

CHAPTER-V

PEACE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE *DHAMMAPADA* AND BUDDHISM

The Sanskrit rendering of the term 'peace' is '*santi*', which is derived from the root '*sam*' meaning 'restrain of the sense-organs' In fact, in Buddhism and Hindu tradition the root cause of the absence of peace from our mind is 'thirst' or '*tanha*', which causes cravings for getting more and more consumable objects. Such thirst can never be quenched with the fulfilment of the desire and hence it is an unending phenomenon. The more we get, the more we urge for it. In order to get rid of it we have to search for self-satisfaction, which ultimately leads us to the world of peace. In order to arrive at such stage it is essential to go through some rigorous meditative training so that we can control our sense-organs including the inner one (*antah-karana* or *mind*).

Objects generally generate in us sometimes pleasure and sometimes pain. In other words, the object which seems to be pleasant in certain time may seem to be painful in other situation. It is also true that an object which is pleasant to some one may be unpleasant to others. An object may create pleasure in one aspect and pain in another aspect depending on the attitude of the enjoyer. Hence it is very difficult to get a clear criterion of describing something as pleasant and /or painful. In the same manner it is also very difficult to determine the criterion of peace. However, peace has got some connection with happiness and hence a painful situation cannot give an individual peace in the true sense of the term. That is why; in the Upanisads the *mantra* invoking peace (*santi*) is often found. One of the functions of such enchanting the *mantra* of peace is to eradicate

sufferings or miseries. Through the removal of such suffering we get pleasure as opposed to suffering.

In order to understand peace we have to understand what pleasure (*sukha*) and pain (*duhkha*) are. To the Naiyayikas (a school of Indian Logicians) something experienced as favourable generates happiness in somebody (*anukula-vedaniyam sukham*) while something experienced as non-favourable generates pain (*pratikula-vedaniyam dukham*). The favourability (*anukulata*) and non-favourability (*pratikulata*) of an experience is very much subjective, as it depends on a particular situation or environment. There is no fixed rule under what situation an experience would be favourable and non-favourable. In the Katha-Upanisad there is a prescription through which we may judge whether our experience is favourable or not and thereby determine its pleasantness or peacefulness.

As per the derivative meaning of the terms '*sukha*' and '*duhkha*' a common term '*kha*' is found in two terms, which are prefixed by two particles- '*su*' (favourable) and '*duh*'(non-favourable). The term '*kha*' literally means the 'hearing sense-organ' (*srotra*) by which all sense-organs may be taken into account as its meaning by secondary implication (*laksana*).¹ These sense-organs are always rushing towards the external objects to fulfil one's thirst, which is cause of painfulness or an unpleasant situation. Hence in order to have peace in our mind we should try to resist the rushing of the external sense-organs towards the objects and to bring them back towards an opposite direction i.e., self. Just as the flow of the river can be brought to the opposite direction through some method, the nature of the sense-organs which rush to the external objects can be changed through turning them towards the opposite direction, i.e., the internal side. An individual who is wise tries to withdraw his sense-organs from the external world and concentrates these to his own self,² which is called

'sama' ('the restrain of the sense-organs') from which the word 'santi' meaning 'peace' is originated as told earlier.

If the sense-organs rush to the external objects without being controlled by us, our minds become polluted and troubled through the vitiation of thinking on the object of enjoyment. Such a polluted mind cannot give us peace or happiness. For this reason the sense-organs are called non-favourable (*duh*).³ On the other hand, if an individual, after withdrawing it from the external object, puts the sense-organs towards his inner self, the mind becomes calm and non-polluted. Hence the sense-organs (*kha*) become 'su' or favourable by virtue of their utilisation in favour of one's calmness. Moreover, in order to keep our mind balanced, it is necessary to bring sense-organs within our control.⁴ It is possible if their flow is turned towards our own self or inward direction. At this stage mind becomes calm and tranquillised producing 'peace' or 'santi'. It confirms the famous saying that whatever is one's own control can generate peace to him while that which is not under one's control can provide only misery (*sarvam atmavasam sukham, sarvam paravasam dukham*). One story supporting this is found in Buddhist literature. One day some Buddhist monks were returning to their own monasteries, but on the way they faced some foul weather with storms and rains. On account of this they had to take shelter in a cowherd's place and to spend the night. The cowherd boys, after seeing the monks, started irritating them by saying-"We are well-protected in a shelter. We have a lot of food for ourselves and cattle. Hence, O rain, you go on showering the whole night." On hearing these irritating words the monks also started saying-"Our sense-organs are well-controlled. Our mind is meditated towards a particular object. Hence, O rain, you go on showering during the whole night." The second one is the result of a self-restrained mind (*atma-vasam manah*).

Buddhism in general represents the way of compassion. The Buddha is an embodiment of compassion and hence he is regarded as the compassionate protector of all beings. As such thirst has been taken as the root cause of all worldly diseases (*bhava-roga*), the path as shown by Buddha is to be resorted to and hence he is called a physician of all worldly diseases (*bhava-roga-vaidya*). To him the individuals following his path should practice loving kindness, which implies not to harm the life of all beings. It is advised always to protect mankind as well as animals and vegetations. It is his wisdom through which he can see all human beings in the universe as equal in nature. The well being of human being and animals is inter-related and mutual.

To ignore such instructions is to invite our mental and environmental crisis. In the modern time we find that human beings have misused their power and destroyed the animals, forests and mountains resulting in environmental crisis. The greedy minds of mankind lead to such changes and destructions of the ecological balance.

The external environment is seriously polluted because of the pollution of the internal environment in the mind having lack of peace. The excessive greed is one of the reasons for the internal pollution, which is the impediment of peace. This disease may be eradicated if an individual finds some satisfaction and contentment through the Buddha's teaching. That the external pollution is related to our internal one is evidenced in the *Dhammapada*. It is said that just as the maker of an arrow makes the end of it straight, so an individual should simplify his mind, which is wavering, fickle, uncontrolled and unprotected.⁵

The contentment in the context of Buddhism does not mean the eradication of all desires but to live in harmony with all beings and

nature. It is said in the *Dhammapada* that a pure and developed mind alone can understand others mind (Panditavagga, verse no.3). It is further emphasized that when the world is burning (*prajjalite*) there is no opportunity for adopting laughter (*haso*) and joy (*ananda*). In the like manner, if our mind is covered with darkness, would we not seek for light? (Jaravagga, verse no.1). Those who believe in the teaching of Buddha will control their desire and live in harmony with nature keeping the environment in healthy condition. It is rightly mentioned in the *Dhammapada* that one who sees only the apparent beauty, who is not self-restraint in enjoying consumable things, who is lazy and weak is always attacked by one's enemies just like a weak tree. On the other hand, an individual refraining from seeing apparent beauty becomes self-controlled and respectful and hence he is not overpowered by the enemies just like a firm and stony mountain.⁶

The historical account of Buddhism shows that for thousand years the Buddhist monasteries have developed a harmonious living with nature and hence they are established in the mountains and forests. The calm and cool atmosphere of the forest and mountain helps the Buddhist practitioners to develop their inner mind, which ultimately makes them 'feel' for the protection of animals. With loving and tolerant heart the Buddhists live with natural vegetation, wild animals in the forest in harmony and for mutual survival.

In Buddhism we find a great celebration of the richness and diversity of the earth and the lotus is only one among many plants of great symbolic significance. In the Buddhist literature it is found that the Buddha was born in the forest surrounded by *Sal* and other trees having large leaves. The Buddha is found to achieve enlightenment under the tree *Peepul* or *Bodhi*, which is admitted as sacred in Buddhism and Hinduism.

In the *Sutta-nipata* we find a deep appreciation of nature's beauty and diversity. Buddha says – "Know ye the grasses and the trees ... Then know ye the worms, and the moths and the different sort of ants ... Know yet also the four-footed animals small and great ... the serpents ... the fish which range in the water ... the birds that are borne along with on wings and move through the air ..."

The consideration for other individuals as a matter of moral obligation is not limited to other human beings alone but to other species. Buddhism seeks to transform in the way through which an individual conceives himself. The environmental ethics in Buddhism is not totally a matter of identifying and securing rights, but it is a matter of undertaking a practice of affirming and realizing the trans-human potential for enlightenment as an effect. The deeper insight in an individual is generated through the cultivation of it in human and trans-human species and hence it can become potential for enlightenment. This can express itself as a compassionate environmental sustaining altruism. Such an idea has been expressed by Shantideva in the following manner :

"Just as the body which is constituted with hands and other limbs should be protected as a single entity, the whole world divided into so many parts should be treated as undivided one so far as its nature is concerned. If it is taken as divided, it would suffer no doubt. I should remove suffering of others because it is suffering like my own. I should help others too because they exist as I exist."

Shantideva adds that if someone is reluctant to remove sufferings of others, it would like refusing to use one's hand to remove the thorn of one's foot, because the pain of the foot is not the pain of the hand.⁷

To get an ecological balance we should develop an ecological sensibility and actualize that sensibility in practice. So in Buddhism the

phenomenon of inter-relatedness is deeply felt and hence a comprehensive developmental path is sought. In the *Dhammapada* it is stated that the house-holders may belong to different professions like students, lecturers, labourers, executives etc, but they should not preclude themselves from following the path of truth, purity, lustlessness, angerlessness etc and should practise the virtues like love, compassion, affection etc. If these virtues are practised in a balanced way, there would be less confrontation and conflict (Buddha-vagga). On proper analysis it is found that tensions and conflicts arise out of desire, cravings and attachment. We can shed desire, cravings and attachment if we understand the true nature of things and life. The control of body may be achieved by controlling the senses of sight, touch, smell etc and organs like hand and feet. For regulation of mind right thought and observance of ethical code of conduct is necessary. The *Dhammapada* gives us an insight into the mysteries and true nature of life and existence, and indicate how we can reduce the range of our attachment, cravings and desire (Bala-vagga, verse no. 3 and Maggavagga, verse no. 16). It is clearly prescribed in the same text that he who seeks refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, he who sees with right knowledge the Four Noble Truths, sorrow, the causes of sorrow, the transcending the sorrow and the Eight-fold path can get rid of sorrow. (Buddha-vagga, Verse nos. 12-14).

Though the Buddhism talks about the protection of the environment, it gives emphasis on the three-fold training of human mind and seven factors of the enlightenment, which are the basis ethical sensibility to the environment. The *Mahaparinibbanasutta of the Dighanikaya* discusses about the three-fold course of training like cultivation of ethical conduct (*sila*) meditation (*samādhī*) and wisdom (*pañña*). These three are inter-connected in the sense that the first is left behind when the second is undertaken. Without the development of these it is possible for one to lead happy and peaceful life. Wisdom

(*prajna*) goes beyond knowledge attained through reading books or hearing the tales. The practice of morality (*sila*) and mental development (*samadhi*) develops a penetrative insight and realization into the nature of everything in its proper perspective. When the realization (wisdom) appears, the trained mind becomes an unshakable dynamic force that can handle any human problem without anxiety and thereby can remove the worldly problems. When the ethical conduct is firmly established, the meditation becomes effective. Through effect of meditation the transformative power of wisdom becomes possible.⁸

The above mentioned three-fold practice has a tremendous influence on the Buddha's doctrine of seven factors of enlightenment viz., mindfulness (*sati*), discrimination of principles (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy in pursuit of the good (*virya*), rapture (*piiti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samadhi*) and equanimity (*upekkha*). It is mentioned in the *Samyutta-nikaya* that these seven are essential for any kind of social or moral development. When a monk remaining secluded recollects and reasons about the doctrine, he adheres to the mindfulness factor of enlightenment, which is followed by other steps. After mindful he can discriminate, reflects on and investigates the doctrine with understanding. In this way he can reach to the path of perfection, which includes rapture (*pitti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samadhi*) and equanimity (*upekkha*). The latter four are connected with the phenomenon of meditation, which is available through the cognitive and affective refinement.⁹

An individual having such moral qualities would be able to have sensitivity towards our environment. It is rightly mentioned in the *Tanhaggo* chapter of the *Dhammapada* that the thirst for enjoyable object makes a man blind of his own future and hence he can go to any extent for his enjoyment adopting injury to human and non-

human beings including environment. This thirsty person is compared to a monkey desiring fruits (*so pravati hurāhuram phalamiccham va vanasming vānaro*).¹⁰ It is so dangerous that it is metaphorised as poison (*visattikā*).¹¹ Hence it is advisable to eradicate the root of such thirst through the weapon of wisdom (*pañña cchindatha*), which is dependent on the paths mentioned above.¹²

An individual having such freedom can have 'real sympathy' towards nature, environment and non-human beings. An individual possessing such a mental state cannot do harm to others. If he cuts trees, injures animals etc. he will be condemned as found in the *Vinayapitākā*. It has also mentioned in the *Bhaisajya-skandhaka* that how different trees serve us as medicines in our everyday life.⁹

From the above discussion we may draw the following conclusions. Only advice to protect environment or to adopt *ahimsā* will fall flat upon others until and unless they are enlightened with wisdom. The true solution of the environmental crisis will be neither technological nor legal. It must be stereological. It must involve the evolution of a significant number of human beings to a higher level of awareness, to a higher ethical sensibility. It does not mean that the technological and legal efforts to safeguard the environment are pointless, but we think there is at least a stopgap measure but not the ultimate solution. To Buddhism there is a potentiality in human being to evolve into a higher ethical sensibility. This will happen through the concerted practice and discipline. The whole Buddhist tradition consists precisely in a sustained effort to devise effective methods for undertaking this transformation. The tradition says that we have our own resources though the task is very difficult. If we can master over the method, the energy in pursuit of the good, patience, the living kindness, the concentration and the wisdom to bring these substantial resources to bear evolve automatically in a man. With this inner

tranquillity alone outer tranquillity, free from pollution, may come into being.

How can this flow of sense-organs be brought towards the opposite direction or inner self? The Indian thinkers have prescribed various ways of achieving this. First, in order to arrive at such stage it is essential to go through some rigorous meditative training so that we can control our sense-organs including the inner one (*antah-karana*) or mind. To the Buddhists the Eight -fold path (*astangika-marga*) is the correct path to know the right knowledge of reality, which ultimately leads to the control of sense-organs. If it is realized that each and every object is transitory or momentary, essenceless (*sunya*), our mind, being controlled, can reduce the thirst for enjoyment. An individual, being free from mental pollution, can achieve peace. That is why; Buddha himself is called an embodiment of peace and an aesthetic pleasure called *santarasa*. By virtue of worthy of it he is called *santatma* and *santa-manas*.

Sri Aurobindo also adopted this method of yogic meditation, which can transform our body from the natural one to a Divine one (*bhagavati tanu*). Yoga has got the power to transform the position of different cells (*kosas*) of the body. In natural body the first outer cell is called physical self (*annamaya kosa*), which is encircled by vital self (*pranamaya kosa*) and mental self (*manomaya kosa*). These three circles cover the nucleus of the body called *rtacit* (main divine power existing in a human being). If yoga is practised as per the given instructions, the given order of the selves is changed due to the awakening of the power remaining as nucleus of the body. At this stage a human being receives a new enlightened body, which is called a Divine one leading to the transformation of mind and sense-organs also. Under such a situation a man can attain the real peace being free from mental pollutions

Moreover, the Indian culture has prescribed some qualities which are advised to be practised by the human being for the attainment of peace. Among these *sama* (meaning the restraint of outer sense-organs) is the most fundamental, because, if they are restraint, the inner organ is automatically controlled, which is called *dama* (the restraint of the inner organ). Under these circumstances the other qualities like forbearance (*titiksa*) etc will easily follow. An individual having all these qualities really can claim that he is having peace of mind.

Secondly, proper counseling is an alternative way through which a man can be made free from the clutch of thirst. Human beings can be convinced through arguments and examples that no one in this world is found happy through his wish-fulfillment. Because the fulfillment of one desire gives rise to another one leading us to the path of *Infinite Regress*. The logic of counseling (*sravana*) has been admitted by Sankara also who advised an individual not to boast of wealth, man-power and youth, because all might be taken away within a moment by the Time. Our life is as transitory as the water in the lotus-leaf ("*Ma kuru dhana-jana-yauvana-garvam/ harati nimesat kalah sarvam// Nalini-dala-gata-jalavat-taralam/ tadvajjivanamatisayacapalam//*") If a human being is convinced with these, he will start minimizing his cravings or thirst, which ultimately leads him to the world of mental balance and thereby environmental balance.

The last method of reducing one's thirst is to encourage him to engage in the enjoyment of fine arts like film, drama, music, dance paintings etc. It is a well-known fact that while enjoying aesthetic pleasure a human being can bracket his day to day problems and engross himself in some non-pathological enjoyment. It is non-pathological in the sense that this type of enjoyment has no connection with the fulfillment of our this-worldly matter. Through such non-

pathological enjoyment one can easily reduce one's this-worldly interested pathological desires arising out of cravings.

Proper counselling is an alternative way through which a man can be saved from the infatuation of thirst. A human being can be convinced with logic and instances that the thirst or cravings can lead him to the world of misery. No one in this world is found happy or peaceful through their constant wish-fulfilment on account of the fact that the fulfilment of one leads to another placing him in an endless path of misery. A man should be convinced through arguments about the ultimate pathetic result of thirst in our life. Otherwise, the ultimate result of the thirst which is said to be miserable will fall flat to them due to their infatuative eye. Keeping this in view, Sankara, the famous Advaita Vedantin, was always in favour of counselling for the curtailment of our enjoyment, which has no ultimate value. To him a human being should not boast of wealth, man-power and youth, because all might be snatched by the cruel hands of Time. Our life is to be considered as transitory as the water on the lotus-leaf. (*Ma kuru dhana-jana-yauvana-garvam/ harati nimesat kalah sarvam// Nalini-dala-gata-jalavat-taralam/ tadvajjivanam atisaya capalam//*). If a man is convinced with these, he will start minimising his cravings or thirst, which ultimately leads him to the world of peace.

The last method of reducing our thirst is to encourage an individual being to engage himself in the enjoyment of fine arts like film, novel, drama, music, dance, paintings etc. It is a well-known fact that while enjoying aesthetic pleasure a human being can bracket his day to day problems and engross himself in some non-pathological enjoyment. It is non-pathological in the sense that this type of enjoyment has no connection with the fulfilment of our this-worldly matter. Through the inculcation of such enjoyment one can easily

reduce one's this-worldly interested pathological desire arising out of cravings.

These causes of peacelessness as told earlier and the methods of their removal has no barrier in certain space and time, These are applicable to human being in general whether he has taken birth in India, or Germany or other countries in the world. If the peace is needed, I believe, these are the only means for availing this without considering the geographical boundaries and racial matters.

References:

1. "*Paranci paragancanti gacchantiti, khani tadupalaksitani srotradini-indriyani, khani-ityuncyante. Tani parancyaivasabdadi-visaya-prakasanaya pravartante.*"
Sankara-bhasya on Katha-upanisad, 2/1.
2. *Ibid.*
3. "*Paranci khani vyatrnat svayambhustasmat paranpasyati nantaratman/kasciddhirah pratyagatmanamaiks adavrttacaksuramrtatvamicchan//*" *Katha-upanisad, 2/1.*
4. *Sankara-bhasya on Kena-upanisad, 2/1.*
5. "*Phandanam capalam cittam durakkham durnivārayam ujum karoti medhāvī usukāro'va tejanam.*"
- *Dhammapada 3/1.*
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6. "*Subhānupassing viharantam indriyesu asambutam bhojanam hi ca amattaññum kusīta hīnavīriyam tam ve pasahati māro vāco rukkhama'va dubbalam//*"
"*Asubhanupassing viharantam indriyesu susamvutam bhojanam hi ca mattaññum saddham ārabdhavīriyam tam ve napasahāli māro vāto selama'va pabbatam//*"
- *Dhammapada 1/7-8.*
7. *Bodhicaryāvatāra, V 2i :91-99, trans. by Kata Crosby and Andrew Skilton, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 96.*

8. *Mahāparinibbanasutta* of *Diighanikaya*– V 67-68.
9. *Samyuttanikāya*. 2/29.
10. *Dhammapada* 24/1-2.
11. “*Yathāpi mūle anupaddabe dalhe
Chino’ pi rukkho punareva rūhati,
Evampi tanhā nusaye anūhate
Nibbattati dukkhamidam punappunam/*”
Dhammapada 24/5.
11. *Vinayapitaka*, 1/4/7. 2/4/47 and 59/ *Bhaisajya-Kandaka*.