

## Buddhism and Deep Ecology: An Appraisal

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We are now in 21<sup>st</sup> Century, where the human community is in search of new and sustaining relationships to earth amidst an ecological crisis that threatens the very existence of all life forms on the planet. Here, Buddhism needs to be re-examined in the light of current ecological crisis and to generate world views and ethics which underline fundamental attitudes and values of different cultures and societies. Ultimately, deep ecology is manifestation of the spiritual realization of individual. It is born in the individual and comes to fruition through the individual's religious understanding and practice. According to Daniel H. Henning, "*Deep ecology can be considered as the spiritual dimension of the environmental movements. It is a holistic approach to facing environmental problems which brings together thinking, feeling, spirituality and action*".<sup>1</sup> Moreover, deep ecology has become sheer necessity for the very survival of the human race<sup>2</sup> which has become a menace to living creatures. It is said that the Buddha had foreseen such a crisis long ago by virtue of His deep insight.<sup>3</sup> According to Buddhism, the solution to these problems calls for preservation of everything that is bestowed on man by nature and overcoming the obstacles created by nature. Although, Buddhism is a doctrine expounded with the air of spiritual emancipation, yet it contains a great deal of advice to make the worldly life comfortable and happy.<sup>4</sup> Buddhism, in fact, was selected for the pilot project in new perspectives for ecological education because it is an ancient, enduring philosophy, embodying strongly themes of awareness and compassion for all life.<sup>5</sup>

Here, it is imperative to discuss the definition and background of the word 'Deep Ecology'. We will start with the term Ecology and next with the term *deep ecology*. The term 'ecology' derived from the Greek words *oikos* which means 'home' and *logos* means 'understanding'. This term was invented by German scholar Ernst Haeckel in 1866 and described *ecology* as '*the domestic side of organic life*'<sup>6</sup> which is defined as '*Ecology is the study of the relationship that develops among living organisms and between these organisms and their environment*'.<sup>7</sup> Its concern is with the relationship among people, other organism such as plants and animals, and the natural environment.<sup>8</sup>

It also offers a means for illustrating the inter-dependencies of people and nature.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Henning, Daniel H., *Buddhism and Deep Ecology*, Polson, Montana: Xlibris Corporation, 2001: 34.

<sup>2</sup> Sharma, P. D., *Ecology and Environment*, New Delhi: Rastogi Publication, 1994: 2.

<sup>3</sup> See *Majjhima Nikāya*.1.236.

<sup>4</sup> De Silva, Padmasiri, *Environmental Philosophy and Ethics in Buddhism*, London: Macmillan, 1988: 29.

<sup>5</sup> Sandell, Klas, *Buddhist Perspectives on the Ecocrisis*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1987: 73.

<sup>6</sup> Pathak, S. K., *Buddhism and Ecology*, New Delhi: Om Publications, 2004: 53.

<sup>7</sup> Chhat, G. R., Ranceley, D. K. & Nanda, K. K., (eds.), *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Environment*, Vol. I., New Delhi: Anmol Publications, 1988: 215.

<sup>8</sup> Gosling, David L., *Religion and Ecology in India and Southeast Asia*, London: Routledge, 2001: 4; Alexander, David E., (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Environmental Science*, London: MPG Books, 1991: 197.

<sup>9</sup> Henning, Daniel H., *Op. Cit.*: 121.

Ecology is relatively a new science<sup>10</sup> dealing with various principles which govern the relationships between organism and their environment. According to David and Julia Jary,<sup>11</sup> the term *ecology* became popularized in the 1980s due to growing fragility of the earth as a living system.

Next: the term *deep ecology* may have been coined by Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher. The term *deep ecology* was introduced to the world in a short article in a journal in early 1970s.<sup>12</sup> Yet *deep ecology* is now a term which enjoys wide currency and considerable charisma on the international arena. *Deep ecology* may be defined in other way as: “*What I call deep ecology is premised on a gestalt of person in nature. The person is not above or outside the nature. The person is part of the creation ongoing. The person cares for nature, shows reverence and respect for non-human nature, loves and lives with non-human nature, follows separate evolutionary destinies*”.<sup>13</sup> Norwegian Philosopher Naess indicates two norms of *deep ecology* which are:

1. **Self-realization:** which involves spiritual growth or unfolding from isolated and narrow egos into an ecological self or organic wholeness which emerges or identifies with all forms of life or nature.
2. **Bio-centric Equality:** which is an intuition that all things have a right to live and reach their own individual forms of unfolding and self realization within.

*Deep Ecology* is based on the principles of bio-centric equality and self realization. Bio-centric equality is the principle that all things in nature have equal value and is thus supposed to be radically non-anthropocentric where as self realization is said to challenge dualistic thinking and our deepest assumptions of what it is to be human.<sup>14</sup> Thus, we come to know that if we harm nature or living beings, indirectly we are harming ourselves, with the recognition that there are no boundaries and everything is interrelated. *Deep Ecology* is also known as “*ecosophy*”. The term “*ecosophy*” is made of two words which are *ecos* and *sophia* where *ecos* means *household peace* and *Sophia* means *wisdom*. Thus, *ecosophy* means an ecological wisdom manifested in actions which are ecologically harmonious.<sup>15</sup>

One major stream of thought influencing the development of *Deep Ecology* has been the influx of Eastern spiritual traditions into the West, which began in the 1950s with the writings of Alan Watts, and D.T. Suzuki.<sup>16</sup> This influx of ideas suggests a new paradigm is required and a new utopian vision of “right livelihood” and the “good society”. *Deep Ecology* can be considered as the spiritual dimension of the environmental movement and is a holistic approach to face environmental problems which brings together thinking, feeling, spirituality and action. This awareness leads to a deeper connection with all life where *ecology* is, not just seen as something out there, but something we are part of and have a role in. *Deep ecology* seeks the transformation of

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<sup>10</sup> Grove, R. H., Damodaran, V., & Sangwan, S., *Nature and the Orient*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998: 70.

<sup>11</sup> Jary, David & Jary, Julia, *Collins Dictionary of Sociology*, Britain: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991: 180.

<sup>12</sup> Naess, Arne, “The Shallow and Deep Ecology, Long Range Ecology Movement: A Summary” (1973) 16 *Enquiry* 95-100, as referred to Elliot, R. & Gare, A., *Environmental Philosophy*, Queensland University Press, 1983.

<sup>13</sup> Merchant, Carolyn, *Key Concepts in Critical Theory of Ecology*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 1996: 132.

<sup>14</sup> Jamieson, Dale,

<sup>15</sup> Henning, Daniel H., *Op. Cit.*: 81-82.

<sup>16</sup> Merchant, Carolyn, *Op. Cit.*: 128.

values and social organization.<sup>17</sup> As a philosophy and as a movement, it spread in many ways during the 1980s and early 1990s with publication of works of Bill Devall (*Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*), Warwick Fox (*Towards a Transpersonal Ecology*), David Rothenberg (*Ecology, Community and life Style*, translator and editor of Arne Naess's works), and others.

Environment protection is one of the urgent problems facing humankind today. Man is protected and nurtured by the environment, and thus, environment has to be protected in all respect.<sup>18</sup> Most scientists, economists, philosophers, television, radio, etc., have analyzed the problems and pointed out to serious adverse impacts on the living environment of human, animals, and vegetation. The awareness of protecting life and living environment has been generated in recent times; however, the teachings of the Buddha towards environment conservation has been one of the main basic [*observational*] laws found scattered in his several discourses set out some 25 centuries ago. The Buddha often used examples from nature to teach his disciples.<sup>19</sup> Meditation is not possible unless the proper environment is there. A person, who is keen on cultivating higher virtues to develop the mind, has to withdraw to a place where the suitable environmental conditions are found, “*Come, Bhikkhus, resort to a secluded resting place: the forest, the root of a tree, a mountain, a ravine, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle thicket, an open space, a heap of straw.*”<sup>20</sup>

Here, we would like to see it through religious and spiritual point of view and particularly from Buddhist point of view which requires a new basis of foundation for it. All religious practices are influenced by local environmental factors and in turn play a role in ecological perception of the relationship between man and God. Buddhist tenets are full of sanctity for the nature's wealth and *such religious ideas* offer solutions to the top of the problem. Schumacher points out that Buddhism is not as anthropocentric as the other so-called religious traditions and that its attitude does not therefore allow for the possibility that mankind has the right to take from nature, to see nature as simply a store house of necessities for humanity. As he puts it, “*Man is a child of nature and not the master of nature*”.<sup>21</sup> In this context it can be stated that Buddhism teaches the philosophy of inter-relatedness and balance between mind and body, man and environment. Today the nature and social environment has been integrated into: ‘One Universe’. The Buddha's approach towards ecology and human beings' relation to nature, as depicted in the Buddhist canonical literature, are conducive to create a congenial atmosphere for life on the earth and also seems that Buddhism is throwing a flood of light on the possible solution to the environmental crisis we are facing now. In keeping with ecological observations, Buddhism cultivates a friendly attitude towards nature and looks at a relationship of plants and animals and people to one another from this angle friendship and harmony.

P.D. Premasiri in his “*Ecological Teachings in Early Buddhism*” argues that *dukkha* does not exist in the change itself, but in one who has the wrong attitudes towards it. The right attitude toward the natural environment is ‘understanding nature as it is’

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ratanasara, P., *Op. Cit.*: 150.

<sup>19</sup> P. Harvey, *Op. Cit.*: 174 ff.

<sup>20</sup> D. I. 71; M.III. 3. **Editor's Comment:** do notice that some of these places are void of vegetation – and therefore any place without distractions is suitable, including an isolated cell.

<sup>21</sup> Schumacher, E. F., *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*, London: Blond & Briggs, 1973: 84.

(*yathābhūtañānadassana* □) and therefore acting positively. A close observation to the *Dīgha Nikāya* reveals that the methods that the Buddha had taken to solve the problems of that time could well be used to solve the social and environmental problems arising now. Moreover, as the teachings of the Buddha emphasize the **conditioned co-production** (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) of phenomena, the relationship between human and nature in this respect is not to be neglected. Thus we see numerous passages in the different texts of the *Tipiṅka* revealing the importance of environmental protection. Buddhist solutions to answer the eco-crisis of today could be drawn from two perspectives:

1. **The Buddha's active participation** against instances harmful to eco-system; such as mass-sacrifice of animals, and
2. **Buddhist philosophical aspects** that have practical appeal to modern ecological discourses.

The implicit concern of Buddhist thought to environment is another area of interest. The environment included not only human beings, but also all flora and fauna-the totality of nature. The respect for life begins and extends to animals, birds, fish and all living creatures living, big and small; all aspects of nature, plants, trees, earth, stars, moon, sun etc. The correct balance between human beings and nature is established if this principle of respect to life is strictly adhered to.<sup>22</sup> What would the Buddha say about responsibility for the environment?

*“When you throw away your spit and toothbrushes,  
You must hide them well away from sight.  
Waste dumping in places that we share,  
And in the water system leads to ill.”*

(*Bodhicharyāvatāra* 5.91)

For the Buddha it is just as true at work as at home. We must treat the places we share with respect, and with six billion people on the planet, every place is a place we share.<sup>23</sup>

Today, a number of problems have arisen mainly due to unwanted changes in environment, its destruction as well as its non-conversation.<sup>24</sup> We are living in the modern world, in which developing countries are in the process of industrialization. They are all concerned much about the development of economy, craving and grasping of human beings has brought this world cold and hot wars, and has caused the serious pollution of the environment and ethical and social crises. Thus, we should reflect as to how humans should act and live so as to be in a less destructive and self-understanding relationship with nature. As Thich Nhat Hanh says: “*we classify other animals and living beings as nature, acting as if we ourselves are not part of it. Then we pose the question ‘how should we deal with nature?’ we should deal with nature the way we should deal with ourselves! We should not harm ourselves; we should not harm nature... human*

<sup>22</sup> Ratnapala, Nandasena, *New Horizons in Research Methodology*, Colombo: 1983: 4-5.

<sup>23</sup> F. Metcalf & B J G. Hateley, *Op. Cit.*: 111.

<sup>24</sup> Ratanasara, P., *The Buddhist Concept of the Environment and Individuals*, Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Maha Vihara, 2000, p. 3.

beings and nature are inseparable.<sup>25</sup> His Holiness the Dalai Lama said the same thing: “Because we all share this small planet earth, we have to learn to live in harmony and peace with each other and with nature. That is not just a dream, but also a necessity. We are dependent on each other in so many ways that we can no longer live in isolated communities and ignore what is happening outside those communities. We need to assist each other even we have difficulties, and we must share the good fortune that we enjoy. To pollute the air or the oceans, in order to achieve some short-term economic benefit, would be to destroy the very basis for our survival. Material development without spiritual development can cause serious problems. Responsibility does not only lie with the leaders of our countries or with those who have been appointed or elected to do a particular job. It lies with each of us individually.”<sup>26</sup>

For survival, humans depend on nature for: their food, clothing, shelter, medicine and other needs – and should therefore live harmoniously with nature. The development of science and technology, modern humanity improved living conditions in so many ways, for pleasure; and affluence has exploited nature without any moral restraint to such an extent that nature has been rendered almost incapable of sustaining healthy life - finally this has caused the conflict between man and nature. These problems must be solved by an appropriate environment ethics. In this way, Buddhism is a fully-fledged philosophy of life reflecting all aspects of experience. It is possible to find enough material in the Pāli Canon to delineate the Buddhist attitude towards nature.<sup>27</sup> Depiction of nature as a friend and compassion in the Buddhist scriptures:

*Yassa rukkhassa chāyāya nisādeyya sayeyya vā  
Na tassa sākkam bhāñjeyya mittadūbhato pāpako.*

(If one were to sit or lie down under the shade of a tree, one should not cut a branch of that tree - if one does then he is an evil betrayer of friendship)<sup>28</sup>

The above verse sums up the general trend of thought that runs through Buddhism on the subject of Buddhist point of view towards deep ecology.

Buddhism started as a religion of renouncers of the household-life which was considered as full obstacles (*bhāsambhādogharavāso*), in favor of homelessness which was regarded as open space, free from obstacles (*abbhokāso pabbajjā*). The early monks lived the life of itinerants: living in caves, caverns, groves and parks close to nature. Therefore, it is not surprising to see a close link between their life and nature - the environment. In fact the *Mahāmaṅgala Sutta*<sup>29</sup> of the *Suttanāta* lays down living in a congenial surrounding (*paṅirūpadesavāsa*) as a blessing or good fortune (*maṅgala*).

It is interesting to note that all four great events connected with the life of the Buddha are closely linked to the environment. Prince Siddhartha’s birth took place in Lumbini Park; Queen Mayā, the wife of King Suddhodana, had a comfortable place as her residence. Since renouncing household life, the *Bodhisattva* lived in groves, parks

<sup>25</sup> P. Harvey, *Op. Cit.*: 151.

<sup>26</sup> M. Batchelor; Kerry, Brown (editors), *Buddhism and Ecology*, London, England: Villiers House, 1992: 110.

<sup>27</sup> M. Batchelor; Kerry, Brown (editors), *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994: 18.

<sup>28</sup> *Kūṅādanta Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya*: Vol. I, *Sutta* No. 5., Nalanda Edition, 1956.

<sup>29</sup> *Mahāmaṅgala Sutta, Sutta Nipāta (Cullavagga)*. *Sutta* No. 4, Bhikkhsu Dharmarakshits, Delhi, 1977

and caves, etc. His Enlightenment took place under a tree called the *Asvattha* tree. In fact *Suttas* like *Ariyapariyasena Sutta*<sup>30</sup> of the *Majjhima Nikāya* show that this was not mere coincidence. The *Bodhisattva* himself selected this spot as the ideal place for his final striving. It records, in the *Bodhisattva*'s own words, thus: “there I saw an agreeable piece of ground, a delightful grove with a clear flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort...”, then he decided: “...this will serve for the striving of a clansman intent on striving.” It was in the Deer Park (*Migadāva*) at *Isipatana* that he delivered his inaugural discourse – The *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, in spite of Ven. Ānanda's pleading to pass away in a flourishing city, he chose the *Uparatana Sāla* grove of the *Mallas* of Kusinārā.<sup>32</sup> The tradition says that the Buddha spend the whole of the second week after Enlightenment, gazing at the *Bodhi*-tree with unblinking eyes. The Buddha showed gratitude to the tree that provided him shelter in his striving for enlightenment. Most of his life the Buddha seems to have spent very close to nature. Thus, many of the *Suttas* were preached either in groves, parks or banks of rivers. The *Amba□□ha Sutta*<sup>33</sup> was preached in a grove close to a village called *Ichhānagala*, the *Tevijja Sutta*<sup>34</sup> preached in a grove on the banks of *Aciravati*, the *Mahāsihanāda Sutta*<sup>35</sup> in a grove close to Vaiśālī. The names of groves and forests such as *Gosinga*, *Simsapa*, etc., are often named in the *Suttas* as places frequented by the Buddha. Besides living close to nature, the Buddha adopted a very affirmative attitude towards flora and fauna. Thus it is laid down that fully ordained monks should abstain from harming all plants and trees (*bijāgāma bhūtagāma samārambhā pātivirati hoti*). The *Samaññaphala Sutta*<sup>36</sup> refers this rule. The *Pātimokkha Pāli*<sup>37</sup> of the *Vinaya* categorizes the transgression of this rule as a *Pācittiya* offence.

Though Buddhism did not blindly believe in tree-worship, the Buddhists made use of this practice as a means of protecting the environment. While the Buddha says in the *Dhammapada*:

*Bahum ve saranam yanti pabbatāni vanāni ca  
Ārāmarukkha-cetayāni manussabhaya tajjitā.*<sup>38</sup>

(When threatened with danger, men go to many refuges – to mountains and forests, to parks and gardens, and to sacred trees and shrines).

The Buddha made use of this belief to serve as the safety of trees and keep the mountains from being destroyed and spoilt by man. Ian Harris reflects that: *Much that is characterized as environmental pollution is, strictly speaking, the unintentional byproduct of industrial activity, etc. Does that mean that the general degradation of the environment should be regarded as a necessary evil from the Buddhist perspective, particularly when we hold in mind the Buddha's continually reiterated teachings on the structural impermanence of all conditioned things? It would clearly be a*

<sup>30</sup> *Ariyapariyasena sutta, Majjhima Nikāya*, Vol. I, Sutta No. 26, Nalanda Edition, 1956.

<sup>31</sup> *Dhammacakkappavattana sutta*, p.7, *Mahāvagga* (ed. Prof. Mahesh Tiwary) University of Delhi, Delhi 1982.

<sup>32</sup> *Mahāsati□āna Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya*: Vol. I. Sutta No. 22, Nalanda edition 1956.

<sup>33</sup> *Amba□□ha Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya*: Vol. I Sutta No. 3, Nalanda edition, 1956

<sup>34</sup> *Tevijja Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya*: Vol. No. 1 Sutta No. 13, Nalanda edition, 1956

<sup>35</sup> *Majjhima Nikāya*, Vol. No. 1, Sutta No. 12, Nalanda edition, 1956.

<sup>36</sup> *Dīgha Nikāya*, Vol. I, sutta No. 2, Nalanda edition, 1956

<sup>37</sup> *Vinaya Pi□aka Pāli, Pācittiya* rule No. 10, 11, ed. Rahul Sankritayana 1956.

<sup>38</sup> *Dhammapada, gāthā* No. 188, p.137. Ven. Narda Thera Maha Bodhi Society, Calcutta, 1992.

misrepresentation to suggest that Buddhists are in favor of pollution and environmental decay. The correct application of right mindfulness... would presumably instill a greater awareness of the unintentional consequences of their actions in the minds of potential polluters.<sup>39</sup>

The *Aggañña Sutta*<sup>40</sup> of the *Dīgha Nikāya* describes how a man impelled by greed begins to continuously and ruthlessly exploit nature, and in return nature reacts by withdrawing away its bountifulness and abundance. The *Cakkavattisihanāda Sutta*<sup>41</sup> also attempts to drive this point in: it shows the exact correlation between decline in human discipline and degeneration of nature. Thus, from not giving properly to the needy, taking of life increased, and from talking of life, lying increased; and of the children whose life-span had been forty thousand years remain now for only twenty thousand. Just as an individual, the state too, is held to be responsible for the conservation of the environment. This is very clearly stated in *Suttas*. The *Kūḍadanta Sutta* and *Dīgha Nikāya*, by discouraging the heads of states from engaging in the performance of futile sacrifices, clearly stresses this point. This is made clear through the norms a *Cakkavatti*-ruler has to follow. Thus the *Cakkavattisihanāda Sutta*<sup>42</sup> lays down this as the first of *Cakkavatti's* duties. "You should establish guard, ward and protection according to Dhamma for your own household, your troops, your nobles and vassals, for ascetics and Brāhmiṇs, for beasts and birds." The inclusion of birds and beasts is very important. It refers to the whole bio-diversity the protection which is the responsibility of the state. The state has to set an example in protecting and conserving nature. It is only then that the subjects would follow this practice. This protection is equal to protecting the lives of the people. Thus, it shows the high priority given by the Buddha and stresses on the state's responsibility in protecting, promoting and conserving nature and everything connected with nature.

The Buddha very skillfully used ethical ideas to encourage his ideas to encourage his followers to engage in conservation and protection of nature. The *Vanaropa Sutta*<sup>43</sup> of the *Saṅgīyutta Nikāya* is a very good example of this. Today, due to wide spread consumerism, people have become insensitive to the needs of conserving nature. They are not concerned about sustaining nature; instead, their aim is to obtain the maximum in the present. Therefore, with the destruction of nature-forest, water reserves, mountains etc., there is an unprecedented change in climate, rapid recurrence of natural calamities, obscure rains at the proper time, earthquakes, sea-erosion and even tsunamis are the result of massive exploitation of nature by man. This is totally contrary to the teachings of the Buddha. Again, many problems of today are the result of these activities of exploitation on the part of man.

### **Karma:**

Another "green" feature of Buddhism responds to the deep ecology interest in trying to show to others how the human species arose out of other life forms and hence an argument for our responsibility to ensuring the continuity of all life forms and their

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<sup>39</sup> Harris, Ian. "Buddhism and Ecology." In *Contemporary Buddhist Ethics*, edited by Damien Keown, 113-136. Richmond: Corson, 2000, 115-116.

<sup>40</sup> *Aggañña Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya*, Vol. III, *Sutta* no. 27, Nalanda edition, 1956.

<sup>41</sup> *Cakkavattisihanāda sutta, Dīgha Nikāya*, Vol. III, *Sutta* no. 26, Nalanda edition, 1956.

<sup>42</sup> *Dhammacetiya sutta, Majjhima Nikāya*, Vol. II. *Sutta* no.89, Nalanda edition, 1956.

<sup>43</sup> *Theragāthā Pāli*, Verse No. 22, Nalanda edition, 1959

habitats, not just human life. To be reborn in another life form seems a powerful argument, on the surface, to oppose anthropocentrism. Yet the idea of acquiring “merit” within karma by Buddhists, favors humans, as individuals, at the expense of other life forms. The teachings of the Buddha has concentrated on the theory of Karma or theory of cause and effect and demonstrates that unmindful neglect of this principle may lead to chaos resulting in the ecological crisis now a days.

A contemporary writer in an anthology makes it clear, the discontinuity with deep ecology, where humans are not special, and “sentient beings” - those with the power of sense perception, have no superior ecological status: “*Among possible rebirths the human rebirth is considered by far the most fortunate and favorable...Rebirth as a human being is valued because human beings, more than any other sentient beings, have the capacity for spiritual development that eventually brings the fulfillment and perfection of enlightenment.*”<sup>44</sup> Ecologically aware Buddhists are attempting to outline what an “engaged Buddhism” or “eco-karma” would mean. Here is what one of the co-editors of an anthology has to say on this: “*As new terms are auditioned and defined, one of the tests will be their compatibility with prior Buddhist tradition. Initially, an expansion of karma in an ecological direction does not seem to conform very closely to Buddhism’s past... cardinal virtues such as nonviolence and compassion were applied to individual animals but not to species or ecosystems. At the same time, other features of Buddhism could be cited to justify the invention of eco-karma. Animals, for instance, have been regarded as subject to the laws of karma. In comparison with Western religious and intellectual history, that belief alone is a significant step away from anthropocentrism (human-centered thinking).*”<sup>45</sup>

### **Buddhist Economics**

Economic activity in a Buddhist sense could be better understood with the doctrine of merit. Accumulation of merit by engaging in activities beneficial to oneself as well as to other-primarily to human beings, but also to animals and to other creatures as well as to the environment is the basis of the doctrine of merit.<sup>46</sup> It is because of this doctrine of merit that the provision of irrigation water, the cultivation of crops and the planting of trees are referred to as meritorious acts.<sup>47</sup> What is economically good and desirable should contribute to the wealth and welfare of the multitude (*bahujana hitāya, sukhāya*). In this, all works of social utility were highly commended as meritorious: “*Planters of groves and fruitful trees, and they who build causeway and dam and wells construct and watering-sheds and (to the homeless) shelter give-of such as these by day and night such folk from earth to heaven go.*”<sup>48</sup> Buddhism has something to teach in this regard. E. F. Schumacher wrote about what he called “Buddhist economics” in the early 70s. Any search for an alternative green economics to that of capitalism or socialism with their multiplication of human wants, needs to acknowledge this. The concern with “Right Livelihood”, itself part of the Buddha’s “Eightfold Path” is fleetingly sketched within E. F. Schumacher’s classic *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as if People Mattered*.

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<sup>44</sup> Rita M. Gross, pp.413-414

<sup>45</sup> Kaza, Stephanie and Kraft, Kenneth, ed., *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*, Shambala, Boston & London, 2000: 398-399.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid: 66-70

<sup>47</sup> M. II. 267.

<sup>48</sup> S. I. 33.



Buddhist economics, according to Schumacher, seeks to move human societies away from the acquisition of material things to the cultivation of personal inner growth. Schumacher further notes: “From the point of view of Buddhist economics, therefore, production from local resources for local needs is the most rational way of economic life, while dependence on imports from afar and the consequent need to produce for exports to unknown and distant peoples is highly uneconomic and justifiable only in exceptional cases and on a small scale.”<sup>49</sup> Schumacher also points out how modern economics does not distinguish between renewable and non renewable goods because monetary price is used to quantify everything under capitalism. But for a Buddhist economics: “Non renewable goods (e.g. coal, oil, natural gas), must be used only if they are indispensable, and then only with the greatest care and the most meticulous concern for conservation. To use them heedlessly or extravagantly is an act of violence...”<sup>50</sup>

In my view Buddhism has many intellectual and spiritual resources that can easily support an environmental ethic. At the simplest level, because non-harming is so fundamental to Buddhism ethics, once one realizes that excessive consumption and reproduction are harmful, one is obliged to limit such activities. Such advice is also in accord with the most fundamental of all Buddhist guidelines—the Middle Path between extremes. To avoid “extremes”, or to follow the Middle Way in all matters, is seen as essential to Buddhist practice. What seems to have happened within deep ecology, is that many can come to a basic eco-centric world view. But a fundamental divide occurs over whether or not the activist works inside or in fundamental opposition to industrial capitalism. Buddhism, with its Middle Way, can seem to orient to the inside approach. In his essay “*Deep Ecology and Political Activism*” in *Dharma Rain*, Bill Devall speaks of the environmental movement as a “loyal opposition” and says, “Political revolution is not part of the vocabulary of supporters of the deep, long-range ecology movement.”<sup>51</sup>

### **Pañiccasamuppāda:**

When one brings the vast collection of Buddhist teachings into conversation with environmental concerns, one basic teaching stands out above all others in its relevance. That is the Buddhist teaching of interdependence, which is also one of the most basic aspects of the Buddhist worldview, a view held in common by all forms of Buddhism. Simply put, interdependence means that nothing stands alone apart from the matrix of all else. In fact, interdependence is to date the most commonly invoked concept in Buddhist environmental ethics. Deep ecological ethics can be observed through the practical application of Buddhist tenets of *Pañiccasamuppāda* (Theory of Dependent Origination). In general reference, this tenet means “when that exists, things comes to be; on the arising of that, this arises. When that does not exist, this does not come to be; on the cessation of that, this ceases.”<sup>52</sup> It is recognized that each of the factors of dependent origination is conditioned as well as conditioning. Consequently they are all relative, interdependent and interconnected and nothing is absolute and independent. Thus, no first cause is acceptable in Buddhism.<sup>53</sup> It is a remarkable contribution of the

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<sup>49</sup> Schumacher, E. F., *Op. Cit.*: 49.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*: 50.

<sup>51</sup> Devall, Bill, *Deep Ecology and Political Activism in Dharma Rain*, p. 386.

<sup>52</sup> M.I.134.

<sup>53</sup> Henning, Daniel H., *Op. Cit.*: 72.

Buddha that helps to realize the change and continuity in visualizing ecological harmony of the universe through causal changes and their respective effectuation.<sup>54</sup>

**Catāri Āriya Saccāni:**

The Four Noble Truths, often characterized as the Buddha's verbalization of his enlightenment experience, provide the basis for developing an ethic of adopting limits for the sake of the matrix of life. Because the Four Noble Truths are so basic to Buddhism, an environmental ethic based on them is not foreign to Buddhism, even though these teachings may not have been applied to environmental ethics before. The First and Second Noble Truths foster especially fruitful contemplations relevant to ecological ethics. The First Noble Truth states that conventional lifestyles inevitably result in suffering; the Second Noble Truth states that suffering stems from desire rooted in ignorance. The Second Noble Truth, with its emphasis on desire as the cause of suffering, is the key to a Buddhist environmental ethic. The first noble truth applies to the natural environment with recognition that nature is suffering as a whole and that serious deep ecological crisis is appearing locally and globally everywhere. It is ironic that man is the one who pollutes his own health and kills the life of all beings on this earth. With the recognition that life is suffering, exploitation and insensitivity towards the living environment, we can not make human kind escape the natural law of impermanence.<sup>55</sup>

The second noble truth is origin of *dukkha* which is taught by the Buddha that it is 'desire' or attachment, the source of all passions, suffering, and defilement.<sup>56</sup> Desire or attachment is the root cause of suffering and origin of all evils. According to Buddhism, the entire set of problems stems from aggression, which is perpetuated under the powerful forces in the mind, what we call *dosa*, hatred or aversion; and *lobha*, craving, desire or greed. The Buddha's emphasis on desire, craving, attachment, etc. and his practical measures for overcoming them, have enormous potential for the removal of the human causes of environmental degradation. The Buddha, in a discourse in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, even hints at the ecological devastation that is caused by a willful exploitation of the resources when lust, greed and wrong values grip the heart of humanity and immorality becomes widespread.<sup>57</sup>

The third noble truth is the actualization of cessation of all *dukkha* which is found through detachment or release from all attachments.<sup>58</sup> The Buddha said that the all suffering of the world have three cause i.e.: greed, anger and delusion, which are the real cause of all injustices. The Buddha's message of the third noble truth from ecological point of view is "*Spiritual seekers and even great accomplished masters do not understand that the essence of ecology is not cleaning the physically polluted environment, but something deeper re-establishing the balance between human and nature.*"<sup>59</sup> As the deep ecological crisis has brought about an enormous sea of new suffering, the ecological cleansing is the vehicle of the cessation of suffering. It seems to

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<sup>54</sup> Pathak, S. K., (et al), *Buddhism and Ecology*, New Delhi: Om Publication, 2004: 8.

<sup>55</sup> D.I.80.

<sup>56</sup> Henning, Daniel H., *Op. Cit.*: 21.

<sup>57</sup> A.I.160.

<sup>58</sup> Henning, Daniel H., *Op. Cit.*: 21.

<sup>59</sup> Skolimowski, Henryk, *Dharma, Ecology and Wisdom in the Third Millennium*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1999: 111.

me that Buddhism is throwing a flood of light on the possible solution to the problem of this deep ecological crisis.

The fourth noble truth leads to the realization of *nirvana*.<sup>60</sup> On the basis of the Buddhist deep ecological ethics, we can practice the teachings of the Buddha through the Eight fold path that leads to complete freedom, extinction of suffering and to discernment and enlightenment. The four noble truths focus attention on suffering as the fundamental problem from which sentient beings seek liberation and Buddhist ethics regards compassion for the suffering of all sentient beings as the supreme ethical virtue. The analysis and understanding of this philosophy help us to have a clearer understanding of the present situation of deep ecological crisis prevalent in almost whole world is due to misunderstanding the place of man in nature, limitless desire for material well-being and undoubtful exploitation of nature without having a sense of mutual protection and goodwill.

It is one of the very important teachings of the Buddha which is quite relevant in the present age of environmental crisis. *Brahmavihāra* may be rendered as modes of sublime conduct, sublime states or divine abodes.<sup>61</sup> *Brahmavihāras* are described as four virtues or perfect states in Buddhist literature. These four are the sublime states of living or supreme source of purification of mind consisting of loving kindness or goodwill (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*) which will help a great deal to foster and cement harmonious interpersonal relations. What we need is a holistic approach towards problems with a genuine sense of universal responsibility based on love and compassion.<sup>62</sup> The *Karuniyamettā* enjoins the practice of *Mettā* towards all living creatures, timid and bold, short and long, small and big, minute and great, invisible and visible, near and far, waiting birth and born.<sup>63</sup> The *Mettā Sutta*, the blue print of loving kindness, tells us how this boundless compassion should be cultivated towards all living beings without any distinction whatsoever<sup>64</sup>, such as the Buddha's *Mettā*, in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, is like Dhamma-rain which gives life to plants fertilizing everything around them and that makes everyone happy, taking them towards *Nibbāna* as well.<sup>65</sup>

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. If we practice the Buddha's teachings and truly follow the principle of love and compassion towards all living beings including forests and their inhabitants, that would create a balanced and happy environment which means each of us must makes a sincere effort to take seriously our responsibility for each other and for the natural environment.<sup>66</sup> From Buddhist point of view *Karuṇā* means compassion which is the sublime emotion that impels one to help another in distress.<sup>67</sup> In the *Vajracheddikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* the Buddha says, 'The great friendliness marked by providing

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<sup>60</sup> Henning, Daniel H., *Op. Cit.*: 21.

<sup>61</sup> *Saṅgīyutta Nikāya*.IV.204, 254 & 227; Harvey, B. A. Ronson, *Love and Sympathy in Theravada Buddhism*, Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1980: 8.

<sup>62</sup> Tenzin, P. Atisha, *On the Environment*, Dharmashala: Department of Information and Internal Relations, Central Tibetan Administration 1994: 30-31.

<sup>63</sup> *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. IV. 302.

<sup>64</sup> *Sutta Nipāta*. 151.

<sup>65</sup> Soothill, W. E., *The Lotus of the Wonderful Law*, Delhi: Motilal Banarasidas, 1956:122-125.

<sup>66</sup> Batchelor, Stephen & Brown, Kerry, *Op. Cit.*: 112.

<sup>67</sup> *Saṅgīyutta Nikāya*. V. 98-99 & 136-137.

what is beneficial; the great compassion by protection'. He also taught His disciples to have 'compassion on all creatures'<sup>68</sup> and 'never to destroy the life of any living creature, how ever tiny it may be'.<sup>69</sup> The Buddha's age old teaching of compassionate love has refreshing relevance to the modern world which creates the foundation for a balanced view of the entire world and of the environment where we live.

*Muditā* or sympathetic joy is the third component of the *brahmavihāra* which is the wholesome attitude of rejoicing in the happiness and virtues of others or the gladness one experiences in the happiness of another.<sup>70</sup> This idea is beautifully expressed by the description of an *arhanta*, who is said to go about in the manner of a bee collecting honey from flowers without harming them in any way.<sup>71</sup> The fourth sublime state is *upekkhā* or equanimity which may be achieved only when man tries to satisfy his need and not his greed. The *Aggaññasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* relates the episode of the evolution of the world and society emphasizes the fact that moral degeneration causes the degradation of personality as well as the environment.<sup>72</sup> So the Buddhist needs cultivate all of the four sublime states simultaneously to take care of environmental crisis. That is why we call the compassion culminates with equanimity.

To sum up, we are of the view that Buddhism and Deep Ecology brings many changes in our lives that require us to be still, accept ourselves, and have faith in the process and to be open. We can view a tree as symbol, helping us to change our mentality and become more open to change. In the present world scenario, deep ecology is a much talked about subject. It so much concerns our life that almost every human being is now aware of it some way or other. The purpose of this paper is to introduce a new attitude to things based upon the fact that man is not as a permanent entity and cannot separated from his social and physical environment. In fact, among the world religions, Buddhism has great promise as a basis for an environmental ethics, since it teaches concern for nature as well as human beings. Buddhism has always presented us with tools for paying attention to our surroundings i.e.: environment, showing us how one can take responsibility without becoming disillusioned or burn out. This retreat has introduced us to aspects of Buddhist teachings and practice, which support an environmental viewpoint for its restoration and preservation. Schumacher has admirably pointed out that a non-violent and gentle attitude to nature is the ecological stance of Buddhism.<sup>73</sup> Under the light of Buddhist doctrine, Buddhism expounds a matter, which needs to be discussed: that the environment crisis has been created by moral and ethical crisis of human beings, and humankind must be responsible for their activities. Thus, we should reconsider our own immoral activities in order to be for our best environmental-behavior. The Self-realization of deep ecology and the interdependence-tenet of Buddhism (and ecology) become fused in a moving ritual which helps humans go beyond anthropocentric consciousness. The personal-self becomes an ecological-self and comes to include all other beings and the planet itself. This breaks the illusion that we humans are separate from the rest of Nature. In Buddhism one cannot draw a firm distinction between "self" and the "world." Deep ecology can learn from this.

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid. 241.

<sup>69</sup> Sarao, K. T. S., *The Origin and Nature of Ancient Indian Buddhism*, Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1989: 50.

<sup>70</sup> *A□□hasālini*.258.

<sup>71</sup> Humphreys, Christmas, *The Wisdom of Buddhism*, London: Promilla and Company, 1987: 90.

<sup>72</sup> Silva, Lily De, *Op. Cit.*: 114.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid: 41.

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