
Buddhism as an Environmental Religion

Dr.Aruna Gogania
Asso.prof. in History
S.P.KN.S.Govt.College,Dausa
Dausa(Raj.)
Email arunagogania@gmail.com

Buddhism, thus, assumes the appearance of a religion related to the environment in which it flourishes. Buddhism, as an environmental religion, is most appropriate for this millennium for the strength of its doctrines which are conspicuously associated with maintaining global peace and harmony devoid of pain and suffering. Several Buddhist concepts like compassion, rebirth and good conduct award particular significance to the assumption of Buddhism as an environmental religion, and they fulfil both the spiritual and social requirements in any environment.

Compassion

Compassion or karunā to living creation is a fundamental component of Buddha's teachings, and a significant factor that contributes to the improvement of relations in any environment. Karuna is one among three other brahmavihara-s or the states of mind which is similar to living with Brahman. Other brahmavihara s are mettā or loving kindness, muditā or cheerfulness in the prosperity of others and upekkha or equanimity. These consist of a universal concern for all living creation. Buddha emphasizes karunā on several occasions as necessarily incorporating both the life of a monk and a layman. It embraces all the inhabitants of the environment into a common bondage, unconscious of whether one is "feeble or strong, tall or short, stout or medium, small or large, seen or unseen, far or near and born or to be born."¹ The one who practises karuna compared to a mother, who protects her only child at the risk of her own life.²

¹Metta Sutta,146-147 in Saddhatissa, p.16.

²Ibid.149, Op. Cit., p.16.

Therefore, for "a boundless heart towards all beings."³ The love that gushes forth from such a boundless heart will definitely "pervade the whole world above, below and across without any obstruction, hatred and enmity."⁴ One who is in possession of such boundless love would neither injure the life of another, nor cause injury for "whoever destroys life, whether bird or animal, insect or fish, has no compassion for life."⁵ Compassion to all living creation is the root cause for abstinence from destruction of life. This paves the way for a respect towards life in an environment. Buddha ordains the following conduct for any Buddhist householder: "Let him not destroy life, nor cause others to destroy life and also not approve of other's killing. Let him stop from oppressing all living beings in the world, whether strong or weak"⁶ One who practises karuna, refrains from causing suffering to others. In his discussion on impurity, which compared stench, Buddha stresses the point that the "immoral, cruel, harsh and disrespectful"⁷ are none other than "persons, who in this world uncontrolled towards living beings, who are bent on injuring others having taken their belongings."⁸ Not only these, but those who indulge in being "rude, arrogant, backbiting, treacherous, unkind, excessively egoistic and miserly,"⁹ and those possessing such states of minds like "anger, pride, obstinacy, antagonism, deceit, envy, boasting, excessive egoism and association with the immoral"¹⁰ which are states devoid of karuna, contribute largely to the moral degeneration in an environment.

The cultivation of compassion paves the way for abhaya or freedom from fear. Abhaya sustains such virtues as friendship, unity, affection, cosmic love and brotherhood for being a state devoid of infliction to harm anybody and develops peace and harmony in any environment. Essentially, ethical and moral Buddhism thus becomes environmental in essence and recognizes abhaya as associating

³Op.Cit., p.16.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Vasala Sutta,117, Op.Cit.,p.13.

⁶Ibid.394, Op.Cit.p.44.

⁷Amagandha Sutta247, Op.Cit.p.27.

⁸Ibid.,247, Op.Cit.,p.27.

⁹Ibid.245 in Op.Cit., 27.

¹⁰Ibid., 288 in Op.Cit. 33.

karuna. Abhaya, associating karuna, was of cardinal importance in the abstract Golden Age, noted by Buddha in the Brahma Sutta. Speaking on the Brahmins of the Golden Age, Buddha notes that they "neither injured nor conquered"¹¹ and practised non-violence. But, once shedding of blood took place, the joy and comforts they enjoyed came to an end.¹² A period similar to this Golden Age as mentioned in the Greek and Roman context by such personalities as Hesiod, Empedocles, Diodorus Siculus, Sextus Empiricus, Aratus, Ovid etc. It was an abstract age in which inhabitants lived a life of primal innocence and unalloyed happiness.

Centuries later, Empedocles provided an ardent picture of the life, that the inhabitants of the Golden Age lived and that was full of karuna.

Kupris represents peace, harmony, order, love and compassion, while the life of her subjects transcends the accepted norms of living. The age being devoid of Ares or war, pain and suffering, its inhabitants thrived and even conversed with animals. The two sins that would cause their downfall were breaking oaths, shedding blood and the consumption of animal flesh.¹³ The latter committed by a demon, which belongs to this age and which suffers bitterly. Apart from this belief in an environment friendly Golden Age, there is a reference to the services of Orpheus who is known to have advocated compassion to all living beings. The songs he composed were of the theme of non-violence which had the power to move even animals and inanimate objects. According to a Greek legend, Orpheus put an end to cannibalism among a primitive race in ancient Greece and encouraged them to adopt agriculture as an alternative means of living.¹⁴ There is also reference to Orpheus as one who put an end to bloodshed¹⁵ and the consumption of animal flesh.¹⁶ Due to his reputation as a great humanitarian, who turned people to a life of non-violence, Orpheus came to be recognized as a

¹¹Ibid., 293 in Op.Cit. 33.

¹²Ibid., 311 in Op.Cit. 34.

¹³The former is mentioned in Vasala Sutta, 122 in Saddhatissa, 14.

¹⁴Ars Poetica, 365-396, in Dorsch, 92.

¹⁵Aristophanes, The Frogs, 1030-1036 in Barret 194.

¹⁶Euripides, Hippolytus, 951-952 in Vellacot, 112.

cultural hero. These sources construct an attempt to turn the Greeks into better people at the cost of sparing the lives of animals. It was not karund in the Buddhist sense which made Orpheus advocate non-violence as a social necessity. Closely in keeping with the idea of non-violence, in the Greek religio-philosophic tradition, is the concept of defilement that the Orphics and Pythagoreans imposed a ban on wool, which was actually a ban on defilement, recorded by Herodotus, who saw a similar practice among the Egyptians.

The following conclusions can conveniently arrived by observing the above lines:

1. Contact with animal skin pollutes the holy precinct.
2. Gathering of animal skin perhaps not necessarily causes death to an animal, but surely some form of discomfort.
3. An animal must have suffered in the process. Suffering of any kind is prohibited on ethical grounds as in connection with pain death.
4. Suffering and pollution had to be avoided at all costs, for they defile the holiness of the temple premises.
5. The taboo on wool is clearly one on defilement for it includes a foreign body.

Any possibility of connecting the ban with transmigration of souls demolished, as the Egyptians did not believe in that concept, although Herodotus records it. Defilement is the basis, on which Pythagoras advised his disciples to avoid associating with hunters and butchers, for they handle dead bodies and blood, and are thus defilers.¹⁷ Any association with defilement contaminates the ascetic life of his disciples. Defilement was again the reason for the exclusion of murderers and defilers from the mysteries including the Eleusinian. The impurity

¹⁷Porphyry, *Vitae Pythagorae*, 7, in Kirk and Raven,

of some fish, and animals was also the reason for the Pythagorean ban on their flesh.¹⁸ These sources indicate that defilement was a vital factor that contributed to the avoidance of the consumption of animal flesh in ancient Greece. It also indicates that some attempts were also made to let the animals live their own life. After all, there were some strict mythical Greek vegetarians like the Abioi, the Thulians, and the Hyperboreans, whose existence tallies more or less with that of the inhabitants of the Golden Age. However, there is no reference to the fact that karuna was ever in fact the ban on animal flesh.

Compassion on living beings is an outstanding feature in Buddhism, and it forms a vital part in the five abstinences ordained for the householders known as the pañcasila. However, Buddha does not impose any strict rule on vegetarianism. If a man lives on a vegetable diet, but still is in possession of ill-will to his fellow beings, that would not be proper, but compassion develops humane feelings among fellow beings, and contributes to the idea that Buddhism links those who inhabit the same environment. It also incorporates the modern concept of the universe as a global village for its emphasis on such genuinely Buddhist features like unity and equality.

The Theory of Rebirth

The advocacy of non-violence based on kinship among living beings was an outstanding feature that incorporated rebirth or transmigration of souls in the religio-philosophic tradition in ancient Greece. The belief that the soul could be transmigrated into any body, is a fundamental doctrine entertained by Greek ascetic philosophers from the 5th century onwards. Buddha did not speak of a permanent soul, but the Greeks believed in the immortality of the soul, and the ban on violence, which is generally connected with defilement and transmigration of souls, observed in order to purify the soul and not contaminate it with any association with animal flesh. Buddha accepted the theory of rebirth. He spoke of the deliverance from the cycle of rebirth or the samsaric cycle, which closely associates jati or birth and bhava or existence. This idea is quite different from that

¹⁸Diogenes Laertius, 8.19, in Op.Cit.225.

of the Homeric, in which so much significance is laid on life, that it was largely a concentration on the body and its sensual pleasures. The Homeric view of death meant a dislocation of the soul from the body. Two notable features can be derived from this view. One is that death in the battlefield generated kudos or honour to the Homeric chieftain. He associates death throughout his life and expects death any moment, but will not hesitate to avoid it, if possible. If he dies, it will be the end of his psycho-physical process, but it will be the beginning of the vain existence of the soul in Hades. Apart from these two extremes, there was no judgement of the good or any consolation in the after life or even any reference to the soul and its purification. Liberation of the soul from the bondage of the corporeal body is a cardinal doctrine taught by the reincarnationists in Greece, covering the period from the 7th century BC to the 1st century BC, and it comes closer to the teachings of Buddha. This doctrine is manifested in the philosophical discussion in Plato's *Phaedo*. The moment it begins, is tense. Socrates, the major speaker, is cautiously awaiting death. It makes a perfect setting for the liberation of the philosopher's soul. The discussion proceeds with the implication that *jati* depends on *bhava*. The pre-existence of the soul is recognized and so is the cyclic nature of *samsara* or *bhavacakra*. *Bhavacakra* produces *jati* and *jaramarana* or decay and death. *Jaramarana* is the cause of *Soka* or grief, *vedana* or pain and *dukkhadomanassa* or misery and depression. *Bhava* depends on *karma* or actions. The fruits of *punya* or merits, and *papa* or demerits is experienced either in this *jāti* or in some other *jati* in *bhava*. Nagasena in *Milinda Panha* says that men are born according to their *karmas*,¹⁹ In keeping with the Buddhist view of *karma*, which prolongs or reduces *jāti* in *bhava*, mentioned in the *Phaedo*, that those who have deliberately preferred a life of irresponsible lawlessness and violence become wolves and hawks and kites.²⁰ Those who have cultivated gluttony or selfishness or drunkenness, instead of taking pains to avoid them, are likely to assume the form of donkeys and other perverse animals.²¹ Those who cultivate goodness and are constantly trying to liberate their soul from the fetters of the body will probably pass into some other

¹⁹Dasgupta,107.²⁰80B-81C in Tredennik,134.²¹*Ibid.*,134.

kind of social and disciplined creatures like bees, wasps and ants or even back in to the human race again.²² The soul of the philosopher in the Phaedo has been cultivating virtue and the philosopher has been expecting death all throughout his life, that it is a pleasure for him to die. He is devoid of any asava or desire that prolongs life like kāmāsava, for he has no desire for food, drink, sexual pleasures, smart clothes, shoes, ornaments,²³ loves, desires, fears, fancies, nonsense, revolution and battles.²⁴ The cessation of bhavasava or the desire to reborn corresponds with the philosopher's withdrawal from life, since philosophers make dying their profession, and that to them of all men, death is the least alarming."²⁵ The culmination of the life of the lover is wisdom or the philosopher in the Phaedo is then death, but for the Buddhists, it is none other than nirvana. Nirvana is a state devoid of birth. This idea is closely akin to the Orphic belief of the end of the cycle of rebirth, and the becoming one with the divine Aither and the end of the thirty thousand year period of the demon mentioned in Empedocles, who committed the sin of bloodshed and the consumption of animal flesh.²⁶ The fear of causing injury to one's own parents and kins is the basis of the idea of the kinship of all beings that observed so earnestly by the Greek reincarnationists. Empedocles writes in fear that one could be causing cannibalism every time he slaughters an animal for food.

Buddhism certainly maintained at least a slight attempt to develop some concern for the lives of, perhaps, not animals, but other fellow. beings based on man, could be harming another man in the process of causing injury to an animal or in short, basing on the belief of the transmigration of souls.

Good Conduct

There was a tendency in the later Hellenistic schools of philosophy in ancient Greece to award a significant position to the conduct of the wise man or the

²²Ibid.,134.

²³Phaedo, 62E-64A in Tredennik, 105.

²⁴Ibid., 65C-66E in Op.Cit. 111

²⁵Ibid., 67A-68B in Op.Cit. 113

²⁶Fr.115 in Kirk and Raven, 351.

philosopher in relation to his environment. It was not particularly one in keeping with Buddhist rules on good conduct, but still it was a particular way of living without inflicting harm and fear to other fellow beings and without harmed by any other. There were instances when the wise man was permitted to indulge in evil, if he has a valid reason for it and if the occasion required it. The same tendency is visible in Buddha's indifference to Devadatta's request for a vegetarian diet to be partaken by the Buddhist monks. As mentioned earlier in this study, it is not necessary to refrain from consuming a meat diet if the occasion requires it. But, Buddha stressed that life ought to be preserved to the utmost, and thus, awarding recognition to equality and humanity in an environment.

The doctrines of the sceptical schools of philosophy in Greece, including the Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics, Cyreniacs, and Cynics, throw much light on indifference to convention and inaccessibility to truth. An inquiry into the right conduct made on the grounds of imperturbability or the happiness aimed at by the philosopher and equipoise or the freedom from disturbance. As long as the philosopher is withdrawn from society and social conventions, he will achieve security, isolation and inner bliss. The conduct of the philosopher was noted in relation to the universe at large which was one huge community of humankind where each individual inherited a spark of the divine. This idea stems from the primitive Greek belief that the human race inherits divine elements for they were believed to have risen from the soot of the Titans who devoured the infant Dionysus. It was this belief that became widespread in the mystical tradition of Greece, and incorporated the notion that by being initiated to mystery cults the initiated could cultivate the divine and discard the Titanic. The boon they enjoyed was both of this world and otherworldly. In the phase of philosophy, Aristotle maintained that man's happiness consisted in living well and it includes living a virtuous life.²⁷ It was not what one does that matters, but his intention of doing it.²⁸ For the Cynics, conduct depended on living according to virtue.²⁹ For the

²⁷Metaphysics, A11072b 26 27 in Rist,2.

²⁸Aristotle, Nichomachacan Ethics, 1105 A 30 in Op.Cit. 2.

Cyreniacs, the goal of life was sensual pleasures, for they were extreme hedonists and thus in some ways like the Carvaka-s, Sahajla-s and the Kapalika-s. According to the Stoics, happiness is the end of life. According to the Stoic Chrysippus, happiness depended on living in accordance with nature³⁰; and for Zeno, it was living in accordance with virtue.³¹ Both Chrysippus and Zeno agree on happiness based on³² virtue, and virtue is a unique characteristic that rises out of reason. "The morally good life," for the Stoics, "meant to be of some service to the community." The philosopher's detachment from social conventions does not necessarily mean that he is withdrawn from duties and responsibilities. By the treatment of all men as brothers and thus constructing a common bondage and brotherhood, race of human beings, the Stoics were attempting to broaden the philosophical speculations, which was hitherto confined to the search for the underlying substance of the universe. The carrier of the wise man consisted of examining the position of man in relation to the universe. The Stoics held the view that there was a harmonious plan or logos to which all men belonged. Men are directed by this logos to be of some service to the universe and they would not hesitate even to die for their friends. Such an act could be pardoned on account of its concern³³ and marriage was a consent for intercourse.³⁴ Based on the same outlines of human existence, the Cynics maintained that men and women should be hold in common, where relationships are concerned.³⁵ Adhering to the idea that humankind were citizens of the universe, the Stoics were aiming at a communism that was hitherto unknown in Greek thought, but they did not respect animal life, and they together with several other Hellenistic philosophers were vehemently against the advocacy of non-violence to animals on the basis that animals could not award justice. However, vegetarianism was favoured by several Sceptics on the grounds of

²⁹Stoicorum Veterum Fragmentum, 1179 in Op.Cit. 2.

³⁰Diogenes Laertius, 7.87, Clement of Alexandria, trometeis, 2.21; 29, SVF 1.180 in Op.Cit. 2.

³¹SVF 1202 in Op.Cit. 3.

³²Cicero, De Finibus, 4.56 in Op.Cit.82 242 Metaphysics, A11072b 26 27 in Rist, 2.

³³SVF. iii., 421 in Op.Cit.45.

³⁴Diogenes Laertius, 6.72 in Op.Cit.60.

³⁵Philodemus, 9 in Op.Cit.66.

ascetic purification and hygienic value. Coming back to Buddhism, it recorded that Buddha acknowledged concern for others living in an environment as follows:

"Let none deceive another, not despise any person whatsoever in any place. Let him not wish any harm to another out of anger or ill will."³⁶

Man, in relation to the universe was a theme in Epicurean teaching as well. Seclusion was recommended as the best form of security for the wise man, but in social life, security from fellow men was much sought after. An undisturbed life much sought after.³⁷ An undisturbed life much sought after.³⁸ This included the freedom from the fear of the underworld, and the as well as the freedom from trouble. The Epicureans believed that the best kind of happiness meant tranquility of mind and body³⁹ Passion threatens this tranquility of the wise man, for it causes unnecessary trouble,⁴⁰ but friendship contributes to this. By friendship, Epicurus means genuine friendship between members of a community which transcends the normal. It ought to develop to the extent that the wise man tempted to love his friends. A truly wise man will never abandon his friends⁴¹ and he will even consider dying for the sake of his friend.⁴² Seclusion from social life and the tranquility of the soul and body are particular components in Epicurean ethics. "Although the wise man," according to Epicurus, "avoids social life he had a thriving private life, in which friendship played a major role." He enjoyed the company of friends and such elements which are associated to friendship as trust, care, confidence and love. Friendship was awarded prominence in Epicurean teaching as a measure that bound people together and helped maintain a better life in the environment. Buddhism too has a lot in store with regard to friendship. There are four noble friends and four evil friends noted in the Singalovada Sutta and it is mentioned in the Khaggavisana Sutta that,

³⁶Metta Sutta, 148, in Saddhatissa, 16.

³⁷Basic Doctrines, 14 in Op. Cit.123.

³⁸Diogenes Laertius 10.120 in Rist, 128.

³⁹Ibid. 10.118, Op.Cit.128.

⁴⁰Epicurus, Vatican Sayings, 52 in Op.Cit.129.

⁴¹Diogenes Laertius, 10.120 in Op.Cit.123.

⁴²Op.Cit.133

"If one finds a wise friend, a companion living according to good virtues, prudent and having conquered all dangers then live with him

The controversy regarding the treatment of animals in an environment in Greece the 4th century BC and afterwards, paved the way for the argument much alive for several centuries until Arthur Schopenhauer in the 19th century argued that animals deserve 'just' treatment from human beings, on the basis that there should not be discrimination in favour of human beings. This followed a host of arguments, which were both for and against the humane treatment of animals in a community. The main gist of the argument for the humane treatment for animals rested on the view that all species in an environment deserve concern and freedom from pain in order to exist in the biosphere⁴³ The biotic diversity contributes much to the principle that some species ought to protect against human cruelty, for example, dolphins or even a rare species of flower for that matter. This trend, which originated in Greece as far back as the 7th century BC, was subject to controversy, due to the fact that not all modern individuals agree with the just and humane treatment of animals and their reasons range from the production of food, perfumes and chemicals to the exploitation of animal life for scientific research. Buddhism, on the other hand, constructs a broader realm when it prescribes compassion for all, for it is a compassion, which transcends the modern diverse concepts of the treatment of animals. When Buddha ordained panathipatho or avoidance from killing, it included both human and animal, a compassion that includes the welfare of all species in a bio-diverse environment. Hence, Buddhism stands out from all existing religions, in both modern and ancient times, for its permanence of values and the universal justice it offers to all living creatures. It fulfils the spiritual and social necessities in any environment. Thus, Buddhism is undoubtedly an environmental religion in its own right.

The present paper consists of two sections. The first is devoted to the consideration of Buddhist concepts re-interpreted from ecological point of view and attempts to correlate them having certain rationale. In the second section, we

⁴³Ibid.

hope to hint at the possibility of the resolution and/or dissolution of the present ecological problems.

Section I

Buddhist Concepts: Ecological Interpretation:

As is well known, the teachings of the Buddha concentrate attention on the problem of Dukha.⁴⁴ He is the first one to consider human nature characteristically connected to Dukha, No one can be free from pain and suffering, annoying states of affairs, difficulties, and miseries of life. The nature and intensity may vary, or even the juncture at which one faces problems may change. However, the possibility of the emergence of Dukha is certainly there and permanently remains to be open. Whether we understand it collectively or individually-nation, caste, creed, religion, socio-economic strata, culture, race, a group of nation, etc., problems are likely to crop up at any time. If they are not at the present emerged and aggravated, sooner or later they can come up.

The sort of problems, which are affecting human life in its various aspects, physical, mental, moral, intellectual, spiritual, etc., and progressively resulting into miseries, are inter connected and, perhaps, are manmade⁴⁵ It is futile attempt to understand them in piece-meal, short-term and isolated manner. Some of them have already become global and are threatening to the extinction of living world in general and human life itself specifically. They are not nature-made⁴⁶ and, hence, absolutely beyond our control like earthquakes, volcanic-eruptions, floods, cyclones, hurricanes, thunderstorms, etc. It is not by arguing that under-developed

⁴⁴For Buddha and any Buddisht, 'Sarvan Dukham' is the basic doctrine. Here 'Sarvan' does not restrictively mean only human beings, but all living beings that are susceptible to pain and suffering.

⁴⁵It is not that all problems are controlled and governed by human beings, but it means that human beings have not developed a perspective to look at them as a part of life. To live with it or look at them as a chance to grow in various ways is yet not developed. And, so long as such problems are there, there is a point of hope to live truly as a human being.

⁴⁶One can understand and classify problems in terms of internal (Antarika/ Adhyatmika) and external (Bahya), and further, latter as Adhibhautika (physical and beyond control) and Adidaivika (unseen and beyond control). The first two, if not controlled by man at least we can be reduced, we have to accept the last one as they are.

countries are alone responsible for them or developed countries are only the culprits of them, the problem is going to be solved. Even though ecological problems are manmade, they were not created by certain specific individual, group, race, country, religion, culture, etc., to whom we can blame, but all of us together are responsible for our own miseries and it is universal (Sarvam Dukham). This, however, does not mean that whatever problems, annoying states of affairs, etc., we encounter in our life, are essentially manmade, and hence, we

In the present context, a question arises: Why are we facing environmental problems today, our relation with others including nature, or problems arising out of man-to-man relation and they are not confronted earlier? This compels us to think about the reasons behind the emergence of them (Dukha Samudaya). Basically, we have to think of two lines at least, viz, one, our conceptions, and other, our relations.

Our conceptions regarding ourselves, others both living as well as non-living, and the entire universe (not only our world restricted to the earth), understood in terms of egocentric predicament (Sathiyadrs) This wrong understanding is due to the incorrect orientation, meaning of life and our goals and aspirations. Our hardened and inflated ego or self brings in a sense of (me) arrogance and power-(money, muscle or missile) and mine (physical, mental, moral, intellectual or spiritual strength). It blooms our greed and desires (Trṣṇa)-selfishness, essentially in terms of possession. Further, it is essentially being connected to false sense of progress and prestige, conceived as goals and aspirations of our life, which results into discrimination of various sorts, underestimation of others and exploitation rationalised in clever ways. If our conception of ourselves is incorrect, no wonder, it also affects our conception of others-living organisms and the non-living world-and the entire universe; but if our conception is wrong, it also is incorrectly correlated to another aspect of our existence and life, viz, our relation to ourselves, others, and the world at large. It distorts our relation to ourselves in a sense that we not only exploit others, but also excessively squeeze even ourselves to achieve power and progress wrongly. This not only leads to subjugation of nature or other living species, but also we try to

subjugate human beings, including our ownself. The extension and expansion of it becomes limitless even beyond space and time. One start talking in terms of rights, instead of duties and responsibilities even to our progenies, leave apart others understood in terms of the entire living world or further extended to non-living world too. This is because of lack of proper orientation and perspective, concerning human life.

However, this does not mean that we are advocating improper protection of life of wild, man-killing animals, event though it is a threat to our own existence. Nor is it advocating a view that proliferation and preservation of nature or animals at the cost of human life. Cosmo-centricism and survival orientation in its extreme form, too, is wrong. It is another extreme against subjugation. Buddhism will attempt to avoid both the extremes and highlights the importance of the middle path (Madhyama Pratipada) insisting on satisfaction orientation.

It is submission to nature and acknowledgement of power of nature with fear helplessly, that is not advocated by Buddhism and submission to the laws of nature (Svabhavavada or Yadrechavada) mechanically, is criticised by Buddhism.⁴⁷ However, too excessive and exclusive self-love, and subjugation of nature and man also are denied by Buddhism. Both these orientations and conceptions are to be avoided by following the survival orientation, it seems, is a view upheld by Buddhists. Live and let others live,' is the implied meaning of it. We are coexisting with others or dependent on others living and non living world and they are dependent on us. However, this does not mean that we are masters or else slaves. We can certainly live with others and progress, but not licentiously free to behave according to our own self-interests only. If this happens, co operation and equality to develop is lost and this creates distress, unhappiness and miseries.

After analysing the ecological problems and the reasons behind their emergence by using some of the prominent Buddhist concepts, it is also essential to hint at some possible guidelines to conclusively resolve them or at least minimise their intensity, because mere theoretical discussions are futile to bring in

⁴⁷Majjhima-Nikaya-II-176, Samyutta-Nikaya-1-37, II-378, III-255, Brahmajala-sutta Digha Nikaya 1-3, 40.

change which we often intend to do. It is not merely theoretical understanding or knowledge for knowledge's sake, going to help. Wisdom' lies in practical utilisation and application of it in the day-to-day life (Prajña).⁴⁸ To discuss some such insights given by the Buddhists that are practically useful, we turn to the next section.

Unless we co-operate, understand our interdependency appropriately and transform ourselves, there is no possibility to solve our present problems. Hence, it is a need of the day to develop friendship non-discriminately. Then man and nature can contribute, and our sensibility and sensitivity cannot be Jeopardised, as that is detrimental to meaningful understanding of life. Our relationship to others, especially to nature, should avoid two extremes-passive and helpless submission to nature, enmity and conquest over it. For, satisfaction may not be achieved by using others as an instrument. There should not be encouragement to opportunism and success.

Our conceptions and co-relationships must be insightful (Prajña) which will have scope for independence and mutual co operation, understood in a holistic manner, non-discriminatively. We are grateful and obliged to our rich traditions of saints, seers, thinkers and reformers, who not only attempted to highlight the importance of self-transformation (Sila), as a clue to bring in requisite change, but also exemplified such thoughts through their lives.

It is our duty and responsibility to ensure that our future generation realises this importance of living a meaningful life in characteristically human way, for which we have to be selfless. So too, we should be considerate and helpful to others in solving their problems. It is compassion (Karuna) towards naive, helpless and unfortunate (those who are suffering due to natural calamities), that is taught by the Buddha. However, we have to be indifferent (Upekṣa) all those that are detrimental to-in short or long run our satisfaction and contentment. Further, it must be clear that nothing is permanent (Anityata), so too, ecological problems faced today are not permanent, but without our attempts, they are not going to be

⁴⁸Digha Nikaya-III-126, Anguttara-Nikaya-III-153,155, Patisambhida magga-100,133,401-20.

solved automatically too. This, on the one hand, gives us hope and, on the other, emphasises freedom of active participation without succumbing to fatalism.

It is this humanitarian concern of Buddhism together with moral reasonableness insisted upon Buddhism, which will open the possibilities of making human life meaningful in more than one way. Co-operation, contentment and complementarity (harmony) are the backbones of such holistic-humanism taught by the Buddha.⁴⁹ Following such a path, perhaps, it is hoped that we may also control, if not totally dissolve, our present ecological problems. This will also be indicative of our being truly Indian and Buddhist in particular. It is this significance and importance of the teachings of the Buddha, which have been interpreted humbly in a new way in the present context. If one finds any relevance of it, let me confess with humility, the credit is not mine, but that of the Buddha, who has provided this rich and insightful way of thinking and art of living, and faults and lacunas are solely mine.

⁴⁹Majjhima-Nikaya-1-104, III-168,250, Suttanipata-364, Digha Nikaya-II

References

- Tredennik. H., The Phaedo in the Last Days of Socrates, Clays Ltd. Great Britain. 1954.
- Barrett. D., The Frogs, Cox and Wyman Ltd. Reading, Great Britain.1980.
- Vellacott, P., Hippolytus, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Great Britain.1977.
- Selincourt A., The Histories, Richard Clay Ltd. Bungay, Suffolk, U.K.1972.
- Wender, D., The Works and Days, Bungay Suffolk, U.K.1986.
- Saunders, T., The Laws, Hazell Watson Viney, Ltd., Aylesbury, Bucks, Great Britain, 1970.
- Kirk. G.S. and Raven, J.E., The Pre-Socratic Philosophers, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Great Britain, 1975.
- Rist, J.M., Epicurus, An Introduction, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Great Britain, 1977.
- Rist, J.M., Stoic Philosophy, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Great Britain, 1977.
- Saddhatissa, The Sutta Nipāta, Curzon Press, Great Britain, 1985.
- Singh, S.K., History and Philosophy of Buddhism, Associated Book Agency, Patna, India, 1982.
- Bodhi, B., The Great Discourse on Causation, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka, 1984.
- Dorsch, T.S, On the Art of Poetry, Penguin Classics, Cox and Wyman Ltd, Reading, Great Britain, 1965.
- Regan, T., The Case for Animal Rights, Berkley, University of California Press, 1983.
- Rawls, J., A Theory of Justice, Harvard University Press, Massachussets, U.S.A, 1971.
- Dombrowski. D., The Philosophy of Vegetarianism, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, U.S.A, 1984.
- Newmyer, S., Plutarch on Moral Grounds for Vegetarianism, Classical Outlook, Winter vol. 72, no.2, University of Pennsylvania Press, U.S.A, 1996.
- Dasgupta, S., A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol.1, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, New Delhi, India.1975.