

BUDDHISM AND NATURAL WORLD**Ven. Dr. Thich Nhat Tu**

(Second Secretary Vietnam Buddhist University)

PREAMBLE

This paper is devoted to analyze the Buddhist ethical treatment to natural world including animal kingdom and environment, in the light of five aspects of natural law (*paṭṭhāna-niyāma-dhammā*),¹ namely, (1) physical inorganic laws (*utu-niyāma*), (2) physical organic or biological laws (*bhūta-niyāma*), (3) psychic law (*cittā-niyāma*), (4) moral law (*kamma-niyāma*), (5) law of conditionality and causality (*dhamma-niyāma*). These laws are conditionally arising and have strong effect on human life, both physically and ethically. According to Buddhism, humans as part of community of sentient beings and the natural world, can not live without natural world. The natural world therefore plays an important role in human life. It along with human intention or free will (*cetanā*) affects and molds the characters and behaviour of individuals, groups and society at large.² Buddhism considers unfavourable environment an obstacle (*sāmyojana*), not only to physical and natural progress of the individual, but also for his spiritual and social well-being and happiness. Living in a suitable environment (*paṭṭhāna-padesavāsa*) on the other hand is one of the auspicious things (*maṅgala*)³ in development of multi-

¹ DA. II. 432; DhsA. 272.² A. I. 126.³ It is one of thirty-eight highest blessings described in Sn. 259-268; Kh. V. 3.

progress of the individuals. Suitable environment from the Buddhist point of view is place where Buddhism is well taught and practiced, meritorious activities are encouraged and where educational facilities, ethical guidance as well as means of livelihood are available. Thanks to such environment, one knows what is good and bad, what should be done and abandoned, what duties and obligations should be performed to one another.

BUDDHA'S LIFE AND NATURE

It is interesting to know that the life of the Buddha⁴ related to nature. He was born under Asoka tree in the Lumbini garden⁵ in Northern India.⁶ At the age of twenty-nine, he renounced the luxurious life as a prince,⁷ struggling spiritually six years in the forest,⁸ amidst the valley of the Ganges. After attaining the same fruitions as his teachers, Āṣṣā Kāśyapa and Uddaka Rāmaputta and wandering around Magadha, he arrived at a village called Uruvelā.⁹ There he found a pleasant forest grove (*vanasaṅgha*) with a beautiful river, the Nerāṣṣjarā,¹⁰ of clear water flowing by. At the age of thirty-five, after forty-nine days of spiritual struggle, he got enlightenment (*sambodhi*) under the Bodhi-tree,¹¹ on the bank of the river Nerāṣṣjarā, which he considered as an ideal place for a person desirous

⁴ Buddhist literature also states that all the Buddhas who preceded and succeed Gautama the Buddha have attained and will attain perfect enlightenment under different trees in the open air.⁵ Sn. p. 73; J. I. 56; D. II. 51f.⁶ Now is Nepal.⁷ D. II. 151.⁸ M. I. 77ff, 163ff, 240; Sn. p. 72.⁹ Sn. pp. 74ff; M. I. 77ff, 163ff, 242ff.¹⁰ M. I. 166ff, 246ff; Sn. pp. 76f. It is near Gayā in modern Bihar.¹¹ It is in fact a pipal tree (P. *pippala*) or *ficus religiosa*.

of spiritual striving (*padh Onthika*).¹² After his enlightenment, it is reported that the Buddha stood gazing at the tree with unmoving eyes as a symbol of gratitude to it for its giving him shade during his 49-day spiritual struggle.¹³ It is believed that he sat under the tree for 7 weeks, for enjoying the peace of nirvāṇa and thinking of ways to spread his message of compassion, wisdom and freedom.¹⁴ He woke up early sitting in solitude till the time arrived for alms. After meal, he used to preach dhamma and meditation to his order. In the evening, he continued to attend to monks seeking his instruction. He spent time with devas for the middle watch. The third watch, he spent in meditation, a short sleep, and contemplating those who are suitable for his teachings, for the next day schedule.¹⁵ He loved quiet places for meditation.¹⁶ He was residing in the peak of Vulture Mountain. He spent a good part of his life in Jeta's forest grove (*Jetavan Dr Oma*). His *parinirvāṇa* occurred at Uruvelā, a beautiful and pleasant forest.¹⁷ Spending one's life in close association with nature is part of the Buddha's ethical philosophy.

The Buddha compared himself as a lotus, the best plant, which can survive well in the muddy pond. The leaf, the body and the flower of the lotus are able to remain unsoiled by the water, though it is in the water, grows in the water. In the same vein, the Buddha was born in the

¹² *M. I.* 166ff, 246ff; *Sn.* pp. 76f.

¹³ *Mhv.* p. 162.

¹⁴ In Theravāda tradition, the Buddha does not preach till requested by Mahā Brahmā. This is explained by Buddhaghosa as an act to make the world pay attention to the Buddha and his teachings. See *DA. II.* 467.

¹⁵ *DA. II.* 470.

¹⁶ *D. I.* 179. Cf. *D. II.* 70; *A. IV.* 438ff.

¹⁷ *D. II.* 137ff.

muddy water of the world (*loke j Oto*), grown up in the muddy water of the world (*loke Vhito*) yet remaining unsoiled by the world (*lokena anupalitto*).¹⁸ It should be noted here that a Buddha will appear in this world when the moral principle, the righteous path, the noble middle path has stopped rolling, or being stuck in the muddy pond of the world. His appearance is therefore for the welfare of the multitudes, for the happiness of the multitudes, out of sympathy for the world; for the benefit, welfare and happiness of gods and humans.

ENLIGHTENED BUDDHISTS' LIFE AND NATURE

Unlike the Christian churches, all Buddhist temples, monasteries are always built on hilltops, mountain-peak, along the river-banks, or in the natural forest (*j Otavana*), where the fresh air, water and nature are available for the promotion of spiritual and aesthetic experience. In Zen tradition, monasteries and meditation huts are built in the mountain, forest and beautiful landscape for living harmoniously with the nature. Here human beings and nature are inseparable. The natural forest (*j Otavana*) plays an important role for spiritual experience and its attainment, in Buddhism. Retirement into the forest may help one in attainment of therapeutic, aesthetic and spiritual values as well.¹⁹

Sōriputta speaks of his appreciation of the delightful forests as well as of other enlightened persons, while ordinary people find no delight at all. He also affirms that forests are suitable to those whose aims are not seeking after sensual pleasures.²⁰ In other words, the enlightened

¹⁸ *A. II.* 38-9.

¹⁹ See, *Thag* and *Th *g*.

²⁰ *Thag.* 992.

one's aesthetic enjoyment is seen in non-sensual and non-attached manners. He also praises those who meditate near the foot of a tree, unmoving and well-founded like a rocky mountain, for the sake of annihilation of all mental cankers.²¹ Mahā-Moggallāna speaks of his living in the forest, meditating deeply the foulness of the body, tearing apart the army of death as an elephant knocks down a reed-hut.²² He confirms that only those who are trained, calm and enlightened with secluded lodging are the real sages and heirs of the Buddhas.²³

Mahā-Kassapa says that he delights blue sky and lovely rocks "cool with water, having pure streams, covered with Indagopaka insects."²⁴ Beautiful forest "covered with flax flower as the sky is covered with clouds, haunted by monkeys and deer, and full of flocks of various birds"²⁵ is seen as necessary and important place for him desiring meditation, application of mind, and of the goal.²⁶ Here amidst the lovely nature, he is reported to have deepened his meditation, eliminated fear and dread, quenched among those who burn, done his task without *Osava* and grasping.²⁷

Aṅgulimāla speaks of his standing with agitated mind in the forest and sometimes in the mountain or caves²⁸ to guard his sense-doors, getting rid of craving and other roots of evil, without grasping.²⁹ Anuruddha tells us that after

²¹ *Thag.* 998, 1000.

²² *Thag.* 1146-50.

²³ *Thag.* 1168-9.

²⁴ *Thag.* 1062-3.

²⁵ *Thag.* 1068-70.

²⁶ *Thag.* 1066-8.

²⁷ *Thag.* 1059-61.

²⁸ *Thag.* 887.

²⁹ *Thag.* 890.

being "reborn" in the Buddha's teachings,³⁰ he got rid of all *Osava* under a tree in the bamboo grove.³¹ For Rāmaṇeyyaka, who delights solitude, amidst the sound of chirping and the cries of the birds, his mind does not waver.³² Likewise, Vimāla says his thoughts are quite and his mind is concentrated when the earth is sprinkled, the wind blows, and the sky is lightened.³³ Bhāta is also without fear of natural phenomena, meditating in a mountain cave at night, while outside the rain falls, thunder rumbles mixed with animal roars.³⁴

Natural scenes with its beauty and forest sentiment are seen as producing excellence for the forest meditators. The trees on the mountain-tops have shot up, well watered by the fresh rain, it is desirable for Usabha in solitude.³⁵ Vanavaccha delights in the forest with clear water and wide crags, haunted by monkey eyes and deer and covered with oozing moss.³⁶ Blue sky and rain also delight meditators.³⁷ The crested peacock's call becomes awakening bell for sleeper to meditation.³⁸ Lakuṇṇaka delight in the forest, enjoying the Buddha's teaching and meditation, having plucked out craving root.³⁹ In a more tranquil vein, Ekaviḥāriya speaks of forest as a pleasant dwelling and giving joy to enlightened ones, as praised by

³⁰ *Thag.* 911.

³¹ *Thag.* 919.

³² *Thag.* 49.

³³ *Thag.* 50.

³⁴ *Thag.* 522-4.

³⁵ *Thag.* 110.

³⁶ *Thag.* 113.

³⁷ *Thag.* 1, 51-3, 325-9.

³⁸ *Thag.* 22.

³⁹ *Thag.* 466-7.

the Buddha.⁴⁰

Seeing the impermanent nature of all things including the three planes of existence, T[Ⓢ]apu[Ⓢ]na prefers living in the mountain cave or crest.⁴¹ For him, the cry of the peacock in the mountain cavern and the crested bird in the wood, wake him up giving thought to the attainment of the deathlessness.⁴² While living in the forest which resounds with the cries of peacocks and herons, revered by leopards and tigers, he does not fail giving up longing for the body, and develops the meditation, faculties, powers, the constituents of enlightenment and attain the three knowledges taught by the Buddha.⁴³ He assures us that non-attached delights naturally arise in those who see benefits in dwelling in the beautiful forest frequented by wild boards and antelopes, or in grove sprinkled with fresh water, full of birds with beautiful blue necks, crests, tail feathers and with beautiful wings of variegated feathers, greeting the beautiful-sounding thunder.⁴⁴

In both the *Therag[Ⓢ]th[Ⓢ]* and *Ther[Ⓢ]g[Ⓢ]th[Ⓢ]*, the process of meditative cultivation has been described in beautiful similes. The goal seeker should train himself in calmness, quietness, speaking in moderation, and pluck off evil tendencies and motivations as the wind shakes off the leaves of a tree.⁴⁵ It is suggested that the spiritual cultivator should keep the wheel rolling, having great knowledge, and concentrated being like earth, fire and water, detached.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ *Thag.* 538-9.

⁴¹ *Thag.* 1133, 1135.

⁴² *Thag.* 1103.

⁴³ *Thag.* 1113-4.

⁴⁴ *Thag.* 1135-7.

⁴⁵ *Thag.* 1006-7, 1.

⁴⁶ *Thag.* 1014.

Thus mountain and forest environment is seen as an important factor for cultivation and development of ethical and spiritual life of individual. Dwelling in the forest or mountain would help one get rid of mental defilements, such as greed, hatred and delusion, and at the same time, develop good qualities, such as fearlessness, energy, and non-attached, aesthetic enjoyment, attaining *nibb[Ⓢ]ana* in this very life.

BUDDHIST ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

Before and during the Buddha's day, mass killing of animals for religious sacrifice was seen as common practice of Brahmanism. The Buddha strongly disapproved of this practice, for two basic reasons. The first is that it involves cruelty and violence against animals, and the second being that it brings the opposite result as expected by the brahmins.⁴⁷ In the *K[Ⓢ]adanta Sutta*,⁴⁸ two opposite kinds of sacrifice are introduced, namely, Brahmanical and Buddhist. The former is animal sacrifice, in which seven hundred bullocks, bulls, heifers, he-goats and rams each were be killed for offering to gods,⁴⁹ whereas, the in latter, no animals were slain, no trees were cut down for sacrificial post, no grasses were mown, workmen were not forced to do their service in fear and tears, and only ghee, oil, butter, curd, honey and molasses were offered.⁵⁰ Before conducting the "pure vegetarian" sacrifice, the conductor should not

⁴⁷ A. II. 42: *GS.* II. 50: "The sacrifice of horse and human life / the throwing of the peg, the drinking rite / The horse unbarred, with all their cruelty / Have little fruit. Where goats and sheep and kine / Of divers sorts are sacrificed, go not / Those sages great who've travelled the right way." Cf. A. IV. 151; *Iti.* 21; *Sn.* p. 50.

⁴⁸ *D.* I. 127-49.

⁴⁹ *D.* I. 127.

⁵⁰ *D.* I. 142.

entertain regrets.⁵¹ He should observe threefold sacrifice with its sixteen attributes: giving gifts to virtuous ascetics, providing shelter for the *saṅgha*, taking refuge in the Triple Gem, observing the five ethical precepts, believing the qualities of the Buddha, the *Dhamma*, the *Saṅgha*, the virtues, self-confidence, guarding the sense doors, being content, living in solitude, elimination of five hindrances, and abiding in four *jhāna*. Such a sacrifice is less difficult, simpler, more fruitful and profitable than all the others.⁵² In other words, leading a life of moral and spiritual advancement is a higher kind of sacrifice, bringing good health, prosperity, security, and happiness for a long time,⁵³ which everyone even the poorest can conduct, anywhere and anytime.

Although raw meat (*ḍmaka-maṅsa*) is not allowed, an early Buddhist monk can accept meat provided that it was pure in three respects that he has not seen (*diṅṅha*), heard (*suta*) or suspected (*parisaṅkita*) that the animal has been killed in order to feed him. On receiving such meat, he is advised to abide in loving kindness (*mettā*).⁵⁴ The reason was that as living on alms-food, the mendicant-monks (*bhikkhu*) were supposed to accept whatever was offered to them by generous householders. In the Pali text, restrictions are, however, made with regard to certain kinds of meat like those of the tiger, panther, lion, bear, hyena, elephant or horse etc. It is reported in the *Vinaya* that the Buddha has refused Devadatta's suggestion to impose new training rule on vegetarianism in the *saṅgha*, and reaffirm that meat

⁵¹ *D. I.* 139.

⁵² *D. I.* 143-7.

⁵³ *D. I.* 134.

⁵⁴ *Vin. I.* 237-8.

eating is not optional but rather unavoidable.⁵⁵ It is further stated by the Buddha in the *Sutta Nipata* that meat eating is not seen as “tainted fare.” The real tainted fare are hurting living creatures, killing, cutting and binding, stealing, telling lies, cheating, deception, sexual misconduct, useless studies, keeping sense doors unrestrained, being greedy for flavours, stingy with property, associating with impurity, losing virtues, harming friends, becoming heartless; anger, arrogance obstinacy, hostility, delusion, envy, pride, conceit, cheating in business and association with the evil, etc.⁵⁶ However, the Buddha sees that eating pure vegetarian food such as plants, beans, green leaves and fruits are in accordance with the doctrine of the good.⁵⁷ What is important for path-seekers, in the Buddha's vision, is not to eat for taste, **nor kinds of food, nor preference**, but rather to take food, either pure veg or non-veg, just for maintaining physical fitness in pursuing the path. Another point worthy of noting is that the laity having known that Buddhist monks take food without preference, should offer more veg food, and to the best, only pure veg food. Offering food to monks in this way is seen as contributing to stopping of animal killing for food in the family and the market, on the one hand, and prevention of indirect *kamma* of killing, on the other.

Consuming wine and eating meat in quantity was seen as a common practice in pre-Buddhist India. Due to the influence of Buddhism, especially Mahāyāna tradition, this practice has been greatly lessened.⁵⁸ Nowadays the high

⁵⁵ *Vin. II.* 171-2.

⁵⁶ *Sn.* 242-8.

⁵⁷ *Sn.* 239.

⁵⁸ *CW. V.* 311; Joshi (1983): 213.

caste Hindu families are purely vegetarian. In the Mahāyāna texts, meat eating is strongly condemned by the Buddha, for it is seen as extinguishing the seed of loving kindness and compassion towards sentient beings. According to the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, during the long course of rebirths in the triple realm of existence, all beings have been mother, father, sister, brother, son, daughter, or close relative of one another, and among them, some may have reborn as beast, domestic animal, or bird. Eating meat is therefore regarded as eating one's relative of the past. What a pity!⁵⁹ There is a strong argument in this text against the statement that the Buddha ate meat as well as allowed meat eating for the monastic members:

If there is any one who would accuse me of eating meat myself and allowing others to eat it, he will surely be born in an undesirable region. Holy people refuse to eat even the food of ordinary people, how much more so with meat-eating! Their food is the food of truth (*dharmāhāra*), the Tathagata's Dharmakāya is supported by that.⁶⁰

The text further says that a Bodhisattva would not eat meat because he wants to nourish his great compassion towards other sentient beings, and seeing it as an evil habit. Meat eater causes terror to animals, having a bad reputation and a bad smell. He will not sleep soundly and always has frightened dreams. He is facing health problem due to eating meat. He is to resort to arrogance, hatred, sensual desire and is hard to progress in meditation. After death, he will be reborn in a bad existence. A Bodhisattva if eating meat will lose his hearers and admirers. When there is no

⁵⁹ *Laṅkā*. p. 100, 244ff.

⁶⁰ *Laṅkā*, pp. 254-6. Translated by Suzuki (1999b): 368-9.

meat-eater, there is no demand for butchers to kill animals, thus the supply of meat to the market will be stopped. Avoiding meat eating and promotion of vegetarianism are best ways to end life taking of animals and other living creatures.⁶¹

In the *Bodhisattva Prōtimokṣa* (*Fan-Wang Ching*, 梵網經) of the Mahāyāna, the first is against killing as one of ten defeated rules (*Pōrōjika sthānīyā dharmā*) for a Bodhisattva. A Bodhisattva on the other hand, should constantly abide in loving kindness and compassion, and use skillful means to rescue and protect all living beings. King Asoka prescribed in his Edict that forest and even bush should not be set on fire, for it kills or harms many living creatures.⁶² Non-killing (*analaḥbha*) of creatures and non-violence (*vihīḥsa*) to living beings were regulated by this great king.⁶³ In the list of 48 minor rules, the third is abstention from eating meat, the twenty-first is abstention from seeking revenge, insulting and beating others and the tenth is abstention from collecting and storing weapons, and the thirty-second is abstention from selling knives, arrows, or business with altered scales or raising cats, foxes, pigs, and dogs, for it is against one's loving kindness and compassion on living beings. There is a traditional practice of liberating trapped birds, monkeys, turtles, fishes, eels and snakes, etc., on full-moon days and Buddhist festivals, in Mahāyāna countries, as part of Bodhisattva practice in protecting, rescuing and liberating all living beings (the twentieth minor precept). These training rules are seen as **cutting** the seed of the compassionate Buddha-nature in the

⁶¹ Suzuki (1999a): 211-22; (1999b): 368-71.

⁶² Asoka's pillar edict V.

⁶³ Asoka's pillar edict VII.

doer, on the one hand, and as an ethical law to protect wildlife along with guarding of mankind from bloody war and mass destruction, on the other. Again the fourteenth is to prohibit setting fires to dwelling places and forests, and the thirty-seventh is refraining from traveling during the rainy retreat. These rules are to be enforced to protect wildlife and plant life, as part of protection of natural resources in balancing the eco-system.

Vegetarianism is highly compulsory for the monastic members in most Mahāyāna countries, except Tibet. Many pious lay people prefer taking pure vegetarian food for life. Others avoid taking meat on observance days (*uposatha*) or during the summer retreat of the *saṅgha*. Vegetarian food is served at Buddhist festivals, ceremonies and anniversaries. Vegetarian restaurants are open in every part of China, Vietnam, Japan and Korea. On full-moon days, many non-veg shops turn into selling instant veg food. Mahāyānist Buddhists consider that monks eating meat is as breaching Buddha's ethical rules, is more serious than the Theravādin monks having meal after midday. In modern context, even in Theravāda countries, begging for alms-food is not seen so much important as in the Buddha's day. Buddhist **monastics** may have food of preference. Avoiding meat eating is, therefore, suggested, not only on the health ground, but also on ethical perspective, at least respect for animal rights and cultivating love (*mettā*) towards them.

PROBLEM OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION

Modern scientists have proved that environmental pollution is one of the major threats to public health. The threat visible or invisible affects the health and safety of the people throughout the world. Human diseases are not only

spontaneously but also environmentally induced. It is suggested that one should take care for the **naturalistic ethical system**, in which everybody in this world **involves**. This is one of human problems involving technology, money, energy, and most important the need for attitude changes. Environmental protection is therefore necessary for all of us to look at, to observe for the betterment of our life and other beings on this earth. The modern chemical use leading to the chemical disaster results in killing and injuring thousands of people every year throughout the world. Chemical use causing environmental problem is responsible for human diseases, birth defects, mutations and premature death.

According to the teachings of the Buddha, environmental problems we are facing today have its cause in mankind, and therefore, any solutions to it should involve human attitudes and efforts. There is growing evidence that environmental solution, which is based on modern technologies, is risky. Every technology has its own input-and-output-problem. To avoid this problem by generating another problem is **self-illusion**, and not a good solution. In this connection, Buddhism sees clearly that all human problems have been caused by our attitudes, the best solution for which would be change of attitude or change of mind. Mind plays an important role in forming, development, changing things in our world. In order to reconstruct our world for better health and well-being, one should take care of the activities of one's mind. If our attitude is egoistically directed, suffering will occur therein. The altruistic attitude is therefore good for the happiness of mankind and other beings. We read in the *Dhammapada*:

Ideas have mind as their fore-runner, are dominated by

mind and are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with a polluted mind, suffering follows him just as the wheel follows the hoof-print of the ox that draws the cart.

Ideas have mind as their fore-runner, are dominated by mind and are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows him like a shadow that never leaves him.⁶⁴

As a mind-culture, Buddhist ethics commence with facts and then base values on these facts. It observes human nature in a naturalistic dimension, pointing out the problems of existence and showing the way out of its crisis accordingly. According to the Buddha, there are two main kinds of root (*m@la*) on which human nature is based, namely, ethically evil (*akusala-m@la*) and ethically good (*kusala-m@la*). The three ethically evil roots known as the vices are greed (P & S *lobha*), hatred (*dosa // dve,,a*) and ignorance (P & S. *moha // avidyā*), whereas the three ethically good roots known the cardinal virtues are non-greed or generosity (*alobha*), non-ill-will or loving kindness (*adosa*) and non-delusion or wisdom (*amoha*).⁶⁵ The former three are the basic roots (*m@la*) of unwholesome motivation, as the latter three, basic root of wholesome forces. The unwholesome (*akusala / p@paka*) motives of behaviour (*kamma*) certainly lead to ① suffering in this life, ② a worse rebirth in next life, and ③ bondage from *sa@s@ra*.⁶⁶ Buddhism attributes

⁶⁴ *Dhp.* vv. 1-2.

⁶⁵ *D.* III. 275. Cf. *It.* 45.

⁶⁶ A. I. 263: There are actions performed by greed, born of greed, conditioned by greed, arising from greed. These actions are unwholesome (*akusala*), blameworthy (*s@vajja*), having suffering as its fruition, leading to further arising of more actions [of the same nature], and not conducive to the

(*kamm@na@s@samudaya*)⁶⁷ all human problems, environmental, psychological, social, biological etc, to human unethical roots (*akusala-m@la*). The root of greed (*raga/lobham@la*) will incline for tendency to sensuous satisfaction (*k@mar@g@nusaya*), to egoistic profit-seeking; the root of hatred (*dosam@la*), to aggression (*pa@sigh@nusaya*), destruction or poison of our environment, depleting natural resources; while the root of ignorance (*moham@la*), to delusion (*avijj@nusaya*),⁶⁸ or cognitive outcome of our failure to understand the truth about interdependently human existence and our world. Most cases of environmental destruction give evidence of combination of these three ethical vices. These evils or vices are individually and socially harmful, in terms of both material profit and spiritual development. So long as one is overwhelmed or corrupted by them, disadvantage to oneself and others, suffering in this life and involving in a worse rebirth in next life will endlessly continue, as the passage runs below:

He who is corrupted by greed (*ratto r@gena*), by ill-will (*du@s@ho dosena*) and by delusion (*m@cho mohena*), losing control, plans things which harm himself, harm others, and harm both. He performs immorality in deed, word and thought. He can not understand his own profit, that of others, or that of both. These three roots are the causes, the roots, the origins of blindness, of not seeing, of not knowing, of loss of understanding: it is associated with suffering

cessation of actions. Similar accounts are with regard to hatred (*dosa*) and ignorance (*moha*).

⁶⁷ A. I. 264.

⁶⁸ S. V. 60.

and do not conduct to *nibbāna*.⁶⁹

According to the law of conditionality or dependent origination (*paticca samuppāda*) taught by the Buddha, all life on this earth and the others are of interdependence and interrelationship. Once life comes into existence, it is conditioned by a variety of factors. Humanity therefore can not separate from nature, for not only humanity is in nature, a part of nature but also is inter-being nature. Separating ourselves from the nature by poisoning natural resources is a way of self-destruction. The environmental principle which can be derived from this is that nature is not man's possession, but an inter-being to which we belong, we inter-exist and inter-act. Inter-being implies non-separated nature of origination, development, preservation and responsibility among every member of the earth-family. In other words, the ties that bind humanity to nature as well as other creatures are not merely physical, biological but moral and cognitive as well.⁷⁰

BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS ON NATURAL PROTECTION

The Buddha's teachings of compassion (*karaṇā*) and non-violence (*ahiṃsā*) are not only for the well-being and happiness of mankind, but also extend for all living beings (*sabbabhūta*). The Buddha's love towards nature and animals is expressed in so many discourses. When he was prince of the Śākya, he recovered and healed the wounded goose, shot by his cousin, Devadatta.⁷¹ The

⁶⁹ A. I. 149; G.S. I. 196.

⁷⁰ See Cromwell Crawford (1991): 189f for further argument in this connection.

⁷¹ See, the 12th chapter of *Fu-peân-hsing-chi ching* (佛本行集經), which means *The Collection of Former Deeds of the Buddha*.

Buddha is well-known for his moral conduct consisting in abstention from accepting meat, sheep, goat, elephants, cattle, horses, and mares, and having avoided the injury of seedlings and growing plants, whether propagated from roots or cuttings or joints or seeds.⁷²

All the teachings of the Buddha are filled with love (*mettā*) towards other beings. One of the ethical principles prescribed by the Buddha for his followers is abandoning life taking or destruction in any forms, and respecting the right of life for all living beings, either man or beasts or plants. This ethical principle not only forms part of the Buddha's five precepts, eight precepts, ten precepts, ten wholesome paths of action, and even in the *Pātimokkha* of the home-left, but also becomes an awareness of respect for life, well-being and peace of others. In both Theravāda and Mahāyāna monastic codes of precepts, intentionally depriving an animal of life entails an offense⁷³ while harming forests, trees, plants and seeds, or having someone to do so, is a *pācittiya* offense which requires expiation by acknowledgement.⁷⁴ The Buddha also prohibits monastic members to wear a foot-covering of certain leaves and grasses.⁷⁵ Tree destruction is seen in Buddhism as harming **one-facultied** life (*ekindriya*),⁷⁶ and disturbing gods' dwelling place.⁷⁷ During the rainy season, the monastic

⁷² D. I. 5. See © 5.3.2.1.

⁷³ *Pācittiya* 61.

⁷⁴ *Pācittiya* 11-2; *Vin.* IV. 34-5; *M.* I. 230.

⁷⁵ *Mv.* pp. 208-9.

⁷⁶ *Vin.A.* 575: That means possessing the sense of touch. This tradition is similar to that of the Jains which considers that plants contains life-principles (*jīva*).

⁷⁷ For tree-deity in Buddhist texts, see for example, A. III. 365-72; *Vin.* IV. 34; *J.* IV. 153-6; *J.* V. 240.

saṅgha observes the retreat and avoiding travelling, in avoiding the injury of **one-facultied** life as well as small creatures.⁷⁸ In a similar vein, digging the ground or having someone to do so is a minor offense for a monastic members, for it causes harm to organism life such as worms, ants, insects and other small creatures.⁷⁹

The Buddha instructs the *saṅgha* members not to pollute water and preserve the green grass.⁸⁰ He also encourages planting groves and fruit bearing trees along with building causeway, dam, bridge and constructing well and watering sheds, as a good way of contributing to social good on the one hand, and making merit and generating kammic fruitfulness in the future, on the other.⁸¹

CONCLUSION

The above discussion has come to the point where conclusions can be drawn with regard to relationship between man and natural world in accordance with the Buddha's teachings:

Man and nature are interdependent, co-existent or inter-being. The concern for human well-being and ethics should therefore starts with the concern for nature or environment. All selfish, aggressive exploitation of natural resources as well as all forms of damage, depletion, destruction of animal kingdom and environment should be wisely considered as immoral, for its involvement entails the anti-human resource development. In other words, the damage done to the natural world will bring harmful consequences to our own well-being here-and-now as well as in the future.

⁷⁸ *Vin.* I. 137.

⁷⁹ *Vin.* IV. 32-3.

⁸⁰ *Vin.* IV. 205-6.

⁸¹ *S.* I. 33.

In order to respect human values, social, intellectual, and moral, we should respect and protect environment and natural resources.

Attitudinal changing and new understanding of ourselves and the world in terms of interdependent origination and co-existence will undoubtedly help stopping the depletion and destruction of ecosystem. The protection of life of all living beings should go in parallel with protection of our nature. The continuity of existence is always in terms of mutual interrelation. Man is not an independent and non-relational creature in this world. Man can not exist nor survive without nature. It is foolish to ignore the relational nature of man for any kinds of egocentric purposive exploitation of natural resources. All selfish, egoistic desires, all profit-making companies should surrender themselves for the betterment and well-being of mankind. While the coextensive relationality of man and nature is an inter-being co-existence, the understanding and new vision of things in terms of dependent origination is a must or ground for environment ethics. Stated the matter in another way, the problematics in environment concerns are not merely material or biological but also and more importantly ethical and human.

According to the law of dependent origination, things and phenomena arise, develop in accord with the appearance of causes and conditions. The change of cause and conditions therefore bring about the change in things. In the same manner, to change environment is one among the ways to change one's life. Moral corruption and degeneration is seen in Buddhism as caused by ignorance as the most crucially cognitive factor, plus with the unfavourable conditions or environment

(*paṅir@padesav@sa*). Under different conditions and environment, people differ from one another. While due to unfavourable conditions, one may become corrupted, when such conditions giving rise to corruption are changed, one becomes progressive, physically, morally and intellectually.⁸² Thus the protection of the natural world and building a favourable environment are duties and obligations of every individual, communities and nations, for a better world where there is a harmonious co-existence of all sentient beings, and all beings and the natural world is treated with dignity.

⁸² D. III. 65-77.