CHAPTER FIVE
THE SPIRIT OF KINDNESS TO ANIMALS

V.1. The Buddhist concept of loving kindness

“My religion is kindness,” says the Dalai Lama. This simple sentence proclaims the essence of Buddhist morality, which is expressed by the Pāli word mettā. Along with upekkhā (equanimity), the subject of discussion in the last chapter, mettā is one of the twin pillars of the way of life and practice enjoined by the Buddha.¹

V.1.1. The meaning of loving-kindness

The Pali term mettā (Skt. maitrī) is translated as benevolence, goodwill, friendliness, amity, sympathy, and is also defined as the strong wish for the welfare and happiness of all beings without exception. Mettā is rendered here by loving kindness and may be defined as follows: “Loving kindness has the mode of friendliness for its characteristic. Its natural function is to promote friendliness. It is manifested as the disappearance of ill-will. Its footing is seeing with kindness. When it succeeds it eliminates ill will. When it fails it degenerates into selfish affectionate desire.”²

The unfailing sign of mettā is that you are deeply concerned for the well-being, happiness, and prosperity of the object of your mettā, be that a person, an animal, or any other being. When you feel mettā for someone, you want them to be not just happy, but deeply happy; you have an ardent

desire for their true welfare, an undying enthusiasm for their growth and progress.³

Mettā means “love” devoid of selfishness, without desire to possess and to be repaid, similar to the love of a mother for her only child; it is an altruistic attitude of love, a universal love embracing the whole world, embracing impartially all human beings as well as sentient beings. It means that which softens one’s heart, or the state of a true friend. It is defined as the sincere wish for the welfare and genuine happiness of all living beings without exception. It is also explained as the friendly disposition, for a genuine friend sincerely wishes for the welfare of his friend.

Sweet mettā is limitless in scope and range. Barriers it has none. Discrimination it makes not. Mettā enables one to regard the whole world as one’s motherland and all as fellow-beings. Just as the sun sheds its rays on all without any distinction, even so sublime mettā bestows its sweet blessings equally on the pleasant and the unpleasant, on the rich and the poor, on the high and the low, on the vicious and the virtuous, on man and woman, and on human and animal.⁴

Although mettā is sublime love, it is not extraordinary thing beyond our means, is not a property of a superman, it is within us, it is the very ordinary ability to just be kind, not dwell in aversion towards everyone or everything, not do anything to harm them, but willing to do well for their welfare and happiness; for this reason, mettā is often rendered as “loving-kindness”.

The Buddha’s saying:

“I visited all quarters with my mind
Nor found I any dearer than myself;
Self is likewise to every other dear;
Who loves himself will never harm another.”

And how does a bhikkhu abide with his heart imbued with loving-kindness extending over one direction? Just as he would feel friendliness on seeing a dearly beloved person, so he extends loving-kindness to all creatures.

In the Dīgha Nikāya, it is said by the Buddha that almost every virtue such as unselfishness, loving sympathy and loving kindness is included in this mettā. Mettā is an essential part of the Middle Path in the teaching of the Buddha. It seeks to eliminate the three roots of evil: greed, hatred and illusion. As part of the method of developing loving kindness, the Theravāda commentator Budhaghosa offers various reflections, in his Visuddhimagga, for undermining hatred or anger. Mettā plays a significant role in the development of moral discipline (Sīla), meditation (Samādhi) and wisdom (Paññā), which lead the follower to the ultimate goal of seeing things as they really are.

Mettā is not mere universal brotherhood, for it embraces all living beings including animals, our lesser brethren and sisters that need greater compassion as they are helpless. Starting from himself he should gradually

5 S.I. 75; Ud. 47.
extend his mettā towards all beings, irrespective of creed, race, colour, or sex, including dumb animals, until he has identified himself with all, making no distinction whatever. He merges himself in the whole universe and is one with all.

Like mettā, karuṇā (compassion) should also be extended without limit towards all suffering and helpless beings, including dumb animals and fertile eggs. Compassion embraces all sorrow-stricken beings, while loving-kindness embraces all living beings, happy or sorrowful. Buddhism paid attention to karuṇā and mettā extending fellow feeling to all beings not only to friends but also to foes, not only to man but also all living beings. It is high level of understanding for the prevailing of peace and co-operation as well as integration between people through the closing down of all the avenues of aversion.

V.1.2. The application of Loving kindness in Buddhism

Once you know about the thought of enlightenment, the next step is to increase this type of awareness. As much as possible, you should work diligently to increase your motivation to attain enlightenment for the benefit of others. In your daily practice you can pray that those beings that have not yet generated bodhicitta may quickly do so, and that those beings, including yourself, who are already cultivating bodhicitta will increase it.⁹

In many suttas, the Buddha taught that the path to the company of Brahmā is the cultivation of the four sublime states of mind known as

Brahma-vihāras composed of loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). The Buddha once pointed out to Anāthapiṇḍika that the cultivation of loving-kindness just for a finger-snap moment would have been the fruit that was greater than the observing of the Five Precepts and the giving of the most expensive donations offered to the saints, the Buddha and the Saṅgha.

We learn that in the daily monastic life of monks and nuns, there are many rules imposed on them to bring up loving-kindness. Besides the *Pārājika* rule of abstinence from taking life (of a human being), there are some other rules such as a *Pācittiya* rule of abstinence from taking life of a living thing; another *Pācittiya* rule is abstinence from using water that contains living things.\(^\text{10}\) Or meat should not be eaten in three instances (*tikoṭiparisuddha*), i.e., when it is seen, heard, or suspected that the living beings have been slaughtered for the bhikkhus.\(^\text{11}\) Water has to be strained before drinking to avoid killing the living things it contains\(^\text{12}\) and so forth.

Loving kindness can be practice in daily life by kindly actions. Loving kindness is stressed in such verse as, ‘Conquer anger by loving-kindness; conquer evil by good; conquer the stingy by giving; conquer the liar by truth’.\(^\text{13}\)

Compassion is based on loving-kindness. When you feel compassion for people and animals, even for just a few of them, it is because you love them. Once you have developed true loving-kindness you no longer act

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\(^\text{10}\) *Vin.III.* 1-3.

\(^\text{11}\) *MN.* II. 369.

\(^\text{12}\) *J.* No. 31.

\(^\text{13}\) *Dhp.* 223.
violently or hurt anyone. When your loving-kindness becomes immeasurable, you want all sentient being to be happy and your treat all of them as your loved ones.14

Loving-kindness and compassion represent the highest state, where all is equal, regardless of hatred or affection. They are selfless, benefiting all sentient beings. Only when people consider all sentient beings with the eyes, words, expression, voice, and mind of living-kindness and compassion and create affinities with all sentient beings can society achieve harmony and be at peace.15

Buddhist moral conduct is “built on the vast conception of universal love and compassion for all living beings.”16 Buddhism inherited *ahiṃsa* from its land of birth, India, and added some uniquely Buddhist expressions of this universal moral ideal, such as *metta* (loving-kindness) and *karuṇa* (compassion). Compassion toward non-human animals has a high profile in the ancient and foundational Buddhist Pāli Canon, as well as in extra-canonical writings. Buddhist literature features prominent injunctions against killing any living being.17

The record of the mirror of the mind teaches, ‘it is suitable to practice enlightenment with the *bodhicitta* as cause and loving-kindness and compassion as the basic. Bodhisattva has compassion for all sentient beings. Compassion gives rise to bodhi, and from bodhi comes Buddhahood. Seeing the distress of sentient beings, out of loving-kindness and compassion the bodhisattva prays and transforms, uprooting suffering and giving happiness, leading sentient beings

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on the way to enlightenment. For this reason, loving-kindness and compassion are a prerequisite for a bodhisattva to become a Buddha.

According to His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa “All of the Buddha’s teachings are based on refraining from harming others and engaging in helping others. It is therefore of great importance for Buddhist to have these two principles as the ground of their practice. The roots of Buddhist practice are the attitudes of altruism and non-harm. In other words, the roots of Buddhist practice are loving kindness and compassion.”¹⁸ From among these two qualities, he thinks that compassion is foremost: in general, we develop loving-kindness by relying on compassion. In the beginning, therefore, compassion is in a sense more important. Our compassion must have a broad focus, not only including ourselves, but including all sentient beings.

Love (or loving-kindness, mettā) and compassion are the mental states at the root of Engaged Buddhist action. It follows that an engaged Buddhist, whose aspiration is to act for the welfare of others, should intentionally cultivate loving-kindness and compassion.¹⁹

The Seventeenth Karmapa said that for Mahāyāna teachings, all sentient beings are ‘our parents of the past, present, and future.’ This means that, of all sentient beings, some have our parents in the past, some are our current parents, and some will be our parents in future: there are no beings that are not, in the end, our parents. For this reason, all sentient beings have a connection of affection toward us. They have a connection of kindness

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toward us. These affectionate and kind parents are trapped in a state of suffering, unable to actualize their desire for happiness.\textsuperscript{20}

The Dalai Lama has often stated that loving-kindness is his religion. Thich Nhat Hanh speaks of love, which to him is the ability to sacrifice oneself for others, as the essence of nonviolent action. The Dalai Lama calls love the supreme emotion, closely tied to our innate ability to empathize with others, basic to being human. Mahā Ghoṣānanda says that the Dharma itself is found in loving-kindness. Working to reduce suffering in humans, living things, and the planet is integral to spiritual practice and leads to selflessness and compassion.\textsuperscript{21}

Most Buddhists are familiar with the expression, ‘the heart of Buddhism is loving-kindness and compassion.’ However, if we take the expression a step further and attempt to define the terms ‘loving-kindness and compassion’, we will find that few are able to do so. According to a commentary on the lotus sutra, ‘loving-kindness and compassion are the uprooting of suffering and the creation of joy’.\textsuperscript{22} Two of the most important qualities to be developed by Buddhists are loving-kindness understood as the wish for others to be happy, and compassion as the wish to alleviate suffering.\textsuperscript{23}

The dharma methods and the teachings contained in the Buddhist canon are infinite, but the basic for each is loving-kindness and compassion. Loving-kindness and compassion, according to the explanation on the passages and sentences of lotus sutra, are ‘the basic for giving charity and

\textsuperscript{20} His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa, \textit{Op. Cit.} 104.
\textsuperscript{22} Hsing Yun, \textit{Op. Cit.} 58.
teaching the dharma. Without loving-kindness and compassion, all Buddhist dharma would be nothing more than magic.

Compassion is expected of monks, saints, and all Buddhists, “Ahimsa, or non-injury, is an ethical goal” for every Buddhist those who successfully travel the Buddhist path will be filled with mercy, living a life that is “compassionate and kind to all creatures.” The virtue of compassion is “one of the indispensable conditions for deliverance” One who is cruel will not attain to nirvana; only those who “hurt no living being” will reach nirvana.

During the life of the Buddha, The Lord endeavored to conquer violence by his compassion. He prescribed that every person should look upon other beings with compassion as mother takes care of her only child. In the Buddha’s former life as a deer king, he laid down his own life to save that of a doe. A human king witnessed his compassion and was so move that he designated the area as a wildlife sanctuary where hunting was forbidden. This story illustrates the Buddha’s love for the environment.

One time, Devadatta in attempt, the fierce man-killing elephant Nālāgiri was let loose on the road on which the Buddha was travelling. As the elephant charged, the Buddha calmly stood his ground and suffused the

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27 Dhp.68.

elephant with the power of his loving kindness, so that it stopped and bowed its head, letting the Buddha stroke and tame it.\textsuperscript{29}

And Aṅgulimāla was a killer; he took refuge under the Buddha and attained arhathood, destroyed the cycle of rebirth in \textit{samsāra}. With his compassion, he helped a woman deliver a baby safely. Thus he who had destroyed so many lives was able to give life to others and take care of their well-being. Therefore, the Buddha recommended this practice: “Whenever a Bodhisattva sees a person preparing to kill an animal; he should devise a skillful method to rescue and protect it, freeing it from its suffering and difficulties.”\textsuperscript{30}

The social consequences of observing the basic ethics enunciated in the layman’s code of ethics are very extensive. They contribute to producing a protective atmosphere of security and goodwill around one which is conducive to both material and spiritual progress.

The idea of a Bodhisattva now becomes prominent in the vast popular \textit{Jākata} literature which tells stories about the Buddha’s former lives. Originally these tales were fables, fairy-tales, anecdotes, etc., taken from the vast fund of Indian folklore. These current tales were then adapted to Buddhist uses by being represented as incidents in the life of the historical Buddha. For a long time they were just talked about in the illustration of the Buddha’s moral precepts, or for the purpose of proclaiming the glory and spiritual stature of the Lord. But at a later age


they were recast into the form of stories about the Bodhisattva. In connection with the Jātakas a set of 10 “perfections” was elaborated, parallel to the six perfections of the Mahāyāna. Also the compassion and the loving-kindness, which in older literature is a minor and very subordinate virtue, become more prominent in these tales of the Bodhisattva’s deeds, the “Boddhisattva” always being the Buddha in his previous lives.”31 A Jātaka story tells of the Bodhisattva as a hermit who, during a drought, ensured that wild animals got water.32 And one Jātaka tale is particularly instructive in regard to the importance of non-injury to living beings: One upon a time, a goat was led to a temple and was about to be sacrificed by the presiding Brāhma. Suddenly, the goat let out a laugh and then uttered a moaning cry. The Brāhma, started by his odd behavior, asked the goat what was happening. The goat responded as follows: “Sir, I have just remembered the history of what has led up to this event. The reason I have laughed is that I realized that in the last of 500 births I have suffered as a goat; in my next life I will return again as a human. The reason I have cried is out of compassion for you. You see, 500 births ago I was a Brahman, leading a goat to the sacrifice. After killing the goat, I was condemned to 500 births as a goat. If you kill me, you will suffer the same fate.” The Brāhma, visibly shaken, immediately freed the goat, which trotted away. A few minutes later, lightning stuck the goat and he was freed to again become human. The Brahman likewise was spared, due to the goat’s compassionate intervention.33

32 J. I. 273-75.
33 Christopher Chapple, Ibid. 24.
The *Karanīyamettā Sutta* enjoins the practice of mettā towards all creatures, timid and bold, short and long, small and big, minute and great, invisible and visible, near and far, waiting birth and born.\(^{34}\) The *Mettā Sutta*, the blueprint of loving kindness, tells us how this boundless compassion should be cultivated towards all living beings without any distinction whatsoever\(^{35}\) such as the Buddha’s mettā, in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, is like Dharma rain which gives life to plants fertilizing everything around them and that makes everyone happy, taking them towards *Nibbāna* as well.\(^{36}\)

Therefore, mettā must be cultivated as virtue parallel with the mental purity, with the perfect morality and forbearance. Once mettā grows up and comes into force, it possesses a great benefit and a mystic power that is capable of bringing us peace and protection, of dominating anger and hostility, of taming fierce beasts, of transforming violent men into decent and mild persons, criminals and murderers into saints. The Buddha taught: “Hatred never ceases through hatred in this world; through love alone they cease. This is an eternal law.”\(^{37}\)

The Buddha manifested a complete compassion and is respectfully seen as the compassionate protector of all beings. The Buddhist moral path inspires altruistic, compassionate friendly attitudes towards mankind as well as deep ecology. Plants, animals and human beings are inseparably dependent on each other as parts of nature. In Buddhism, the loving-kindness and compassion be in spite of the socio-cultural diversity and all living beings in this planet. Buddhists practice of loving-kindness toward

\(^{34}\) AN. IV. 302.

\(^{35}\) SN. 151.


\(^{37}\) Dhp.8.
non-harming the life of all beings, not only to protect mankind, but also to protect animals and vegetation. “Buddhism’s traditional interdependence between human life and the natural world has been transformed to give it considerable contemporary relevance.”

The Buddha strongly upheld the purity of heart filled with loving-kindness marked with the principle of “Live and let live” to promote tolerance, compassion and love for all creatures. His disciples have to abide by an even stricter code of ethics than the laymen and abstain from practice which would involve even unintentional injury to living creatures. For instance, the Buddha promulgated the rule against going on a journey during the rainy season because of possible injury to worms and insects that come to the surface in wet weather. “O Moggallāna, do not do such a thing, because the insects will be confused.”

The Dhammapada testifies to this fact as follows: “All are afraid of the stick, all fear death. Putting oneself in another’s place, one should not beat or kill others and all are afraid of the stick, all hold their lives dear. Putting oneself in another’s place, one should not beat or kill others.” This shows that the Buddha did not condone any kind of harm or injure to any creature. In Buddhist meditation (vipassanā), compassion is the sublime emotion that impels one to help another in distress and balancing compassion is sympathetic joy, which is a rejoicing in the happiness or

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40 Vin.III. 34.
41 Dhp.129-130.
success of others.\footnote{Roderick S. Bucknell, Chris Kang, \textit{The Meditative Way: Readings in the Theory and Practice of Buddhist Meditation}, Curzon Press, 1997: 91.} This has to be distinguished from personal involvement in others’ troubles and the experience of sadness; it means the detached readiness to help. It also is a virtue, which uproots the wish to harm others. So, compassionately one feels that one views the harm to others as harm to oneself. Compassion, altruistic joy and equanimity if developed in such a way, will lead to the state of non-returning, in the case of a monk who is established in the wisdom found here in this teaching, but who has not penetrated to a higher liberation.\footnote{Nyanponika Thera, \textit{Anguttara Nikāya: Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: An Anthology of Suttas from the Anguttara Nikāya}. Bhikkhu Bodhi (trans.), Altamira Press, 1999: 265 - 270.}

Innumerable stories, legends and behavioral experience have been depicted in the Buddhist literatures, like the \textit{Nikāya} the \textit{Vinaya Piṭaka}, the \textit{Jātaka} and the \textit{Avadāna} stories to illustrate for being mindful to maintain equanimity in feeling the distress of the others around human beings.\footnote{S.K. Pathak, \textit{Buddhism and Ecology}. Bauddha Sanskrit Kendra, 2004: 32.} An interesting story in recorded in a Buddhist \textit{sūtra}. A king of heaven was stalemated in a war with a demon, and neither side emerged as winner. As the king of heaven was leading his soldiers back, he saw the nest of a golden-winged bird in a tree by the roadside. If the soldiers and chariots pass by here, the eggs in the nest will certainly fall to the ground and be scattered, he thought to himself. So he led his thousand chariots back the same road by which they came. When the demon saw the king of heaven returning, he fled in terror. The conclusion of the \textit{sūtra} was that if you use mercy to seek salvation, the lord of heaven will see it. This story tells us that mercy may not seem like much at first glance, but it is in fact extremely powerful. The Buddhist sutras frequently mention “the power of mercy,” from this we


\footnotetext[S.K. Pathak, Buddhism and Ecology, Bauddha Sanskrit Kendra, 2004: 32.]}
know that mercy is indeed a potent force. If a Buddhist wants to learn to use this strength of mercy, he must be like the king of heaven in this story, and be ready to change the route of a thousand chariots rather than let a nest full of bird eggs fall to the ground. This story includes multiple facets of Buddhist teachings, including karma, rebirth, non-injury, and compassion.\footnote{Christopher Chapple, \textit{Op. Cit.} 24.}

In some instances in Buddhist literature, animals are portrayed as sacrificing their lives for the sake of human beings. In other cases, humans are seen as giving up their own flesh and sometimes their lives so that animals may survive. In the \textit{Jātaka}, a rabbit offers his body to a Brahman for food, jumping into fire piled up by the rabbit himself. The Brāhmaṇa was in fact the god Indra in disguise, who then places the figure of the rabbit in the moon. But these stories are only half the picture. Several parables and birth stories tell of humans sacrificing their flesh so that animals may keep living. In the \textit{Jātakamālā}, the \textit{Suvarṇaprabhāsa}, and the \textit{Avadānakalpalatā}, a story is told in which a Buddhist throws himself before a hungry tigress so that she may feed her cubs.

In the early texts, great care is taken not to harm animals for fear that other members of the offended species might take retribution, or that one might be reborn as that same sort of animal. And in the \textit{Śuraṅgama Sūtra}: “All monks who live purely and all Bodhisattvas always refrain even from walking on grass; How then can those who practice great Compassion feed on the flesh and blood of living beings?.”\footnote{Kerry S. Walters & Lisa Portmess, \textit{Religious vegetarianism: From Hesiod to the Dalai Lama}, New York: State University of New York Press, 2001: 65.} The \textit{Lañkāvatāra Sūtra} teaches: “The Bodhisattva, whose nature is Compassion, is not to eat any meat… For

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\item \footnote{Christopher Chapple, \textit{Op. Cit.} 24.}
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fear of causing terror to living beings...let the Bodhisattva who is disciplining himself to attain Compassion, refrain from eating flesh.”

Buddhists, especially those of the Mahāyāna school, can refer to numerous references in their religious texts that support Buddhism’s vegetarian ideal. One indicator of the Buddhist commitment to the ethic of not injuring life forms is found in the abundant references to animals in the teachings of both the Buddha and the later Buddhist. For instance, in the Jātakamālā, didactic tales told by the Buddha drawn from his past lives, he portrays himself as a rabbit, a swan a fish, a quail, an ape, a woodpecker, an elephant, and a deer. Animals are said to have contributed to his desire for nirvāṇa, seeing animals and humans suffer caused Buddha to seek enlightenment. In another anecdote, he feels compassion when he sees a tired farmer plowing the earth, a bird eating a worm dredged up by the plow, and the welts inflicted on the back of the ox by the farmer, the weariness of both beast and man helped initiate his quest for total awakening.

We who train ourselves in developing loving kindness must not eat meat. Eating meat negates loving kindness and compassion, and causes us to turn our back on the pursuit of universal liberation. Love is the only force strong enough to overcome hatred, and for this reason it is the most powerful weapon in the world. Clearly the practice of ahimsā on an international scale would entirely preclude the possibility of war or any other form of

bloodshed or butchery, including capital punishment and the slaughter of animals for food. The idea of ahimsa is that it should be universal in practice and universal in application.\textsuperscript{50}

The present Dalai Lama has expressed a strong conviction numerous times that it is important not to harm other sentient beings including animals. He considers it part of the Buddhist practice of harmlessness not to eat meat. Although Tibetans as a culture eat meat, Buddhists in general do not.\textsuperscript{51}

The strongest pillar of Buddhism is its philosophy of compassion towards all people. Buddhism also offers definite and positive instructions with regard to the manner in which humans should develop universal loving kindness towards all living things that exist in the universe, whether in close proximity or at a distance, seen or unseen, large or small, fierce or timid. Even those seeking to come into existence like feta bodies of unborn babies or those in the stage of eggs are encompassed within this range of universal loving kindness in Buddhism. It specifies this attitude thus declaring may all beings be well and happy. Ultimately, loving-kindness and compassion extend to all living things: people, animals, plants, the earth itself.

V.2. The Buddhist Precept of taking life

Having taken the Three Refuges (\textit{Tīsaraṇa}), the Buddhist layperson takes it upon him to observe the precepts. The Buddha taught the

advisability of comparing one’s own life with that of other beings: “Everyone fears violence, everyone likes life; comparing oneself with others one would never slay or cause to slay”. In the conventional sense, however, pāṇa, (Sanskrit, prāṇa) is a “sentient being”; but in the highest and ultimate sense it is only psychic life or vital force. Preventing the existence of a sentient being is taking away life or killing.\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{V.2.1. The precept of taking life in the meaning}

Śīla may be translated as moral or ethical conduct or behavior, or as the five moral precepts, or as virtue, rightness. It refers in the main to right conduct of body and speech, and as such constitutes the first and initial branch of Buddhist training and discipline.\textsuperscript{53}

The first precept, regarded as the most important, is the resolution not to kill or injure any human, animal, bird, fish or insect.\textsuperscript{54} The First Precept states: “I undertake to abstain from taking life.” This includes the lives of animals. It seems reasonable to assume that most animals would prefer not to die, so taking an animal’s life is likely to break this precept.

A Buddhist Monk’s first vow is, “I abstain from destroying life.” This is borne out by the fact the Bhikkhus are forbidden from cutting down boughs.\textsuperscript{55} Therefore, monks and nuns are even prohibited from injuring plants and seeds.\textsuperscript{56} The first of the five precepts bans the taking of life. As most narrowly interpreted, it applies primarily to the killing of human beings; however, from

\textsuperscript{55} Vin. I. 88.
\textsuperscript{56} Vin.V.34; DN.I. 64.
the beginnings of Buddhism, there were also regulations intended to prevent the harming of animals as well. Monks were forbidden from intentionally killing an animal, or drinking water living creatures in it.

The first and most fundamental Buddhist precept requires followers to refrain from killing not just human beings, but all living beings. This prescription against killing “is central to the Buddhist tradition. Indeed, it is in fact one of the few common features across the vast Buddhist tradition and its many sects, strands, and branches”.

The well-known five precepts form the minimum code of ethics that every lay Buddhist is expected to adhere to. Its first precept involves abstention from injury to life. It is explained as the casting aside of all forms of weapon, being conscientious about depriving a living being of life. In its positive sense, it means the cultivation of compassion and sympathy for all living beings.57

For the purpose of keeping the precept against killing, the Buddha defined killing very specifically as the act of purposely taking life. In the rules he set down for monks, the Buddha further clarifies the conditions necessary for an act of killing:58

- There must be a being (presence).
- You must know that there is a being (knowledge/awareness).
- You must intend to kill (intension, i.e, mensrea).
- You must plan to use a method to kill the being (planning).
- You must kill the being, using only the planned method (result).

57 DN. I. 4.
Other sets of precepts include one out of 250 for monks, one out of 348 for nuns, one out of 10 for both male and female novices, and one out of 6 for married female novices. In addition to the 5 precepts mentioned above, both male and female lay Buddhist are enjoined to abide by an expanded set of 8 precepts on either four or six specified days each month: not to take life, not to steal, to refrain from all sexual activity, not to lie, not to drink intoxicants, to avoid perfume, dancing, and the theater, not to sit or sleep in an adorned chair, and not to eat after noon.59

In the monastic code of discipline, it is an offence requiring expiation if an animal is intentionally killed.60 Its first precept involves abstention from injury to life. It is explained as the casting aside of all forms of weapon, being conscientious about depriving a living being of life. In its positive sense, it means the cultivation of compassion and sympathy for all living beings.61

V.2.2. The precept of taking life in practice

Life is so precious. An important idea mentioned earlier is the value of life. If it is life itself that is valuable, are the lives of all living beings of equal value?62 The First Precept is the practice of protecting all lives, including the lives of minerals. Protecting human life is not possible without also protecting the lives of animals, plants, and minerals. The first Buddhist precept is the admonition not to kill, but to cherish all life. Therefore,

60 Vin. IV. 4.
61 DN. I. 4.
according to Buddhism, one who believes in the law of causation, will be careful not to cause pain to people, animals, plants, or the earth itself, for harming them is simultaneously harming oneself.

Avoiding causing injury and killing plants and animals: *Samgha* was the main instrument of the Buddha to execute his preaching and to convey the same to the common people. Therefore, the Buddha first of all tried to set right his own house by prescribing strict code of moral conduct. *Pātimokkha* rules for monks and nuns were laid down for the same purpose. In Buddhism, killing or injuring living beings is regarded as both unwholesome and fundamentally immoral. On the one hand, killing or injuring them is bad karma entailing evil consequences for the perpetrator after his death, and on the other all living, sentient beings are afraid of death and recoil from pain just like oneself.

In the case of killing animals one is forgiven by confession. The monks and nuns often carry cloth-bag to strain water before drinking because there are so many small creatures in water. The principle of *ahimsā* embodies clearly in Vinaya through the precept of restraining oneself from causing injury to living beings or not killing of living creatures. This precept can be understood by another meaning, that is, the practitioner is expected not only to shun killing but also void inciting others to kill. A Buddhist not only does not kill but also protect animals. Ambedkar puts it “Brāhmanism has in it the will to kill. Jainism has in it the will never to kill. The Buddha’s *ahimsā* is quite in keeping with his middle path”.63

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The Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh reminds us that “The practice of the First Precept is a celebration of reverence for life. When we appreciate and honor the beauty of life, we will do everything in our power to protect all life”.

While practicing the protection of humans, animals, plants, and minerals, we know that we are protecting ourselves. We feel in permanent and loving touch with all species on Earth. We are protected by the mindfulness and the loving kindness of the Buddha and many generations of Samghas who also practice this precept. This energy of loving kindness brings us the feeling of safety, health, and joy, and this becomes real the moment we make the decision to receive and practice the First Precept.

An offence requiring expiation is also committed if a monk uses water while knowing that it contains breathing creatures that will be killed by his action. To avoid this, a water-strainer is made a part of the traditional kit of a monk. Again, it is an offence to sprinkle water on the ground if it is known that there are living creatures there that will be harmed by this.

The Buddha explains that a monk receives food as a gift from a donor, and his loving-kindness for donor and other creatures is not compromised by such eating, if it is ‘blameless’ by being ‘pure in three respects’. If a monk should make use of human flesh there is a grave offence. A monk should not eat the flesh of elephants, horses, dogs, snakes, lions, tigers, leopards, bears,

66 *Vin.* IV. 125.
69 MN.II. 30 - 5.
hyenas (even in times of scarcity). Whoever should eat the flesh of any of
these animals, there is an offence of wrong doing.\textsuperscript{70}

The Buddha makes it very clear that, killing beings will bring up fear
and hatred in the present, in the future, and pain and suffering in mind.
Moreover, it will lead to hell to the animal kingdom, and to the world of the
ghost. He advises everyone not to kill, because all sentient beings tremble
run so at the stick, to all life is dear. In other words, a Buddhist is expected
not only to shun killing but also avoid inciting others to kill. The first
precept to be taken by a Buddhist is this respect of life, this refrains from
killing beings.

This precept is to be found in almost every code of ethics, and each
must uses his common sense in applying to it the need of daily life. Clearly,
killing for sport or for personal adornment can never be defended, but in the
far more difficult problems of the extermination of vermin, of killing for
food, and in self-defense, no dogmatic statements can be made.\textsuperscript{71}

The treatment of animals is included in the first Buddhist precept not
to harm or injure living beings. In the \textit{Mahāvagga}, the Buddha proclaims:
“A monk who has received ordination ought not intentionally to destroy the
life of any living being down to a worm or an ant”.\textsuperscript{72} This concern for animal
and plant welfare shaped monastic life. In the early days of the Buddhist
community, the monks traveled during all three seasons, winter, summer,
and the rainy season. The public, however, protest that “they crush the green
herbs, they hurt vegetable life, they destroy the life of many small living

\textsuperscript{70} Vin. i. 218-220.
\textsuperscript{72} Mahāvagga I. 78. 4. Also see Kenneth Kraft (ed.), \textit{Inner Peace, World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and
beings”, particularly when traveling during the rainy season. Subsequently, the Buddha required that all the monks enter retreats and stop wandering during the monsoons. This public protest clearly indicates that the practice of ahimsa had by that time exerted broad influence, sufficient for people to advocate the adoption of this ethic by members of a religious order.\(^73\)

The injunction against destroying life is known as the First Precept. In addition, the Buddha also tells us not to “hurt” others, for example: “He who for the sake of happiness hurts others, who also want happiness, shall not hereafter find happiness.”\(^74\) Probably because not killing and not hurting are so important, Buddha repeatedly asks us not to do either in many places throughout the Dhammapada. The fact that the First Precept and other teachings forbid killing and hurting is not controversial among Buddhists. Where the controversy comes in is the question of whom Buddhists are forbidden to kill or hurt.

In Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra the Buddha says: “The great friendliness marked by proving what is beneficial; the great compassion by protection. He also taught his disciples to have “compassion on all creatures”\(^75\) and “never to destroy the life of any living creature, however tiny it might be.”\(^76\)

The Emperor Aśoka, who was great king around 300BCE in India, was so impressed with the doctrines of Buddhism, especially its emphasis on nonviolence, that he founded monasteries, schools, hospitals, and other institutions to further its influence. He made laws against killing animals on

\(^{74}\) Dhp. 131.
\(^{75}\) SN.v. 241.
observance days, the castrating or branding of cattle, and indiscriminate burring of forests; some Theravada kings have also prohibited or limit the slaughter of animals.\textsuperscript{77}

The Aśoka had recorded as his public services in some Rocks Edict. Repeated in very major Rock Edict is the injunction or information:\textsuperscript{78}

- The king abstains from killing animals and all men including the king’s huntsmen and fishermen have stopped hunting and fishing (Minor Rock Edict IV in Greek and Aramaic).
- Commendable is abstention from killing living beings (Rock Edict III).
- Due to the king’s admonitions have increased the abstention from slaughter of living creatures, and non-violence to beings (Rock Edict III).

Emperor Aśoka made fifty-six official ‘no slaughter’ days per year, approximately four per lunar month, when no fish could be captured or sold, and animals might not be killed even in game reserves.\textsuperscript{79} The Emperor prohibited the castration or branding animals on various holy days, as well as completed banning of killing of young goats, lambs or pigs, or of their mothers while still in milk for them.\textsuperscript{80} In 257 BCE King Aśoka said that in contrast to before, only two peacocks and a deer were killed to provide food in the royal kitchens and that in time even this would be stopped.

The Buddha praised Brāhmaṇas of old for not sacrificing animals-probably historically correct-and, in the \textit{Kūṭadanta Sutta},\textsuperscript{81} he described a

\textsuperscript{77} Peter Harvey, \textit{Op. Cit.} 203.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Ibid.} 56-57.
\textsuperscript{81} DN. I. 127–49.
sacrifice which he had himself conducted for a king in the past life. In this, no animals were killed, no trees were felled to act as sacrificial posts, workmen were not forced to help, and the only offerings were items such as butter and honey.\textsuperscript{82} The existence of a monastic rule which obliges monks to avoid causing injury to plants and animals also seems to point in the direction of a rudimentary ecological concern. In the light of other factors, however, such as those monks are not required to be vegetarian. Harris takes the view that “none of this seems closely tied to an explicitly ecological ethics.”\textsuperscript{83} Nevertheless, the relationship of a tree-deity to ‘his’ or ‘her’ tree is generally seen as a close one.\textsuperscript{84}

The Buddha is described as having avoided harm to seed and plant life and there are monastic rules against harming trees and plants. It is an offence requiring expiation for a monk to fell a tree or to ask someone else to do so.\textsuperscript{85}

The most fundamental of them are the 5 precepts for lay Buddhists: not to take life, not to steal, not to indulge in improper sexual activity, not to lie, and not to drink intoxicants. Stated positively, these precepts exhort us to love and protect living creatures (including both human and nonhuman beings), to be generous and munificent, to lead sober lives free of dissipation.\textsuperscript{86} These five precepts enshrine, broadly speaking, the principles of non-violence, non-appropriation, chastity, truthfulness, and mindfulness.\textsuperscript{87} Observing the precepts is the second of the Mahayana Buddhist Six Perfections. Mahāyāna Buddhism also teaches the ten good deeds, precepts
corresponding to three aspects of the Eightfold Path: not to kill, not to steals, not to indulge in improper sexual activity; not to lie, not to use bad language, not to slander, not to equivocate, and not to covet, not to be angry, and not to hold wrong views.

In every country in the world, killing human beings is condemned. The Buddhist precept of non-killing extends even further, to include all living beings.\textsuperscript{88} We must look deeply. When we buy something or consume something, we may be participating in an act of killing. This precept [non-killing] reflects our determination not to kill, either directly or indirectly, and also to prevent others from killing.\textsuperscript{89} Nonviolence against humans cannot take firm hold in a society as long as brutality and violence are practiced toward other animals.\textsuperscript{90}

The Vinaya also requires monks to strain all water they drink to be sure there are no small creatures in it that would die through being drunk. Monks are also forbidden to wander during the rainy season, to avoid stepping on and crushing the new growth of vegetation. During this season they were to build a hut near other monks or otherwise live communally, but still living off daily alms. Monks are also forbidden to dig holes or farm for fear of accidentally killing worms or insects in the soil.

It is not true to say that fishermen, farmers, or hunters cannot observe the first precept. Like people in other trades and occupations, they may not be able to observe all the precepts all the time or in all circumstances, given

\textsuperscript{89} Thich Nhat Hanh, \textit{Touching Peace: Practicing the Art of Mindful Living}, Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1992: 82.
their family obligations and livelihood, but they can certainly practice them on special occasions, like holy days, or when they are not actually engaged in their professions. In fact, there may be more opportunities to practice than at first seems possible. We observe the precepts in accordance with our abilities, training by degrees until we are able to make the precepts part and parcel of our lives.

Right livelihood rules out trade on flesh, seen as including the butcher, hunter and fisherman: jobs which no committed Buddhist would carry out.91 In addition to nurturing and protecting animal life, we should also treasure plant life. Even a blade of grass is vital because it purifies the air we breathe.92

We avoid cruel and hurtful behavior because we see the consequences of such actions that they lead to profound unhappiness for us and for everyone around us, now and in the future. We practice skillful action because we want our lives to be helpful and harmonious, not destructive and contentious, and because we want a calm and happy mind, untroubled by regret or remorse.93

The Buddha said “Mahamati, meat is not eaten by anybody for any reason, there will be no destroyer of life.”94 And “meat eating I have not permitted to anyone, I do not permit, I will not permit.”95

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95 Ibid. 138.
The Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh who is meditators and social peace activists was emphasized: “Do not live with a vocation that is harmful to humans and nature.” Some Sri Lankan Buddhists are increasingly resorting to the same means to discourage the slaughter of animals and cruelty towards animals. After all, the very first precept of a Buddhist is to abstain from killing and this is what is promoted by caring Buddhists.

We cannot support any act of killing; no killing can be justified. But not to kill is not enough. We must also learn ways to prevent others from killing. If the Buddha believed fish to be sentient, it is highly improbable that he would deny that many of the other animals commonly killed and hurt by humans (e.g. mammals and birds) are not sentient. Therefore, at least fish, birds, and mammals could not be killed or otherwise hurt according to the First Precept and other teachings which protect sentient beings. It is quite possible that the First Precept covers other animals as well.

Buddha reiterates the importance thing: “To abstain from destroying life, to abstain from immorality. Right acts are to abstain from taking life, from stealing and from lechery.” We can infer a great deal merely from the First Precept and the teachings against hurting other beings. It is clear that the Buddha does not want us to kill or hurt animals ourselves. Therefore, Buddhists cannot be hunters, fisher, trappers, slaughterhouse workers, vivisection sectors, etc., nor can we “euthanize” homeless animals in so-called animal “shelters”. This is suitable with right act, right livelihood in the Noble Eight fold path that lead people go to liberation.

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V.2.3. The precept of taking life in usefully

In the contemporary globalizing world, there are too many who take life and too few people who save lives. In society, people are arrested and jailed mostly because they have violated the five precepts. If we wish to gain freedom, to eradicate delusion, to ignite the bright light of wisdom, if we wish to gain liberation from life and death, to ride the Bodhi boat and cross the limitless ocean of karma, then we will see that abiding by the five precepts is fundamental to human morality.\(^99\)

The practice of Buddhist moral precepts deeply affects one’s personal and social life. On the personal level, the precepts help one to lead a moral life and to advance further on the spiritual path. Moreover, popular Buddhism believes that the practice of morality contributes to the accumulation of merits that both support one in the present life and ensure happiness and prosperity in the next. On the social level, observing the five precepts helps to promote peaceful coexistence, mutual trust, a cooperative spirit, and general peace and harmony in society. It also helps to maintain an atmosphere which is conducive to social progress and development, as we can see from the practical implications of each precept.

In the *Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, there is a story of a novice monk who was near the end of his life span. One day, he saw a group of ants drowning in water and reached out to save them. Through his act of compassion, he gained a long life. All these stories serve as reminders for us to act with compassion. Protecting life is a basic for us to act with compassion.

compassion. Protecting life is a basic moral principle of being human and is the best tool for transforming anger, violence, and sadness into tranquility. Therefore, to raise the quality of life we should promote protection of all living beings.

Life and limb are precious to every living being and nobody has the right to destroy the life of another for any reason. But we know that human beings kill others individually and collectively in the name of human rights, religion, peace, nation, race, culture and population control all assumed good purposes. Hatred, jealousy, power, greed, ill will, selfishness, cruelty, callousness, pride, ignorance are incentives that provide and drive one to commit *pañātipāta*. This is a deviation from the Noble Eight Fold Path - right understanding, thought and action.

The First Precept is born from the awareness that lives everywhere are being destroyed. We see the suffering caused by the destruction of life, and we undertake to cultivate compassion and use it as a source of energy for the protection of people, animals, plants, and minerals. The First Precept is a precept of compassion, *karunā* the ability to remove suffering and transform it.

The first precept admonishes against the destruction of life. This is based on the principle of goodwill and respect for the right to life of all living beings. By observing this precept one learns to cultivate loving kindness and compassion. One sees others’ suffering as one’s own and endeavors to do what one can to help alleviate their problems. Personally,

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one cultivates love and compassion; socially, one develops an altruistic spirit for the welfare of others.

V.3. A Buddhist perspective on Animal Rights

The core of religious living and the idea of our community, then, for a Buddhist, is not to be taken in the narrow sense of human society alone, but in the broader sense of a shared community comprised of all living or sentient beings. There is another, less favorable side to the Buddhist view of animals, however. The way in which early Buddhists talked about animals reveals that they thought about them in rather negative ways. For Buddhists, any animal other than a human was in an inferior position and could, if it lived a perfect life, be reborn as a human. Similarly, if a human lived immorally, he or she would be punished by being reincarnated as a nonhuman.\footnote{Paul Waldau, ‘Religion and Animals: Buddhism’. In Encyclopedia of Animal Rights and Animal Welfare, Volume 1, ed. Marc Bekoff, Greenwood Publishing Group, 2010: 455.}

V.3.1. The meaning of Animal Rights

An animal is defined as “a living being other than a human.” This is a controversial definition, because animal is often defined as “a living thing capable of spontaneous movement”.\footnote{Robert A. Palmatier, Speaking of Animals: A Dictionary of Animal Metaphors, USA: Greenwood Press, 1995: xi.} In regard to animal rights, we have to explore two points. The first is the right of humans to exploit animals for their own pleasure, comfort, profit, and survival, and the second is the right of animals to live a natural life and die a natural death, without human interference or exploitation. These are the extremes, of course: Most animal...
rights groups recognize the dependence of humans on animals and of animals on humans, for the survival of both.

Animal rights activists believe that animals are of equal or similar importance to humans, and thus, animals must receive equal or similar treatment to that of humans. Animal Rights is the philosophy of allowing non-human animals to have the most basic rights that all sentient beings desire: the freedom to live a natural life free from human exploitation, unnecessary pain and suffering, and premature death. This is what the animal rights movement is about; it is not about working for equality between human and non-human animals.

Animals, humans and nonhumans, are sentient, and their lives have significant value. To obstruct an animal, to cause it pain, distress, suffering, misery, or terror; to mutilate an animal; or to kill an animal is harmed the animal. Animal rights are based on the idea that animals share similar emotional and physical feelings to humans, and therefore should have similar rights to health and wellbeing. They address the interests, welfare and ethical treatment of animals, including animal cruelty.

Animal right, also known as animal liberation is the idea that the most basic interests of non-human animals should be afforded the same consideration as the similar interests of human beings. We have a duty not to harm animals, and animals have a right not to be harmed by us. It developed in the late 1970s. Animal Rights is a movement that intends to protect all

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104 John M. Kistler, People promoting and people opposing animal rights: in their own words: ABC-CLIO, 2009: 2.
animals from being exploited and abused by humans. This includes the use of animals for anything that causes them pain and suffering, such as medical experimentation, imprisonment in circuses and zoos, and fur production. Animal rights activists want animals to be considered as individuals, rather than property. The Animal Rights movement had a strong comeback in the 1970s, where most of the modern terms were coined. Oxford psychologist Richard Ryder coined the word “speciesism,” which came to be the basis of the animal rights movement. Basically, speciesism is the assignment of different values to beings depending on their species. Ryder wrote extensively on the issue and considered it as serious as racism.

In 1975, Peter Singer wrote what is now considered the basic reference book for animal rights activist. The book *Animal Liberation* has been used as course book for Singer’s Bioethics course at Princeton University. Other books considered as essential to the animal rights movement include James Rachels’ *Created from Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism* and Tom Regan’s *The Case for Animal Rights*.

The animal rights movement is not interested in making animals and humans equal. Rather, they work for the basic rights of all animals to live free of human abuse, and avoid unnecessary pain or premature death at the hands of humans. Animal right organizations go further in saying it is also morally wrong to use animal product for food or clothing, they oppose the use of animal in experiment and entertainment completely. Organization such as people for the ethical treatment of animals, in the USA, hope to end

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the use of animals in these way. They work towards this by campaigning and protesting, or even by rescuing animal from research laboratories.  

**V.3.2. Buddhist perspective on Animal Rights**

Buddhism entails a philosophy that is sensitive to the pains and needs of animals, and this philosophy is not merely peripheral, but belongs “to the core of the tradition” forming “the foundation of Buddhist morality”.

Animals in the *Jataka* speak out against harming other species, against animal sacrifice, and against hunting and eating animals. The Buddhist is to remember that “All have the same sorrows, the same joys” and must be protected. He who for the sake of happiness does not hurt others, who also want happiness, shall hereafter find happiness.

Consideration for animals must have mention here, for the books in very many places teach it, not merely in connection with the rule against taking life, but as a form of kindness. The *Jātakas*, in those ‘birth stories’ a genuine sympathy for animal life, with that racy rustic humor which accompanies it, is often made the means of giving point to the moral, that the dumb animals claim of us, not merely the cold technical avoidance of killing, but friendliness that will neither hurt them nor cause them fear. In the same that meaning, The Buddha commented:

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113 Dhp. 54.
“All living beings are afraid of the stick,  
All living beings fear death.  
Comparing oneself to others,  
Don’t hurt or cause another.”\textsuperscript{115}

Those who resorted to these activities were usually relegated to the margins of the society. This policy is far removed from the ideals that the Buddha proclaimed when he advised rulers that birds and beasts should be given ward and protection.

The concern for animal welfare was not confined to the Buddhist monastic community. Aśoka, one of the best known Indian emperors, converted to Buddhism and establishes several laws that required kind treatment to animals. These include restricting meat consumption, curtailing, and establishing hospitals and roadside watering stations for animals. Excerpts from Aśoka’s inscriptions are as follows, translated from rocks and pillars still standing throughout India: “Formerly, in the kitchen of the Beloved of the gods, king Priyadarśin (Emperor Aśoka), many hundred thousands of animals were killed every day for the sake of curry. But now when this Dharma- rescript is written, only three animals are being killed (every day) for the sake of curry (viz.) two peacocks (and) one deer (and) the deer again, not always. Even these three animals shall not be killed in the future.”\textsuperscript{116}

In his fifth Pillar Edict, Aśoka decrees the protection of a large number of animals that were not in common use as livestock; protects from slaughter young animals and mother animals still milking their young; protects forests from being

\textsuperscript{115} Dhp.129.  
\textsuperscript{116} Christopher Chapple, Op. Cit. 24-25.
burned, expressly to protect the animals living in them; and bans a number of other practices hurtful to animals. In this Aśoka was carrying out the advice to the Cakravartin king given in the Cakkavattisīhanāda-sutta\(^\text{117}\) that a good king should extend his protection not merely to different classes of people equally, but also to beasts and birds. Animal life is observed with accuracy and sympathy and we see not only the large forms like elephants and horses but a train of ants going up a Palāṣa tree in flower.\(^\text{118}\)

In Sri Lanka, around 300 BCE, an adept Buddhist practitioner (Arahant Mahinda) petitioned King Devānaṃpiyatissa on behalf of animals, to remind the emperor of his Buddhist obligation to protect, represent, and defend all creatures in his realm:\(^\text{119}\) “Oh! Great King, the birds of the air and the beasts have an equal right to live and move about in any part of this land as thou. The land belongs to the peoples and all other beings and thou art only the guardian of it.”\(^\text{120}\)

Aśokan model of benevolent state Arahant Mahinda’s declaration set the tone for the creation of an Aśokan model of benevolent state in Sri Lanka. The social and legal history of Sri Lanka provides innumerable examples of the Buddhist attitude to animal life. Our former Kings established some of the worlds’ first wild life sanctuaries. Five of the kings governed the country under the ‘Maghata’ rule, which banned completely the killing of any animal in the kingdom.\(^\text{121}\)

\(^{117}\)DN, no.26.


King Silakala (524-537 CE) decreed the preservation of life for all creatures throughout the Island. King Kassappa IV (898-914 CE) granted safety to all creatures on land and water and in doing so observed in all respects the conduct of the ancient kings. Virtuous Kings moved by compassion for animals distributed young corn full of milky juice to cattle, and rice to the crows and other birds. King Mahinda IV made arrangements for the distribution of rice cakes to apes, wild boar, gazelle and dogs. King Parakramabahu I had commanded that safety of life protective measures be extended to all creatures without exception living on dry land and in the water on the four uposatha days in every month.¹²²

Several Kings established Animal Hospitals and one King i.e. Buddhadāsa (314 CE) became a reputed medical and veterinary surgeon. The people, influenced by the principle of Ahimsa generally kept away from occupations that required the killing of animals to earn a living e.g. hunting, fishing and the slaughter of animals for food. Those who resorted to these activities were usually relegated to the margins of the society.

Buddhists should be more proactive in animal welfare work and campaign for law reform in this area because Buddhism more than any other religion (except Jainism) recognizes the right to life of all living beings rather than only humans. In addition Buddhism extols compassion to all forms of life. ‘Kill and eat’ is not a Buddhist tenet.

At a minimum, the Dhammapada is consistent with animal rights. Indeed, it seems to mandate many of the goals of the animal rights movement, for example the abolition of the meat industry and vivisection.

Given that the *Dhammapada* is one of the core scriptures of Buddhism, it is difficult to see how Buddhists who do participate in activities which kill animals can justify the discrepancy between their practice and the words of the Buddha.

Blaise Pascal, a French philosopher and mathematician, in the seventeenth century, he made an unequivocal of no meat in his meal. The humane man will grant the animals of this world what he grants his fellow men: the right to live and be happy. The philosophers know that animals contain all the characteristics that make a human: individuality, emotions, desires, ability to suffer. And the scientists know that humans are just another animal, just another creature of complex psychology.

Ritson argued against meat-eating on the grounds that it is unnatural, unnecessary, unhealthy and immoral. He repeated the notion that meat ‘is the cause of cruelty and ferocity’ among those who devour it, and drew attention to the widespread existence of vegetarian cultures. Finally, if we believe in the right to life, we have no excuse for killing animals.

Although raising animals for food is not the best way to increase the amount of animal pleasure, it may be argued that it is the best way to increase the amount of animal and human pleasure. In developing the classical utilitarian position on the use of animals for food, it’s claimed that it is implausible to think that the suffering an animal experiences from confinement, transportation, and slaughter-related activities are outweighed

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by the pleasures of eating these animals. One can live and live well without
going hunting, eating meat, wearing furs or even leather clothing, and doing
all the other things that directly or indirectly contribute to animal suffering
or the violation of putative animals right.\textsuperscript{126}

According to Mahatma Gandhi, Indian leader, “The greatness of a
nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are
treats.”\textsuperscript{127} People’s beliefs about animal rights come from their family
background, education, religion, society and the experiences in their life.
Each of us is unique and we have our own unique set of beliefs. Our beliefs
form the codes and laws of our society. These in turn affect the way in
which the animals in our society are treated.\textsuperscript{128}

As regards the consumption of meat, Percival says, “They never eat
meat, or anything that has had life” and Tennent says, “The mass of the
population were nevertheless vegetarians and so little value did they place
on animal food”.\textsuperscript{129} “On these grounds, a great deal of the killing of non-
human animals must be condemned.”\textsuperscript{130} Animal right campaigners have
written their own declaration of rights for animals:

- have the right to live free from human exploitation, whether in the
  name of science or sport, exhibition or service, food or fashion.
- have the right to live in harmony with their nature rather than
  according to human desires.

\textsuperscript{126} Tom Regan, \textit{Op. Cit.} 373.
\textsuperscript{127} Mohandas Gandhi, quoted in Margaret C. Jasper, \textit{Animal Rights Law.} Dobbs Ferry, New York: Oceana
\textsuperscript{128} Barbara James, \textit{Op. Cit.} 11.
-have the fight to live on a healthy planet."¹³¹

There are many ways in which government can protect wild animals. They can set up areas nature reserves, national park and wilderness areas, where wild species and their habitat are protect. Environment and wildlife concerns can be taken into consideration when planning for housing and city development. “Many animals are hunted have simply for please, in what are called blood sport. Hunting has become a sport rather than a necessity.”¹³²

This policy is far removed from the ideals that the Buddha proclaimed when he advised rulers that birds and beasts should be given “ward and protection”.¹³³ Cultural beliefs, history and prejudice have had an enormous impact on how humans view animal sentience. Most people have over history assumed that many animals feel pain, hunger, thirst, heat, cold, fear, anger and other basic emotions, because we have everyday evidence that they do.

According to Charles Darwin: ‘Animals, whom we have our slaves, we do not like to consider our equal.’¹³⁴ Most people think that the lives of human beings are of special value. They believe that any human life is so much more valuable than the life of any nonhuman animal that faced with a choice between saving the lowliest member of our own species or any member of any other species; they would always choose to save the human.¹³⁵ At present the killing of a chimpanzee is not regarded as a serious

¹³¹ Barbara James, Op. Cit. 7.
¹³² Ibid. 42.
¹³⁴ Barbara James, Op. Cit. 5.
matter. Large numbers of chimpanzees are used in scientific research, and many of them die in the course of this research. If human life does have special value or a special claim to be protected, it has it in so far as most human beings are persons. But if some non-human animals are persons, too, the lives of those animals must have the same special value or claim to protection.

Actor Richard Gere says, “As custodians of this planet it is our responsibility to deal with all species with kindness, love and compassion. That these animals suffer through human cruelty is beyond understanding. Please help to stop this madness.” Animals should not be used by humans, and should not be regarded as their property. In order to save the most animals, increasing numbers of animal rights activists are becoming vegetarian. The bonus in this dietary change is that vegetarians have lower rates of heart disease, osteoporosis, and certain forms of cancer than flesh eaters. In addition, vegetarians are also helping the environment and the world hunger problem, since less water, land, and energy are needed to feed a person on a vegetarian diet than on an animal-based diet.

The Dalai Lama says that: “We need others for our very existence. The practice of compassion and non-violence is one’s own self-interest.” To practice nonviolence, first of all we have to practice it within ourselves. In each of us, there is a certain amount of violence and a certain amount of nonviolence. Depending on our state of being, our response to things will be

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more or less nonviolent. Even if we take pride in being vegetarian, for example, we have to acknowledge that the water in which we boil our vegetables contains many tiny microorganisms. We cannot be completely nonviolent, but by being vegetarian, we are going in the direction of nonviolence.\footnote{Thich Nhat Hanh, \textit{Op. Cit.} 19.}

Whereas some of the great religions of the East have emphasized the desirability of protecting nonhuman life while tending to ignore nonhuman suffering, the animal welfare moment of the West has emphasized the reduction of suffering while condoning killing for food and other purposes. Now the modern animal rights ideology brings both threads together in its quest to conquer suffering and to protect nonhuman like universally.\footnote{Richard D. Ryder, \textit{Op. Cit.} 3.}

As working on animal rights issues follows clearly from fundamental Buddhist teachings, they are by no means exclusively Buddhist. Our hope is that many people, regardless of their religious views, will wholeheartedly embrace them in their future work for animal rights.

\textbf{V.4. The Buddhist Tradition toward Protect Environment}

A thoughtful interpretation of Buddhist attitudes toward the natural world that the Buddha as a forerunner of environmental protection.\footnote{Susan Jean Armstrong and Richard George Botzler, \textit{Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence}. McGraw-Hill, 2003: 200.} Buddhism has a long history of environmental protection, well before the concept became popular as a modern social cause. As custodians of this planet it is our responsibility to deal with all species with kindness, love and
compassion. When we do our part to protect the environment, we give future generations a fair chance to live peacefully and work happily on a healthy and thriving planet.

When we talk about protecting the environment, we should first realize that there are two facts to the problem: preserving inner sanctity and maintaining outer ecological balance. We alone are responsible for our inner peace. To do this, we have to see into the emptiness of the three poisons: greed, hatred, and delusion. Addition to protecting the physical environment, we have to take good care of our internal spiritual environment. The *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* says, “If the bodhisattva wishes to acquire a pure land, he must purify his mind. When the mind is pure, the Buddha land will be pure” and “If one wants to be in a pure land, one should purify the mind. When the mind is pure, the land is pure.” External environmental protection, such as natural habitat privation, air purification, water source clean up, noise pollution control, trash management, and radiation protection, must rely upon the joint efforts of everyone.

“Man is a child of nature and not the master of nature.” Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh writes: “A human being is an animal, a part of nature. But we single ourselves out from the rest of nature. We classify other animals and living beings as nature, as if we ourselves are not part of it. Then we pose the question, “How should I deal with Nature?” We should deal with nature the way we deal with ourselves...! Harming nature is harming

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145 See Weimojiejing (*Vimalakīrtirinirdeśa-sūtra*), T 14, 538c, zongjinglu, T 48, and Burton Watson (tr.), The Vimalakirtinirdesa: 29.
ourselves, and vice versa.”

The harmony and equilibrium in the individual, society and Nature is being destroyed. Man is sick, society is sick, Nature is sick. The way out is to reestablish harmony and equilibrium.

Nature continues to evolve other species: ‘let the earth bring forth living creatures, according to their kind, cattle, reptiles and wild animals,’ all according to their kind. Deep ecology in Buddhism is a practice of loving-kindness, non-harming the life of all beings not only to protect mankind, but also to protect animals and vegetation. The Buddhist moral path inspires altruistic, compassionate friendly attitude towards mankind as well as deep ecology.’

The Aggañña Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya that relates the episode of the evolution of the world and society emphasizes the fact that moral degeneration of man causes the degradation of his personality as well as his environment. We humans are made entirely of non-human elements, such as plants, minerals, earth, clouds, and sunshine. For our practice to be deep and true, we must include the ecosystem. If the environment is destroyed, humans will be destroyed, too.

Buddhism is a religion that embodies the spirit of environmental protection. The sutra not only advocates loving our neighbors, they teach us to love our environment too. Throughout its history, Buddhism has had a profoundly positive impact on the environment. Monasteries have planted trees, dredged rivers, repaired roads and bridge, and thoughtfully used and cared for nature resources. During discourse, monastic encouraged devotees

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149 DN.1. 27.
to free captured animals, promoted vegetarianism, and reminded all to value
the gifts of nature. From these actions, we see that monastic were
environmental activists before the term “environment protection” was
coined. This tradition of nurturing the nature world continues to this day.\textsuperscript{150}

Buddha’s tenets represent an environmentally friendly aspect. Take,
for example, the original reason for the \textit{Vassāvāsa}, ‘rainy season’ and a
period when new life, including new crops, abounds. He desired to minimize
the destruction of newly grown vegetation and insect-life under the feet the
touring monks.\textsuperscript{151} They were instructed to remain in the monasteries only for
three months, which was an effective check on them from possible killing
and destruction of insects, small creatures and green crops. The \textit{Vinaya
Pițaka} informs that the Buddha also taught the \textit{bhikkhus} that one should not
dig the ground as there are living things, like the earthworm in the ground,
which will be destroyed if the earth is dug.\textsuperscript{152}

Among the charitable deeds of the emperor \textit{Asoka} was planting of
medicinal herbs, development of wayside wells and planting of shade trees
for both humans and animals.\textsuperscript{153} He banned the killing of a wide variety of
non-food animals, birds and fish, and drastically reduced the slaughter of
animals to feed the large royal household.\textsuperscript{154}

Nowadays, some people choose to follow a vegetarian or vegan
lifestyle for environmental reasons. “Today young children who refuse meat
spontaneously are being allowed this dietary freedom by more permissive

\textsuperscript{151} Marie. B.Byles, \textit{Footprints of Gautama The Buddha}, Wheaton, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing
\textsuperscript{154} \textit{Ibid.} 56-57.
twentieth century parents: they like animals and therefore, quite logically, decline to eat them.”155 We want to save the planet; we have to stop eating meat first. Ocean fish generally live their lives under nature conditions, and in this respect their lot is better than that of farmed animals. We don’t eat any animals or animal products. This is also very un-arbitrary. Products such as milk and eggs come from enslaving animals in sometimes horrendous conditions. It makes sense that if we’re trying not to kill animals, we also should try to avoid inflicting other forms of violence on them.

Much of our daily products also involve animals such as leather shoes, milk from cows, honey from bees, soap from animal fat, drugs with animal serum. However, there are many new products today that are free from animal derivatives. Given more choice, we are at liberty to make wiser decisions on how to live life in a more harmless way. Consider becoming a vegan. This accords with one of the duties of compassionate: protecting animals and birds.156

In the Śuraṅgama Sūtra, the Buddha said: “If a man can control his body and mind and thereby refrains from eating animal flesh and wearing animal products, I say he will really be liberated.”157 A brief examination of the morality, environmental impact, and healthiness of eating meat easily produces the reasonable conclusion that one should probably avoid meat as much as possible. “It can also be argued that it is better for the environment to be vegetarian.”158

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156 DN. III. 61 - 5.
158 Barbara James, Op. Cit. 15.
To protect the environment, the Buddha ceaselessly reminded his disciples to protect trees and animals. The *Vinayamātrikaśāstra* states, ‘there are five types of trees one should not cut: bodhi trees, medicine trees, large roadside trees, tree in cold groves, and nyāgrodha trees.’

However, unlike today there was no paucity of green forests, rainfall, animals and other natural resources in the Buddha’s time, he always talked of preserving natural surroundings. If we practice the Buddha’s teaching and truly follow the principle of love and compassion towards all the beings including forests and their inhabitants, that would create a balanced and happy environment. For some of us, the most effective way to do so is through religious practice. For others it may be non-religious practices. What is important is that each of us makes a sincere effort to take seriously our responsibility for each other and for the natural environment.

The Buddha strongly opposed the sacrifices and the slaughter of animals. He pointed out, “Love all so that you may not wish to kill any.” This is a positive way of stating the principle of *ahimsā*. The Buddha reiterates the importance of being nonviolent: “To abstain from destroying life, to abstain from immorality. Right acts are to abstain from taking life, from stealing and from lechery.”

The Buddha’s age-old doctrine of compassionate love has refreshing relevance to the modern world. It creates the foundation for a balanced view of the entire world and of the environment in which we live. It is only by

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exercising compassion toward all that a human being can perfect him or himself and become a cherisher and sustainer of life.

A person enlightened with the Buddhist ideals and practicing the same can contribute valuably in saving the physical, biological and social environment. “...the need for universal compassion for sentient beings who are alike in that they dislike pain and wish for happiness; the inalienable dignity which living creatures possess by virtue of their capacity to achieve enlightenment in this life or in the future.”\textsuperscript{161} It is then obvious that Buddhism, in its teachings, should place such importance on the harmony between man and nature. Man’s duty is the preservation of the beauty of life and not its destruction. The follower of the \textit{Dhamma} is instructed to protect trees, forests and wild life.

The Buddha’s age-old doctrine of compassionate love has refreshing relevance to the modern world. It creates the foundation for a balanced view of the entire world and of the environment in which we live. It is only by exercising compassion toward all that a human being can perfect him or himself and become a cherisher and sustainer of life.

Man is expected to utilize the resources nature provides without polluting and harming nature, to make life richer and happier. This can only be done if man tries to satisfy his needs and not his greed. Over exploitation impoverishes natural resources impairing nature’s replenishing capacity. Wastage in the modern world is another detrimental factor, reminding us of the prudent use of nature’s bounty in a short episode in the \textit{Vinaya Piṭaka}.\textsuperscript{162}

\textsuperscript{161} Peter Harvey, \textit{Op. Cit.} 121.
\textsuperscript{162} Vin.II. 23.
Non-violence-based Buddhist religious activities were also directed towards the environment.\textsuperscript{163} The \textit{Kūṭadanta Sutta} points out that the state administration should provide protection to flora and fauna. In the teachings of the Buddha, a basic concern is shown regarding the evils related to the destruction of life. As the first precept in Buddhist ethics, this concept is rooted in a whole orientation to oneself, others and the natural world. The Buddha was a pioneer in the world to preach love to all beings and left a timeless legacy in the form of a message of truth and \textit{ahimsā}.

\textsuperscript{163} DN.I. 182.