houses. Māgha took upon himself also to observe seven obligations. These seven obligations are that throughout his life, (1) he would support his parents; (2) he would respect

the elders; (3) he would be gentle of speech; (4) he would avoid back-biting; (5) he would not be avaricious, but would be generous; (6) he would speak the truth and (7) he would restrain himself from losing his temper. It was of his good deeds and right conduct in that existence that Māgha was reborn as Sakka, king of the devas.99

The open air, natural habitats and forest trees have a special fascination for the Eastern mind as symbols of spiritual freedom. Home life is regarded as a fetter that keeps a person in bondage and misery. Renunciation is like the open air, nature unhampered by human activity — ambo kāso.100 The Buddha began his missionary activity in the open air in the sāla grove of the Mallas in Pāvā. His constant advice to his disciples was to resort to natural habitats such as the forests. There, undisturbed by human activity, they could devote themselves to meditation.101

In animals, plants and Buddhism, it would be fitting to narrate the story of a grateful parrot. The king of the parrots lived in a grove of fig trees on the bank of the Ganger River, with a large number of his followers. When the fruits were eaten, all the parrots left the grove, except the parrot king who was well or bark. Assuming the form of geese, Sakka raises a question from the bird why he is yet sticking to a barren tree.

Why he did not leave the old withered tree as the others had done and why he did not go to other trees which were still bearing fruits?

The parrot says: Because of a feeling of gratitude towards the tree I did not leave and as long as I could get just enough food to sustain myself I shall not forsake it. It would be ungrateful for me to desert this tree even though it be inanimate.102

102 Daw Mya Tin. The Dhammapada, verse and stories, p. 165. (verse 32.)
Buddhist Approach to Solution

In the protection and preservation of environmental ethics, Buddhism practically protects the natural value by doing and avoiding. To be realistic, we have to accept the selfishness and greed are not going to vanish overnight. Buddhist solution is to explain how our way of life is simply not in our own self-interest, let alone in the interest of millions of other beings and future generations. *Samyutta Nikāya* said, "By what is the word bound? By the removal of what is it freed? What is it that one must forsake to cut off all bondage? The answer is that "By desire is the world bound. By the removal of desire it is freed. Desire is what one must forsake to cut off all bondage - *Kneassu bajjhati loko, kismiṁ vinayāya mucchati, kenassu vippahānena sabbāṁ chindanti bandhananti? Ichchāya bajjhati-loko, icchāvinayāya muccati, icchāya vippahānena, sabbāṁ chindati bandhananti.""¹⁰³

There is another interesting *sutta* which tells how the world arises. In what has the world arisen? In what does it form intimacy? By clinging to what is the world harassed in regard to what? The Buddha responds the question like this. In six has the world arisen. In six it forms intimacy. By clinging to six the world is harassed in regard to six. *kismiṁ loko samuppanno, kismiṁ kubbati santhavam, kissa loko upādāya, kismiṁ loko vihaññati’t? chasu loko samuppanno, chasu kubbati santhavam channam eva upādāya, chasu loko vihaññati”¹⁰⁴ In the modern age people have become alienated from themselves and nature. When science started unveiling the secrets of nature one by one, humanity gradually lost faith in theistic religions. Consequently moral and spiritual values were also discarded. Since the industrial Revolution and the consequent acquisition of wealth through technological exploitation of nature, humanity has become more and more materialistic. The pursuit of sensory pleasures and the acquisition of possessions have become ends in themselves. The senses dominate people and they are slaves to their insatiable passions.

(Incidentally the sense faculties are known in Pāli as *indriyas* or lords because they control a person unless s/he is sufficiently vigilant to keep control of them.) Thus men and women have become alienated from themselves as they abandon themselves to sensual pleasures and acquisitive instincts.

In our greed for more and more possessions, we have adopted a violent and aggressive attitude towards nature. Forgetting that we are a part and parcel of nature, we exploit it with unrestrained greed, thereby alienating ourselves from it as well. The result is the deterioration of humanity’s physical and mental health on the one hand, and the rapid depletion of non-replenishable natural resources and environmental pollution on the other. These results remain us of the Buddhist teachings in the *suttas* discussed above, which maintain that the moral degeneration of humanity leads to a decrease in life-span and the depletion of natural resources.

Moral degeneration is a double-edged weapon; it has adverse effects on humanity’s mental and physical well-being as well as on nature. Depletion of vast resources of fossil fuels and forests has given rise to a very severe energy crisis. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that such rapid depletion of non-renewable natural resources within less than two centuries, an infinitesimal fraction of the millions of years taken for them to form, is due to modern society’s inordinate greed and acquisitiveness. A number of simple ancient societies had advanced technological skills, as is apparent from their vast sophisticated irrigation schemes designed to meet the needs of large populations. Yet they survived in some countries for over 2,000 years without such problems as environmental pollution and depletion of natural resources. This was no doubt due to the philosophy which inspired and formed the basis of these civilizations.

In the present ecological crisis humanity has to look for radical solutions. ‘Pollution cannot be dealt with in the long term on a remedial or cosmetic basis or by tackling symptoms: all measures should deal with basic
causes. These are determined largely by our values, priorities and choices. The human race must reappraise its value system. The materialism that has guided our lifestyle has landed us in very severe problems. Buddhism teaches that mind is the forerunner of all things, mind is supreme. If we act with an impure mind, i.e. a mind sullied with greed, hatred and delusion, suffering is the inevitable result. If we act with a pure mind, i.e. with the opposite qualities of contentment, compassion and wisdom, happiness will follow like a shadow. We have to understand that pollution in the environment has been caused because there has been psychological pollution within ourselves. If we want a clean environment, we have to adopt a lifestyle that springs from a moral and spiritual dimension.

Buddhism offers humanity ‘the middle way’, a simple moderate lifestyle avoiding both extremes of self-deprivation and self-indulgence. Satisfaction of basic human necessities, reduction of wants to the minimum, frugality and contentment are its important characteristics. Every individual has to order their life on moral principles, exercise self-control in the enjoyment of the senses, discharge their duties in their various social roles, and behave with wisdom and self-awareness in all activities. It is only when each person adopts a simple moderate lifestyle that humanity as a whole will stop polluting the environment. This seems to be the only way of overcoming the present ecological crisis and the problem of alienation. With such a lifestyle, humanity will adopt a non-exploitative, non-aggressive, caring attitude towards nature. We can then live in harmony with nature, using its resources for the satisfaction of our basic needs. “Just as the bee manufactures honey out of nectar, so we should be able to find happiness and fulfillment in life without harming the natural world in which we live.”

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105 Dhammapada, verse, 49.
Harmony with Nature

The issue of happiness is critical. The concept and the methods of deriving happiness, determine the world. Suffering and happiness are the opponents. The diminished suffering means increased happiness. But addressing happiness or suffering has drastically different consequences. If man wants to be in harmony with nature, attention must be paid to reduction and finally eradication of selfishness. As selfishness subsides sufferings decrease and happiness proportionally increases. One become free and in peace with oneself and the environment as self subsides. Compassion duly arises out of subsidence of selfishness. Harmony with nature, happiness and freedom become one and the same. This is the Buddhist ideal. Compassion creates the foundation for a balanced view of the entire world and of the environment in which we live. It is only by exercising loving compassion toward all that a human being can perfect him—or herself and become a cherisher and sustainer of life.

Nothing in nature should be spoiled or wasted for wanton destruction upsets the vital balance of life. Destroying natural resource is physical pollution, but psychological pollution can also afflict any society, affecting both human beings and the environment. Buddhist teachings explain how this occurs. If a king or ruler is overcome by feelings of hatred, excessive desire and ignorance, his ministers and officials are affected and infected by it. This travels down infecting everyone in the power hierarchy until it reaches the common people. From there it affects the environment in which they live, plants, trees and living creatures, until all are destroyed. Such is the power of psychological or spiritual pollution.

In one of the well-known *sutta* the Buddha speaks of the happiness of living in an appropriate environment. The environment whether village, forest, valley or hill is beautified when the right kind of people live there. There should be a perfect balance between the people who live in a place and the place itself. This is achieved when people live with nature without disturbing the flora and fauna; without breaking and injuring the rhythm of
life. The idea is beautifully expressed by the description of a Buddhist saint who is said to go about in the manner of a bee collecting nectar from flowers but not harming them in any way.

Buddhism recognizes the fact that environment plays an important part in the molding of the character of individuals as well as that of the group; though it does not believe that it is the one and only factor. Buddhism further acknowledges that human being is born with pure mind but it gets coloured by his association with the outside world:

"Pabhassaramidam bhikkhave cittaṁ tañca kho āgantukehi upkkilesehi upakkiliṭṭham"\(^{106}\)

Man gathers experience and knowledge from the environment in which he lives and the temperaments and inclinations are developed in him according to that. The *Cakkhavatthisūhanaśada sutta* shows how people became corrupted due to the unfavourable conditions that prevailed in a society and how the same people progressed when those conditions that gave rise to corruptions were changed.\(^{107}\)

The story of *Aṅgulimāla* also amply illustrates this point. *Aṅgulimāla*\(^{108}\) who became a dangerous criminal was due to the viciousness of his immediate environment. The same criminal turned to be a virtuous man by his association with the Buddha. *Aṅgulimāla* was the son of the head-priest in the court of King Pasenadi Kosala. His original name was *Ahiṁsaka*. When he was of age, he was sent to Taxila, a renowned university town. *Ahiṁsaka* was intelligent and was also obedient to his teacher. So he was liked by the teacher and his wife; as a result, other pupils were jealous of him. So they went to the teacher and falsely reported that *Ahiṁsaka* was having an affair with the teacher's wife. At first, the teacher did not believe them, but after being told a number of times he believed them; so he vowed to have revenge on the boy. To kill the boy

would reflect badly on him; so thought of a plan which was worse than murder. He told Ahimsaka to kill on thousand men or women and in return he promised to give the boy priceless knowledge. The boy wanted to have this knowledge, but was very reluctant to take life. However, he agreed to do as he was told. Thus, he kept on killing people, and not to lose count, he threaded a finger each of everyone he killed and wore them like a garland round his neck. In this way, he was known as Aṅgulimāla, and became the terror of the countryside. Early in morning, the Buddha saw Aṅgulimāla in his vision and reflected that if he did not intervene, Aṅgulimāla who was on the lookout for last person to make up the one thousand would see his mother and might kill her. In that case, Aṅgulimāla would have to suffer in niraṇa endlessly. So out of compassion, the Buddha left for the forest where Aṅgulimāla was. On hearing the Buddha’s teaching, Aṅgulimāla asked the Buddha to admit him into the Order of Bhikkhus. Then and there, the Buddha made him a Bhikkhu and Aṅgulimāla ardently and diligently practiced meditation; he attained arahatship.

The Buddha and his disciples regarded natural beauty as a source of great joy and aesthetic satisfaction. The saints who purged themselves of sensuous worldly pleasures responded to natural beauty with a detached appreciation. Many poets derive inspiration from nature because of the sentiments it arouses in their hearts; they become emotionally involved with nature. The saint appreciates nature’s beauty for its own sake and derives joy unsullied by sensuous associations and self-projected ideas.

Man’s wholesome actions result in pleasant environment. In the Pali canonical literature, I find the Buddha appreciate the wholesome deeds of the virtuous monks including Arahants, saying that wherever the virtuous monks live there to be found a pleasant and delightful place. The reason is that the virtuous monks live in harmony with nature, causing no harm to environment. Plenty of good examples are found in the Theragathā and Threrīgathā of Khuddaka Nikāya, which record how those virtuous elders were living happily in perfect harmony with
environment. The simple spontaneous appreciation of nature’s exquisite beauty is expressed by the Elder Māhākassapa in the following words:

Those upland glades delightful to the soul,
Where the Kaveri spreads its wildering wreaths,
Where sound the trumpet-calls of elephants,
Those are the hills where my soul delights.

Those rocky heights with hue of dark blue clouds
Where lies embossed many a shining lake
Of crystal-clear, cool water, and whose slopes
The ‘herds of Indra’ cover and bedeck:
Those are the hills wherein my soul delights.

Fair uplands rain-refreshed, and resonant
With crested creatures’ cries antiphonal,
Lone heights where silent sages oft resort:
Those are the hills wherein my soul delights. 109

Another monk, Saṃkicca described the charm of the forest as follows:

Acchodikā puthusicā gonaṅgulamigāyutā,
Ambusevālasaṅchannā te selā ramayanti maṁ.

Vasitām me araṇāṇesu kandarāṣu guhāsu ca, 
Senāsanesu pantesu vāḍamiganisevite. ¹¹⁰

Craggs where clear waters lie, a rocky world,
Haunted by black-faced apes and timid deer,
Where cloaked in watery moss the rocks stand,
Those are the highlands of my heart’s delight.
I’ve dwelt in forests and in mountain caves,
And where the creatures of the wild do roam.¹¹¹

Sāriputta affirms, ‘Forests are delightful, where (ordinary) people find no delight. Those rid of desire will delight there; they are not seekers after sensual pleasures –Ramaṇīyā araṇāṇīni yattha na ramatī mano, Vītarāgā ramissanti na te kāmagavesino.¹¹² That is, the enlightened appreciate nature in a non-attached, non-sensual way. Indeed, MahāMoggallāṇa speaks of his living at the root of a tree in the forest, contemplating the foulness of the body.¹¹³ He is also without fear of natural phenomena: while lightning flashes around the mountain, ‘gone to the cleft in the mountain the son of the incomparable venerable one meditates –Odahi migavo pāsaṃ nāsadā vāguraṃ migo, Bhutvā nivāpaṃ gacchāma kandakante migabandhake.¹¹⁴ Likewise Bhūta speaks of contentedly meditating in a cave at night, while outside the thunder rumbles, the rain

¹¹⁰ Ibid. verses, 601-2.
¹¹¹ D. J. Kalupahana. The Ethics of Early Buddhism, p. 141.
¹¹² Theragāthā. Sāriputtatheragāthā, verse, 992.
¹¹³ Ibid.Mahāmoggalānanatheragāthā, verses, 1146-7. Ārammaṇe taṃ balasā nibbandhisam, Nāgamva thambhamhi daṭṭhaya rajjuyā, Taṃ me suguttaṃ satiyā subhāvitaṃ, Anissitaṃ sabbabhavesu hehi.s./Paññāya chetvā vipathāṇāsārīnā, Yogen niggayha pathe nivesiya, Dīsuvā samudayaṃ vibhavaṃ ca sambhavaṃ, Dāyādako hehi.s aggavādino.
¹¹⁴ Ibid. verse, 1167.
falls and fanged animals roar.\textsuperscript{115} In a more tranquil vein, Rāmaṇeyyyaka says, ‘Amidst the sound of chirping and the cries of birds, this mind of mine does not waver, for devotion to solitude is mine – Viḥaviḥābhīnādite sippikābhīrutehi ca, na me tāṁ phandati cittām ekattaniratāṁ hi me’\textsuperscript{tī}.\textsuperscript{116} As Vimala says, ‘The earth is sprinkled, the wind blows, the lightning flashes in the sky. My thoughts are quietened, my mind is well concentrated.’\textsuperscript{117} The environment could also be an example – for instance a mountain as an image of unshakeability – Anāṅgaṇaṣa posaṁ nīccaiṁ suci gaussino, Vālāggaṇaṭaṁ pāpassa abbhāmattaṁ’va khāyatī.\textsuperscript{118} Vanavaccha says that with clear water and wide crags, hunted by monkeys and deer, covered with oozing moss, those rocks delight me.\textsuperscript{119} All in all, the mountain and forest environment loved by such early saints is one in which a person can develop such qualities as non-attached joy, fearlessness, energy, and full enlightenment.

**Environmental Conservation**

Are we really working here for the progress of this world? We may think so but we are actually damaging this world. We have discovered many gadgets to destroy this world. Nature has produced so many things here in this world. To achieve our own ends, we are destroying the natural beauty of this earth. We are polluting the atmosphere, the water and the air. We are destroying plant life as well as all animal lives. We should not assume

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid. Bhūtatttheragāṭhā, verse, 524. Yadā nīsīthe raḥikamhi kānane Deve gaḍantamhi nadanti dāṇhino, Bhikkhū ca pabbhāragato’va jhāyatī Tato rātim paramataḥ na vinatī.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid. Rāmaṇeyyakattheragāṭhā, verse, 49.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid. Vimalatttheragāṭhā, verse, 50. Dharaoṭī ca sīfcaiṁ vāti māluto vijjutā carati nabhe Upasamanti vitakkā cittāṁ susamāhitāṁ mamā’ṭi.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid. verse, 1000.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid. Vanacchaţtheragāṭhā, Verse, 113. Acchodikā puthulā gonaṅgulamigāyutā, ambusevālāsaṅjannā te selā ramayanti ma’ṇṭi.
that we as human beings are the only ones who have got the right to live on this earth. Each and every other living being too has got an equal right to live here. But we deprive other beings of their privileges. Not only that, even within our own human community, one race will try to topple the other race, hindering their progress and not allowing others to live in peace. They declare wars and start to slaughter one another in the name of patriotism.

As long as human beings have polluted minds there will be no peace on earth. It is due to the existence of such people that this earth has become a place of turmoil. People always talk about the uncertainty of the world situation. Who is responsible for this unfortunate situation? How can we expect a better and peaceful world if men behave as uncultured persons? How can we enjoy our life in this uncertain world? Scientists seek to conquer nature for their own material ends. Religions and philosophy aspire to live in harmony with nature for peace of mind and spiritual achievement. You cannot change worldly conditions according to your wishes but you can change your mind to develop contentment to find happiness.

An environment is the surrounding of physical, biological, cultural and social elements which are interlinked to each other either individual or collectively by myriad ways. So its conservation is essential by all its way for the present and also for future. Conservation allows for sustainable development which refers a socio-ecological process characterized by the fulfillment of human needs while maintaining the quality of the natural environment indefinitely. Most recent World Summit Outcome Document refers to the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development as economic development, social development and environmental protection.

Conservation is the management of wild plants and animals or other natural resource their survival for use by future generations. This may involve the maintenance of particular natural habitats and the control of
environmental quality. The conservation ethics is an ethics of resource use, allocation, exploitation and protection. Its primary focus is upon maintaining the health of the natural world: its forest, fisheries, and habitats and biological diversity. Secondary focus is on material conservation and energy conservation, which are seen as important to protect the natural world. Modern conservation has to consider people as part of natural ecosystem and to balance the needs of the wild fauna and flora against the social and economic needs of local people to promote the sustainable use of resources.

In recent decades, scientific and technological discoveries have rapidly accelerated the dissolution of the traditional obstacles that long separated the nation and people of the world. At the same time, with the erosion of cultural barriers, society is undergoing a spiritual transition. The impact of improved educational standards and information technologies is increasing global awareness, and the fundamental unity of the human race is becoming increasingly apparent. What are the ethical concepts and spiritual principles that are now necessary to transform society in order to make solution to environmental conservation possible? The consumer conservation ethics is sometimes expressed by the four R’s: “Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle.” Conservation objectives that in one way or another assume some preexisting state of ecological balance can be tabulated in the way indicated by Table two, depending on whether the site is view as relatively intact, ‘damage’, or virtually destroyed.120 Alan Holland mentions conservation objectives as follows:

Table 2 Conservation Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial state of affairs</th>
<th>Appropriate response</th>
<th>Mode of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intact</td>
<td>Conservation</td>
<td>i. Keep things the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Keep things going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>iii. Let things be</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Such a schema is not free of internal difficulties. Consider the third mode of response to damage – restoration to some natural state.

As previously mentioned, humans depend on nature for their food, clothing, shelter, medicine and other needs. Buddhism recognizes the vitality of nature for humans; in fact, humans cannot survive without it. Therefore, preservation of nature is extremely crucial to their survival. Buddhist scriptures contain a lot of teachings in this regard.

In *Samyutta Nikāya*, there is a whole section devoted to environmental conservation called *Vana Samyutta*. Therein the Vanaropa sutta says, landscaping parks, tree planting, building bridges, arranging waterspouts, digging wells and constructing resting places- these are social services which procure merit always day and night. By performing such meritorious activities, self-disciplined men and women who are established on right views, reach heaven.

\[
\text{Ārāmaropā vanaropā ye janā setukārakā}
\]
\[
papañca udapānañca ye dadanti upassayaṃ
dhammatthā sīlasampannā te janā saggāminā
\]

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What is important here is gardening (ārāmaropa) and reforestation (vanaropa). It demonstrates that Buddhism in teaching how to preserve forests emphasizes on the reforestation as trees bring sundry benefits to humans as well as other ecosystems. In the above Sutta, the significance of water resource is also highlighted. It indicates that the opposite acts—deforestation and overexploitation of nature are strongly condemned. The Dhammapada reminds us that the people’s surroundings not only satisfy their needs but also serve as their refuge when they are struck with fear.\textsuperscript{122}

The conservation of environment is really imperative if humans are to survive. If the current trend of ecocrisis is not averted, the destruction of humankind will be the inevitable result. Human society is no longer compartmentalized into local communities. World has now become a global village. Yet the building blocks of this enlarged society are local communities. The environmental code which guides local communities, therefore, must constitute the foundation of any global code of Environmental Ethics. We have to learn from the communities and groups that maintained ecological balance. We have also to see how the global perspectives can help us integrate the local value into a broader code of environmental ethics.

Environmentally ethical conduct is based on ecologically sound principles which lead environmentally sensible decisions. In every society, the people and institutions, created by them need to appreciate the requirements of the future as well as the requirements of the present. They will need to understand the intergenerational consequences of any decision involving the use of natural resources. In this lies the essence of environmentally ethical behavior. The needs of economic development are often posed as conflicting with the needs environment. This need not necessarily be so. Over the centuries, some human societies have reached an environmental equilibrium in which it was possible to draw upon nature

\textsuperscript{122} Dhammapada, verse, 188. Bahum ve saranam yanti pabbatānī vanānī ca ārāmarukkhacetiyaṇī manussā bhayatājītā (when threatened with danger, men go to many a refuge—to mountains and forests, to park and gardens, and to sacred trees.)
destroying its resource base. With increase in population and with the availability of technologies that exploit earth’s resources in bulk, that equilibrium is now lost. We now find intolerable pressure of population on the environment. Population pressure on the natural resources is a serious problem face by the third world countries. The current approach to population control does not augur well. Population growth and human development are negatively related. On the other hand population growth and environmental degradation are positively linked. Therefore, improvement in the quality of life alone can stem the rapid population growth and environmental destruction.

Most of the current environmental problems –green house effect, ozone layer depletion, emission of toxic gases like CFC (chlorofluorocarbons), deforestation, desertification, energy crisis, etc., has been created by the industrialized countries. The poor countries have benefited the least by trading in their footsteps but the consequences of the ecological disasters are being borne by them equally. Globalization of the economy and ecology is a step in the right direction but it should not scuttle the future development of poor nations. National sovereignty over natural resources up only if there is a fair and respectable equity in development the world over.

The Cakkhavatthisihanāda Sutta and Aggañña Sutta of Dīgha Nikāya show that the precipitous changes in society and the environmental problems were due to the moral decline of man. When man realized the consequence of immorality and renewed morality, increasing prosperity and longevity returned to him. This clearly shows that morality and due respect to nature are the only ways to sustainability and continuity of mankind. Buddhist texts have laid emphasis that nature and human beings are required to live harmony and it has also been stressed that it is absolutely unethical to injure or destroy trees.

We are already experiencing impacts of climate change in different space and time. As predicted by many scientists, tens of millions of people
will be at risk from water shortage, hunger and floods. Along with climate change adaptation strategies, stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a minimum required-level are required to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. What you can do to combat the climate change?

i. Replace as much travel as possible by public transportation or on foot

ii. Turn off electrical appliances when not in use and to replace regular light bulbs with more energy efficient –compact florescent light bulbs

iii. Plant trees and respect your natural surroundings

iv. Avoid using non-biodegradable products

v. Implements 3R policy in your daily life, Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle, and promise never to burn trash.