

SECOND CHAPTER

Humans' Attitude Towards Nature

Introductory:

It is a well accepted fact that human beings are the integral part of the nature and they are tied to it through a serious of interactions. Amongst all the species of the biotic community human beings occupy a supreme position on account of his rationality and intelligence which account for its greatest responsibility towards maintenance of ecological balance. Their role as members of the biosphere and their attitude towards the same, however, has changed with the passage of time. The friendly attitude towards nature which man once possessed has gradually and in recent times drastically changed with more and more inventions in science or precisely with the rapid pace of scientific and technological development. The attitude of mastery over nature by modern man, spearheaded with advanced technologies has greatly affected the so-called ecological or in a broad sense environmental balance. It may be said that "for modern man nature has become like a prostitute- to be benefited from without any sense of obligation and responsibility toward her. The difficulty is that the condition of the prostituted nature is becoming such as to make any further enjoyment of it impossible" ² From this respective quotation it can be well understood that nature is conceived of as a *storehouse of materials* for mere use and exploitation by humans and this exploitative attitude of man towards nature has led to environmental degradation of the greatest magnitude. Human existence and the existence of all biotic species is in fact sacrificed to the advantage of

² Nasar, S. Hossein: *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*, Vikash Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, Bombay, Bangalore, Calcutta, Kanpur, 1968, p.18.

blind technological progress and unbridled appetites for luxury, profit and power.

Man is gradually becoming conscious about his misdeeds and fallacious treatment of nature and therefore seeks to take a drive at the global level to solve the crisis. In this respect it is very necessary for man to change his attitude towards nature. He should develop an attitude based on justice and ethical insight. Adoption of an ethical code of conduct by human beings of different cultures enables the maintenance of harmonious relationship between man and nature ensuing continuing material and cultural enrichment of the society.

In Paul Taylor's vision, an attitude of respect for nature by humans occupy a pivotal place in the foundation of a life-centered system of environmental ethics. He conceives that a set of norms or an ethical code of conduct is needed to guide human beings in his treatment of the natural world. The human beings in turn need to abide by the moral norms and thereby adopt an attitude of respect for nature as his ultimate moral attitude. Taylor further seems to have conceived that life centered of environmental ethics³ need not centre around a holistic approach of nature where all species-animate as well as inanimate- including man are considered to be the integral part of nature nor around the concept of ecological balance or equilibrium which is not considered to be the moral norm. The attitude of respect for nature by humans who are seen as moral agents revolves around the concept of good of a being where all natural species are considered as entities possessing 'inherent worth' which in actuality determines our moral relations with the Earth's community of life.

From the above discussion it seems clear that life centered system of environmental ethics which centers on the attitude of respect for nature is quite contrary to the concepts of traditional or human centered ethics revolving around the notion of anthropocentrism.

³ See Taylor, P.W. *Respect for Nature, A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1986, pp.59-90.

Traditional Human Approach towards Nature (Anthropocentrism)

The anthropocentric approach is, in fact, a traditional approach going back to Protogoras who said that man is the measure of all things; of what is, that it is; of what is not, that it is not. Anthropocentrism is a view where value is conceived instrumentally or non-intrinsically, where nature is conceived as a storehouse of materials to be used exploited and satisfies the needs of human beings, the unique creation of God possessing rationality. Nature according to the anthropocentric outlook is therefore used as a means to satisfy ends. This anthropocentric attitude towards nature is further strengthened with the advancement of science and technology and the rise of materialism and consumerism. The ancient book of Genesis describes the unique position of human beings in relation to the rest of the species in nature. According to the content of the book God says to the human beings, "Be faithful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have domination over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God even said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the force of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; and you shall have them for food."⁴ Such ancient writings clearly reflect the notion of anthropocentrism.

In the past people thought that the natural process were intentional and could be thus modified through prayer and entreaty. But this conception of nature was not well accepted in the Gracio-Christian western world. In the later period it was further believed that nature has the power to take revenge on human beings for his misdeeds. In Ibsen's Wild duck old Ekdal believed that the forest would take revenge for having been too ruthlessly thinned.

This belief that nature is capable of taking revenge on humans for his misdeeds bears great value in recent environmental literature. The

⁴ Subbarao,S. : *Ethics of Ecology and Environment*, Rajat Publications, New Delhi ,1997, p. 4

Stoic Christians believed in the absolute uniqueness of man. According to their view nature was created by God for man to use in accordance to his free will. They thought that God created man to serve him and He only created the natural world of plants and animals to serve man in turn. Every natural process like volcano, flood, and tempest is not intentional, it attempts to aid man or guide him spiritually. Although such a view about nature, God and man can be traced back to the *Old Testament*, that everything in nature exists to serve man is not a regular teaching of the *Old Testament*. On the other hand, it has been said that that God causes it to rain on Earth for nature to survive, make the buds spring forth, flowers bloom, and grasses grow and satisfy the dry and desolate land. Thus, the view of nature focused by the Stoic Christian was contrary to the teachings in the Old Testament. Moreover, the dictum that everything in nature has been created by God for man to use does not entail that man should go forth and transform the world according to his needs. God has created both man and nature, He has created nature in accordance to the needs of man; therefore “sinful corrupt men ought not to attempt to reshape the world in their own image.”⁵

The invention of machines and scientific and technological progress and development was witnessed in Europe after the crusades. Machines like water wheels, wind mill, compass etc reduced human labour. It was believed that such intentions displeased God as He provided everything readymade on earth for man to utilize and consume. Hence artificiality through mechanization obviously went against God’s will. Thus, the view that nature was created by God for human utilization clearly bears the notion of anthropocentrism which is the actual cause behind the present day crisis of environmental degradation. Such an anthropocentric outlook failed to induce respect in humans for nature as it was seen as something created only for utilization. Nothing in nature was thus considered sacred, hence

⁵ Passmore, John. : *Attitude to Nature from Environmental Ethics*, edited by Robert Eliot, Oxford University Press, Published in 1995, p. 131.

falling of tress or mercifulness killing of animals was not considered as a sinful act.

Inventions and progress in science and technology seemed to be a distinctive feature of Christian civilization. Act of modification or transformation of nature by man for his use was not at all considered sacrilegious. In the other way it may well be said that according to the Christian view ‘ no moral consideration bear upon man’s relation to natural objects, except where they happen to be someone else’s property or except where to treat them cruelly or destructively might encourage corresponding attitude towards other human beings.’⁶

According to the stoics, cruelty or brutality to animals is not wrong in itself, but it is wrong in the sense that such an act on the part of man towards animals might make them act in the same manner with other human beings. The Jewish Christians, however, advocated and maintained a more cordial and considerate attitude towards non-human nature. A philosopher like Emanuel Kant reaffirms the Stoic Christian thought by saying that brutality to animals is wrong only in virtue of its effects on human beings. He condemned the act of killing animals on the ground that such an act effects human interest and is therefore intrinsically wrong. Though Kant’s conviction is intended towards protection of human’s interest, it enables one to be governed by moral consideration in their attitude towards nature.

Rene Descartes, a French philosopher and scientist of the 17th century denied the fact that it is wrong to cause suffering to animals because according to him animals cannot suffer. All suffering in the world is due to Adam’s sin and since animals were implicated in that sin they cannot suffer. Thus, according to Descartes, the act of killing or treating animals, i.e. nature brutally is not wrong or sinful. Both humans and animals are a part of nature, but the unique characteristic of human beings is their consciousness which is outside nature. Thus, human body though united with nature was for Descartes “unique in being in some way united with consciousness;

⁶ Ibid. p. 132.

the human person, conjoining mind and body, would thus be set in total opposition to the non-human world it encounters.”⁷

From the above lines one can easily say that man though united with nature is not subjected to any sort of moral obligation in his treatment or confrontation with nature. That every resource in nature is meant for human use is considered ‘absurd’ or ‘childish’ by Descartes. Everything existing in nature is not utilized by man, nor can all things existing naturally be used by man immediately and effectively. Man needs to modify or transform nature in order to utilize it effectively. It is possible for man to artificialise or modify nature only when he thinks himself to be the master and possessor of nature. This intention of man to utilize nature by transforming and modifying it reflects the exploitive attitude of man towards nature. Descartes calls this method of exploitation of nature through artificialisation and modification ‘practical philosophy’, which is based on scientific and technological advancement of man. Human beings, the possessor of supreme intellect at the outset acquire a first hand knowledge about the wild nature and then moulds natural things in order to make them work in the manner more comfortable with human interest. Such an attitude of exploitation of nature by man formed the basis of western sciences.

Most of the philosophers during that period were not prepared to accept the Cartesian mind-body dualism; the theory according to which mind or consciousness was taken to be equivalent to reason and body equivalent to matter or nature. Descartes advocated an absolute anthropocentric approach by making a rigid partition between nature and consciousness and it was neither difficult to bring them together. Philosophers went against the mind-body dualism of Descartes. To them nature appeared to be more human like but they denied the fact that nature is wholly independent or a ‘thing in itself’, i.e. denying the fact that nature possesses intrinsic value. Nature, therefore, was still of instrumental use for them.

⁷ Ibid. p. 133.

Hegel and Marx emphasized on this negative aspect of nature which implies that the existence of nature is only for human utilization. The post Cartesian philosophers and metaphysicians denied absolute partition of mind from body or reason from nature. They emphasized that wild nature appears to be weird (strange) to man, but man makes it less strange by working on it and moulding it in accordance to his own desires thereby destroying its actuality or rationality. According to Hegel this depreciation or devaluation of nature is actually appreciated by man since nature is humanized or made less strange or weird to man by his own self. Such artificialisation or humanization of nature gives more scope of human invasion into nature which allows him to conquer and tame it according to his desires.

From the above paragraphs it seems to be quite clear that though both Descartes, through his theory of mind-body dualism and Hegel through his concept of humanization of nature were strong supporters of anthropocentrism, yet both differ greatly in their views. Descartes held nature equivalent to body which is inert, intuitive or passive and therefore completely dominated by man seen as equivalent to mind or reason. Such a view advocated human mastery over nature. The Hegelian philosophy is somewhat different as it propounded the humanization of nature through man's intellect and labour

A Modified Version of Anthropocentric Approach (Attitude) towards Nature:

From the above section we come to understand that a strong form of anthropocentrism persisted in society, particularly in the western society which generated degradation of the environment. It was gradually felt that such an anthropocentric philosophy of life needs to be replaced by a new one.

The new philosophy which gradually emerged tried to accept the strangeness or wildness of nature. By following such a philosophy concerning nature man had to learn how to co-exist with wild and

weird nature instead of transforming it totally. Human beings tried to be aware of the fact that the natural processes continue and they will continue in their own natural way despite the presence of human beings. He even realized that it was not possible for him to neglect or ignore science or scientific theories since such theories give us a detailed knowledge about every aspect of nature. What man actually did and is still doing is, his interaction with a system of already formulated natural interpretations which sets in a new series of interactions that may carry any sort of risk unable to be predicted by man himself. This inability to predict the consequence of his conscious actions stem out from his limited knowledge of science and his unawareness about nature and its processes. This actually induces exploitation of nature.

The new philosophy of nature should be non-anthropocentric or at least weakly anthropocentric which needs to accept the changes and complexities of nature and natural processes. This new philosophy of nature needs to take it for granted that natural processes are independent of man's existence on earth, that nature is not malleable and should not be reshaped, transformed or modified in accordance to the will of man and it is not constructed to guarantee the continued existence of human beings and their civilization.

The naturalistic philosophy, however, is not new. Its foundations have been laid since the time of Darwin when he propounded the 'theory of survival of the fittest.' According to his theory, natural processes go on and the species which are able to adjust to their environment or surroundings are able to survive. The new philosophy of nature which should be adopted follows the same line. This philosophy tries to reduce the strangeness of nature by proposing that man is a part of nature and therefore nature is not alien to man, neither strange to him. Thus all plants and animals and even human beings are therefore subject to natural laws.

In the natural world, human beings subject to natural laws and natural processes survive at the cost of other species. They are

different from the other species in the sense that they possess the power to observe the disappearance of certain species in the competitive natural world, ascertain the reasons for such disappearance and even predict the consequence of such disappearance. They also possess the power or capacity to give protection to such species or preserve them by modifying their own behaviour towards them by being less destructive towards nature.

Thus, the central theme of the new ethics or philosophy of nature is human responsibility towards nature. It is therefore high time for human beings to realize and to be conscious that he is a part of the biotic community and every member of that community, be they plants, animals, insects or birds have a right to survive and deserve respect from every other member of the community. But one thing which must be remembered is that, all species of the biotic community survive through the prey-predator relationship amongst them. It is a natural process and therefore has to continue. Thus, it should be taken for granted that human beings to a certain degree are predators, i.e. they are dependent on other species for their survival. This role of predatorship of the human beings is permissible as far as their survival is concerned but not beyond that. Human beings, apart from being a predator for their survival, need to act justly and humanly towards all other species of the biotic community.

The only way to co-exist in harmony with nature is to abandon the Augustinian principle which advocates that nature is there to be used, and not enjoyed. Moral notions like vandalism and philistinism expose man's cruelty towards nature. Such attitudes should be vehemently discarded. The contribution of Romanticism, which encouraged human beings to look upon nature not merely as an instrument, is considerable to build up a relationship of harmony with nature. What ought to be our attitude towards nature can be put down in the following manner- "if we can bring ourselves fully to admit the independence of nature, the fact that things go on in their own complex ways, we are likely to feel more respect for the ways in which

they go on. We are prepared to contemplate them with admiration, to enjoy them sensuously to study them in their complexity as distinct from looking for simple methods of manipulating them.”⁸ To develop such an attitude nature should be looked upon as something less ‘strange’ which could enable us to be concerned or take interest or even care for it.

What ought to be Human Attitude towards Nature:

As already discussed, a life-centered theory occupies a very important place in modern environmental ethics. The theory states that every human being by virtue of being a moral agent have moral obligation towards plants, animals and all living species since all are members of the biotic community. We are morally bound to protect and promote their good for their own sake. In fact the healthy survival of all species within the environment depends largely on human attitude towards them. An attitude of respect towards all natural species on the part of human beings enhances their healthy and proper survival within the natural environment. If the life-centered theory of environmental ethics needs to be accepted, “a profound reordering of our moral universe would take place. We would begin to look at the whole of the Earth’s biosphere in a new light. Our duties with respect to the ‘world’ of nature would be seen as making *prima facie* claims upon us to be balanced against our duties with respect to the ‘world’ of human civilization. We could no longer take the human point of view and consider the effect of our actions exclusively from the perspective of our own good.”⁹

Two concepts need to be clarified and analyzed in understanding the attitude of respect towards nature. These two concepts are first that of the good of being and second the concept of inherent worth.

⁸ Ibid. p.141.

⁹ Taylor, W. Paul : “ The Ethics of Respect for Nature”, included in *Environmental Ethics* by David Schmidly and Elizabeth Willot, Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 83.

The concept of good of a Being and Inherent Worth:

Any entity is said to have a good of its own when any positive endeavour by any moral agent furthers its good without reference to the satisfaction of human wants. For example, routine physical exercise by a human entity may promote his or her health directly. Thus, the said entity possesses good of its own. The regular pruning and caring of rose trees in a garden for which the trees bear more flowers to provide aesthetic satisfaction to the viewers cannot be considered as an ideal example of a being or entity possessing good of its own. A machine is oiled, not for the true well being of the machine itself, but for the efficient work it can perform for some human purposes or ends.

To promote a being's good is intimately related to the good of a being. An entity's good may be promoted or protected by either avoiding causing it harm, or by keeping it safe from danger, or by providing a condition which is favourable for its existence, or destroying a condition unfavourable or detrimental for its existence.

The foremost question which strikes our mind is, what sort of entities possesses good of their own. From the above examples it may be said that those entities which have their own interests or ends or those affected by positive or negative actions by any agent can be said to possess good of their own. Thus, a heap of sand, a machine or a stone have no interest of their own, nor are they satisfied or dissatisfied by any action of any agents.

But is it really true to say that only entities having interest possess good of their own? The answer is certainly not. Even those entities which experience neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction, neither fulfillment nor frustration are living things possessing good of their own. Such entities may be unconscious or even conscious, but unable to express their consciousness. Therefore, it may be said that all

members of the biotic community of natural world including all forms of life, whether plants or animals, possess good of their own.

In this perspective one needs to understand the distinction between one's apparent good and one's true good. When an entity values something and believes that it can bring about good to that entity, then that something which an entity values is apparently good for that entity. On the other hand, whatever is conducive for the realization of one's good directly is said to be one's true good or is objectively valuable and can be referred to as human good.

Thus, any condition which leads to the true realization of one's good or in fact human good, or in other words any condition bringing about human flourishing or true happiness is objectively valuable. As an individual gains more rationality, autonomy and factual knowledge, he becomes more mature in choosing an ideal condition which is favourable for his own living and the true realization and achievement of that ideal condition becomes his ideal goal of life.

Now the question which needs to be answered here is whether the non-human living entities can realize the conditions favourable for their existence or put value on something which will bring about their true good. The theory of respect for nature states that plants and animals, i.e. the non-human living species possesses good of their own and it is correct to apply the concept of objective value on them.

The good of an insect or the well being of that particular insect can be fully realized if one has or gains a proper knowledge about the full life cycle of that insect and the environmental conditions favourable for the prosperous existence of that insect. If the insect thrives under favourable environmental conditions then it can be safely concluded that the good of this particular insect has been fully realized. A good knowledge about the environmental conditions conducive for a non-human entity's well being will enable one to make proper moral judgment towards them. When an individual is fully acknowledged about what conditions promote the welfare or what conditions are detrimental to the non-human natural entities, he or she can make

proper value judgments from the perspective of the organism's life, even if the organism can neither make nor understand those judgments. The underlying theme of the theory of respect of nature is that the moral agents, i.e. human entities capable of making moral judgment must be dutiful towards natural objects and refrain from actions detrimental to the healthy existence of those entities. Thus as moral agents, it becomes obligatory for human beings not to harm or destroy plants or animals or any sentient beings who possess good of their own. If human beings are capable of promoting the welfare of individual organisms then it is also possible for them to promote the welfare of the whole species population. Individual organisms are components or members of the species population and hence promotion of their well being furthers the well being of the whole species population although the species population itself does not possess good of its own. Similarly, the good of the whole biotic community can be realized by promoting the good of the individual members of the community. But this statement is quite confusing since if the good of all members of the biotic community is to be realized, it may cause harm to the community. Now the question that requires clarification is that how the community is harmed when the well being or good of all its individual members is realized. The proper functioning of the ecosystem is maintained by the pre-predator relationship. Now if one tries to protect the prey from the grip of the predator, then it may cause harm to the predator, i.e. its natural existence would be at stake which in turn could cause harm to the biotic community at large. That is why Taylor rightly puts, " Thus the reality of the community's good, like that of the species population, can be found nowhere, but in the lives of individual organisms, even though when we speak of the good of the community we are not referring to the good of each individual member taken separately."¹⁰

¹⁰ Taylor, P.W.: *The Attitude of Respect for Nature: Respect for Nature, A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, pp.70-71.

After careful analysis of the first concept, i.e. the concept of 'good of a being', let us discuss in detail the concept of inherent worth. In fact the attitude of respect for nature stems from the fact that plants and animals, like humans possess inherent worth or some value which is not always instrumental. Since the non-human living members of the biotic community possess worth or value, therefore they deserve respect from the moral agents.

A distinction can be brought between the two concepts, i.e. the concept of 'good of a being' and the concept of 'inherent worth'. That entity possesses good of their own does not entail that moral agents ought to respect them or promote their welfare. Moral agents may protect, care or bring about welfare to those entities or may not do so, i.e. they can even harm or destroy those entities possessing good of their own. Possession of good of a being only does not make an entity worthy of respect by moral agents. An entity, whether human or non-human, deserves respect from moral agents when it possesses inherent worth along with having a good of its own.

Two other concepts which often seem to be synonymous to the concept of inherent worth and are frequently referred to in environmental ethics are the concepts of 'intrinsic value' and 'inherent value'. A proper analysis of the aforesaid concepts will help us to make a distinction between them.

Intrinsic value:

It is the value which one places on an object which is valuable in itself and is not valued simply for its uses. An object or entity possessing value is not a means to an end but an end itself. Thus, all natural objects- whether plants or animals possess intrinsic value and they all owe respect from moral agents. Both plants and animals possess instrumental or use value too, but they are also the possessors of intrinsic value. In the biotic community all the members survive through a prey-predator relationship. Thus, one member may be of instrumental use to the other, which in turn may be of use to the

superior predator and so on. But, while recognizing such relationship one must not forget that such individual member of the community has value in itself ,i.e. they are not only valuable as means to an end, but they are all an end in themselves.

Inherent value:

This is the value which one places on an object or place because of its cultural significance, historical importance or aesthetic beauty. One feels or knows that such objects or places need to be preserved or one should refrain from destroying or damaging such places or objects. Thus, the great Taj Mohal of India is preserved, protected or repaired and looked after for its aesthetic beauty or inherent value. A small ring not having much price value in the market may be of inherent value to an individual since it was presented to him/her by someone who loves him/her. Thus, the object possesses inherent value for that particular individual. Such an inherent value may be placed on living objects like animals kept as pet, or flowers and trees grown in one's garden or even wild animals in forest or zoo. But such objects bear inherent value when one places value on it. Thus, such value depends simply on the valuation of respective individuals which does not depend on the commercial worth or usefulness or instrumentality of the object. Therefore, it is the humans who endow the plants and animals and many other objects with inherent value. As soon as inherent value is endowed on an object, whether living or non-living, animate or inanimate, that object or entity is preserved, protected or respected by that individual. Inherent value has a close tie with intrinsic value in the sense that such value is endowed not on the basis of the object's commercial worth or instrumental usefulness.

Inherent worth:

This term is applied only to those entities that possess good of their own. Any living thing has inherent worth if it possesses good of its

own regardless of any instrumental or inherent value and without reference to the good of any other being. The term inherent worth is in fact applied to the possessors of absolute intrinsic value. Thus, the entity having inherent worth should be treated as a moral subject which deserves care and consideration from moral agents. The moral agents therefore have a duty to preserve and protect the entity's good as an end in itself. Or in other words, it can be said that the humans have a moral obligation to respect all entities possessing inherent worth.

The concept of inherent worth should be separated from the concept of merit both from human-centred judgment and from the non-human standpoint. Those entities possessing inherent worth, all have the same worth irrespective of differences in merit. Thus, all human beings possess inherent worth since it is their simple personhood itself which is the ground of their worth. One individual may be superior to the other on the basis of merit, or individuals may be graded in the order of merit, but such gradation does not hold good when we say that all those individuals possess inherent worth.

In the non-human world also, one animal species may be better than the other as a prey for a predator population, and that particular predator population may itself have merit in relation to the biotic community of which it is a part. But when the question of moral judgment or consideration comes, all species should be treated or considered equally as all possess inherent worth irrespective of their inferiority or superiority.

The distinction between inherent worth and merit has very important implications in both environment ethics and human centered traditional ethics. Let us consider its implications in environmental ethics for the time being.

In the first place, if inherent worth is attributed to all plants and animal species of the biotic community, then each plant or animal is to be treated as moral subjects having equal status and therefore

deserve or owe duties by moral agents. None are considered to be superior or inferior to others on the basis of merits.

Secondly, the non human members of the biotic community should not be treated as objects for satisfaction for mere human wants. In other words, plants and animals should not only be put to instrumental use for human beings who are the sole moral agents.

Thirdly, the preservation, promotion and protection of natural entities should be taken as an ultimate end by the moral agents.

And lastly, it can be said that the moral agents have a duty on principle to give moral consideration to moral subjects whether non-human or human. The moral agents are bound to show respect towards moral subjects irrespective of whether they like, love or dislike the entity possessing inherent worth.

From the above discussion it is quite clear that the core theme of environmental ethics, i.e. the attitude of respect to be bestowed on moral subjects by moral agents, centers on the concept of inherent worth. To accept the theory of environmental ethics means to hold that all plants and animals of the natural world have inherent worth and therefore deserve respect from moral agents which in other words mean that moral agents ought to have a biocentric outlook of life.

The ultimate moral attitude of moral agents as said earlier ought to be the attitude of respect towards non-human nature. Once such an attitude is adopted by the moral agents they ought to follow certain ethical principles or code of conduct whereby they express their ultimate attitude.

Different Dimension of an Attitude of Respect for Non-Human Nature:

The attitude of respect for nature by moral agents has four dimensions- the valuational, connative, practical and effective dimension. A clarification of each dimension needs detailed discussion. According to the valuational dimension all natural entities

are regarded as objects possessing inherent worth. They are therefore worthy of deserving respect, moral concern and care from moral agents. In other words, it may be said that the moral agents are disposed to show an attitude of respect towards all natural entities.

The second dimension, i.e. the connative dimension in the disposition of the moral agents, is to aim to certain ends or goods and to strive towards the achievement of that goal. The two purposes of the moral agents who strive to respect nature are (i) avoid harm, injuring or bringing about destruction to the natural entities and (ii) preserving the existence of all non-human entities. If all moral agents adopt such an attitude then they are set to follow certain rules or ethical principles which will ensure proper preservation of the biotic community.

The practical dimension deals with the practical decision to be taken by moral agents regarding the attitude they are to undertake towards natural entities. This dimension actually incorporates the decision making capacity of moral agents which in turn encompasses their rationality, power of judgment and exercise of will. The question of practical decision comes when a choice has to be made amongst various alternatives. In such situation the moral agent chooses to undertake that action which according to his rationality and moral judgment he considers to be the best or most appropriate. Thus, before taking any decision in practical life the moral agents think the questions: whether they ought or not ought to take such an action, what are the possible future consequences of the action to be taken or whether his action will bring about harm or encourage flourishing of natural entities? The decision taken by one is considered to be morally good if the action taken according to the decision bring about no direct or indirect, present or future harmful impact on any natural entity. Actions taken by individuals are morally good if they encourage flourishing, promote welfare and preserve the existence of all living entities or members of the biotic community. If the ultimate goal of the moral agent is to respect nature then all those actions aiming towards

the achievement of that end are morally justifiable and the actions which go against the achievement of that end or purpose are considered to be morally justifiable. Thus in the words of Taylor “ When moral agents have the ends mentioned in connection with the connative dimension, and when they do things or abstain from doing things for the reasons just given, they have the attitude of respect for nature.”¹¹

The fourth and the last one is the affective dimension or the disposition of feeling or affection for living things on the part of moral agents. When any moral agent shows respect towards any moral subject he or she has a soft feeling or affection for that moral subject and he or she wants its existence to continue. This disposition of affection is very closely related to the valuational, connative and practical dimension mentioned in the earlier paragraphs. The affective dimension is the ‘sign that one does regard wild living things as possessing inherent worth, that one has the appropriate ends and purposes, and that one is disposed to act for the relevant reasons. The feelings go with these other dispositions, and all of the dispositions together comprise the unified attitude of respect for the natural world.”¹²

What ought to be the attitude of respect for nature?

Having discussed the four dispositions, such as, valuation, connative, practical and affective, one can clearly understand what it means to have an attitude of respect for nature. Now the question arises: how this attitude of respect can be expressed in the conduct and character of moral agents?

When an individual performs action or refrains from performing actions on the basis of the above mentioned four dispositions, he

¹¹ Ibid. p.83.

¹² Ibid. p.84.

expresses the attitude of respect for nature in his conduct. For example, if an individual values a rose plant, if he wants its existence to continue and if he possesses a feeling of affection for the plant and starts watering, pruning, manuring and caring for the plant then his action expresses the attitude of respect for the rose plant. Thus, when he is concerned about the existence of any natural living entity and acts in accordance to such concern or consideration, then he expresses the attitude of respect for that living entity.

Some of the actions performed by the supporters of anthropocentrism may also encourage the well being of non-human natural entities. But it cannot be said that such actions express an attitude of respect for nature because the ultimate objective or end of the people supporting human-centred viewpoint in environmental matters is to bring about human welfare at the cost of non-human living entities. Thus, they express respect for humans and therefore cannot express the attitude of respect for wild living natural entities. According to them, humans are the sole possessors of inherent worth and therefore their conduct cannot express the attitude of respect for non-human entities as they are not the possessors of inherent worth according to them.

Moreover, the action showing respect for nature should be taken on the basis of certain moral principles and not on the basis of one's context or inclination. An action taken on the basis of one's context or inclination will obviously reflect one's personal affection or love for that entity and not the attitude of respect. An action expresses the attitude of respect when it becomes ethically obligatory on the part of the moral agents to preserve, protect and care for the good of all members of the biotic community for their own sake or an end in themselves.

It is now time to understand how the attitude of respect for nature is reflected in one's character. The two aspects deliberative and the practical are the two aspects visualized in a person's character. The deliberative aspect incorporates a person's rationality in deciding what he ought to or ought not to do in a situation of choice particularly

when he is influenced by non-moral wants and desires. A person is said to possess an honest character if he has the power of deliberative rationality. This means that a truly honest person never gets confused or gets involved in duplicity and biased judgment but takes a rational decision and always comes at a correct conclusion.

The practical aspect of a person's character reflects the capacity of an individual to act in accordance to deliberate rationality, reasoning and judgment. In order to perform such actions a person should possess enormous will power and should exercise his will power and self mastery in performing any action in practical life.

In the arena of environmental ethics our prime concern is to assess how a person's character expresses the attitude of respect for nature, person of good character or a person of virtue will deliberate his actions correctly or in the rigid direction in a situation of choice. In the words of Paul Taylor 'virtues give one the steady ability to do the right thing with the right aim and for the right reasons in situations where mere failure due to confusion of mind and weakness of will are not uncommon.'¹³ Thus, proper or good character traits enable one to visualize clearly the necessary duties, obligations and responsibilities one ought to take towards the non-human entities of the biotic world.

The attitude of respect for nature can also be expressed through moral rules or through certain ethical systems. The true respect towards wild living things is finally expressed when the normative rules or laws are linked with the ethical conduct and character of individuals. Thus, if moral agents act in accordance with the normative rules and principles that define a 'possible world', the true attitude of respect towards nature is expressed. Summing up, it may be said that moral agents ought to follow the 'rules' and standards of a valid system of environmental ethics in order to give due recognition and respect to the inherent worth of living natural entities.

True respect for nature is the most fundamental kind of moral commitment that one can make. This moral commitment of moral

¹³ *ibid.* p.88.

agents should not be misunderstood as love for nature. Love for nature expresses one's personal affection or feeling or one's fondness for a particular breed of animal or a particular plant species or whatsoever natural object it may be. But such love or affection for natural objects is not understood as a matter of moral commitment, i.e. it is not universally adopted by moral agents, but repulsive to others which allow one to adopt an attitude of love for some objects and dislike for others. But if one expresses the attitude of respect for nature, then he ought to be concerned about the well being of the whole nature in general irrespective of repulsiveness of specific species. To adopt the attitude of respect for nature is to abide by certain moral norms or ethical norms which are morally binding upon him, he also feels that such norms should be binding upon all moral agents, i.e. such an attitude ought to be universally adopted by all moral agents. All moral agents should therefore give due recognition to the inherent worth possessed by all natural entities. Since all natural entities are true possessors of inherent worth, a worth or value irrespective of any subjective interest of any human beings, they all deserve concern, respect, and care from all moral agents.

Apart from the attitude of respect towards nature, several other attitudes towards nature can be taken by moral agents, like the attitude of scientific curiosity, the aesthetic attitude of appreciation of nature's beauty, the attitude of deriving enjoyment or pleasure from nature and so on. If any of those attitude are taken along with the attitude of respect for nature then the well being of nature is not adversely affected. In another way it may be said that such attitude should not supercede the moral attitude of respect for nature in any way.

In certain instances it may be seen that two moral attitudes, i.e. the attitude of respect for persons and attitude of respect for nature come in conflict with each other. Certain scientific experimentation may be carried out which may adversely affect nature, but prevent human beings from certain unwanted danger. Under such circumstances,

when the two moral attitudes come in conflict with each other, it is morally difficult for moral agents to decide which attitude ought to be adopted. Some of the hedonistic, aesthetic or scientific attitudes sometimes directly harm nature. For example, setting up a hotel or resort in a forest area. In order to establish that resort the forest area has to be cleared up, which means felling of innumerable valuable trees and destruction of natural habitat of wild animals and plants simply to provide aesthetic satisfaction to the handful of human beings. In this situation when moral agents are in a dilemma whether to build up the resort or protect the natural habitat of wild animals and plants, priority should be given to the protection and preservation of nature. In fact the above mentioned attitudes, i.e. scientific and aesthetic and hedonistic should be resorted to with great care so that such attitudes do not seriously harm wild creations and natural ecosystems.

Although a discussion of different types of attitudes towards nature, including the attitude of respect has been taken up in the former paragraphs, the most common attitude undertaken by man towards nature is the exploitive attitude. Nature and its wilderness is visualized by man as a storehouse of resources which only possess instrumental value to meet human ends. Human beings, in general, therefore exploit natural resources to satisfy their own wants, desires and needs. With the advancement of civilization which actually involves scientific and technological progress and development, man has mastered the technique to 'subdue' and 'conquer' nature for his own benefit.

This exploitive attitude of man is always in conflict with the moral and ethical attitude of respect towards nature. Human beings recognized wild creatures and plants as objects of consumption possessing instrumental value or objects possessing inherent value insofar as human finds satisfaction in observing them, learning about them or interacting with them in some way. Thus, they are not treated as subjects or objects possessing inherent worth which is the 'core word'

or 'core philosophy' of the attitude of respect towards nature. The absence of this 'core word' in the exploitive attitude brings it into deep conflict with the attitude of respect towards nature.

Now how shall one justify that the ultimate attitude of moral agents should be an attitude of respect towards nature. As said by Taylor, '...in order to justify the attitude, then, we must show that the whole ethical system that embodies it is a valid one. How can this be done? The only way is to set forth the belief system that underlies and supports the attitude and show that it is accepted to all who are rational, factually informed and have a developed capacity. In the case for the attitude of respect for nature, this involves examining the way of looking at nature and the place of humans in it which makes intelligible and taking of that attitude. We must then show why every rational being who is factually informed and open to the reality of life would accept the outlook as a part of their own total world view.'¹⁴

Buddhist Approach towards Nature:

In the perspective of environmental studies the religious movement that has its greatest impact is Buddhism. Buddhism as a religion originated in India several centuries ago and with the gradual passage of time its mission spread throughout the world. The only reason for its wide acceptance is that Buddhism as a religion is based on true wisdom and not on any blind faith or dogma. To accept or to follow Buddhism means to strive towards ones own self realization (atmadipo bhava). The main intention of Buddhism as a religious faith was to reduce the sorrows and sufferings of human beings. In fact, the guidelines prescribed by Lord Buddha for reduction of human sorrows and sufferings are of great significance in present environmental studies.

Buddhism predicts, "When humanity is demoralized through greed, famine is the natural outcome; when moral degradation is due to

¹⁴ Ibid. p.98.

ignorance, epidemic is the inevitable result; when hatred is the demoralizing force, widespread violence is the outcome.”¹⁵

The above statement clearly brings out the picture of ecological devastation. But to be just an observer of the present situation will not bring a solution to the present crisis. Human beings as active members of the biotic community should come forward and search for ways and means for maintaining the ecological balance between man and nature.

According to Buddha, human sorrow or suffering is the outcome of intense craving or desire. Intense greed for material benefits increases mental agony and tension which is the sole cause for human suffering. The best way to bring down such suffering is by regulating one's desire. Buddha's teachings have clear indication of maintenance of one's mental balance (*kaśula citta*). The global environmental crisis can be tackled if such a state of mental balance is attained not only at individual level, but at the universal level. *Atmopolabdhi* or 'self-realization' through self regulation of desire is actually *nirvāṇa* in the words of Buddhism. Attainment of *nirvāṇa* from individual platform to universal level will surely bring down environmental crisis gradually according to Buddha.

Protection and preservation of nature which is the key to the maintenance of ecological balance is clearly brought into focus through two expressions of *Shantideva*, a prominent Buddhist exponent: (i) '*parātmāsamatā*' - i.e. feeling of oneness with others and (ii) *paratmaparivartana* - i.e. identification of oneness with other selves. Love and respect for others, which not only incorporates love for human beings alone, but love and respect for plants, animals and nature as a whole is expressed vividly in Buddhist literature which expresses Buddhist's concern for protection of nature. Buddhist literature also enumerates that nature is the greatest teacher spreading the notion of kindness (*maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), joy (*mudita*) and equanimity (*upekṣā*). Such faults clearly indicate that

¹⁵ Rhys Davids, T.W. & Stede, W. ED. *Digha Nikaya*, London, PTS, 1970-71, Vol. iii, p.80.

Buddhism as a religion encouraged collective life and corporate living of fellowmen with the rest of nature.

Buddhism as a religion or the preaching of Buddha prescribed in Pali language forms an important part of Pali literature where environmental problems and their ethical solutions are highlighted. Through Pali literature Buddha propounded harmonious living of human beings with the rest of nature, i.e. with the animate and inanimate species of the biotic community. Green forest areas where nature survived with its full purity were chosen as places for meditation. Buddha too, like ancient *munis*, *seers* (*rsi-s*) and saints selected the forest of Uruvela and the river Niranjana for meditation and attainment of *Nirvāṇa*. Buddha realized the contribution of the natural surroundings towards attainment of peace. He comprehended the necessity of nature for the promotion of human welfare. In fact, a full chapter- '*Opammakatha*' in the *Milindapanha* in Pali literature is devoted to Buddhist awareness of nature. As emphasized in Buddhism, nature and its components guide every human being towards attainment of peace and morality and therefore development of a purified personality. While residing in the forest Buddha visualized and hence realized that each and every species of the natural world live in harmony with each other and the natural order or the balance of nature is well maintained through the complex prey-predator relationship. While living with nature, men are bound to develop a caring attitude for the harmless flora and fauna around them. He even realized that each species draws its sustenance from nature, therefore men can also live by acquiring his basic needs of food, clothing and shelter from nature, but his intention should be devoid of greed and lust which is the actual cause behind destruction of nature and deterioration of environmental quality. The forest according to Buddha is an unusual or exceptional organism having unlimited kindness or benevolence which has no demand for its own subsistence. It offers generously its products to all natural species

including human beings; it gives protection to all even to the axeman who tends to destroy it.

In the present day context of acute environmental degradation, the notions of Buddhism enumerated in Pali literature finds its importance. With more and more advancement in information technology, the world has become a global village and people have come to know about the facts and occurrences in every nook and corner of the world. Such informations have revealed to the masses the present scenario of extreme ecological crisis which made them aware of the fact that unlimited exploitation of nature through the progress of science and technology should be stopped or halted somewhere. Instead, nature needs to be protected, to be looked after, to be cared for, which would bring about universal welfare.

Although nature is useful to man from various aspects, the value of nature should not only be judged from its instrumental aspect. Such a fallacious view leads to rapacious exploitation which in reality leads to global environmental crisis. Nature, in fact, needs to be valued for its inherent worth. The greeneries are in a way, our benefactor and Buddha's preaching through Pali literature and sermons show proper respect to them with a sense of gratitude. The Buddha expresses his respect, love and gratitude towards nature by prohibiting cutting down of trees and plants and destruction of all types of fauna and flora, even the minutest one.

Buddha's love and concern for nature or the concept of human beings living in harmony with nature is revealed through the Jataka stories of rebirth. Buddha practiced various *Pāramitās*, e.g. *dāna*, *sita*, *khanti*, *viraya*, *jhana* and *panna* by taking birth as different living species in the lap of nature.

Through Pali literature Buddha expressed that love and concern for nature can be exhibited by living in harmony with it. One needs to identify him as a part of nature, as a member of the whole biotic community and in this respect nature should be revered and treated with kindness and benevolence for its invaluable services extended

towards human welfare instead of its ruthless exploitation carried out through the progress of science and technology. The practice of *Arannikanja* (living under some tree) encouraged by Buddhist teachings revealed his respect for nature. He encouraged meditation in the deep forest without harming fierce animals unless harmed by them. According to Buddha, meditation by which he means 'one-pointed concentration' makes a man psychologically balanced, which will gradually enable him to refrain and restrain himself from unwanted desires and live in harmony with all social beings and nature. Buddha has gained that external environmental pollution is primary due to pollution of internal environment, i.e. the inner mind of specially the human beings. This opinion of Lord Buddha is evidenced in the *Dhammapada*. Thus, according to him the first and foremost step towards blocking environmental degradation should be to simplify one's mind, which is uncontrolled and fickle. He therefore encouraged meditation in the calm and cool atmosphere of the forests and mountains which would enable one to develop his inner mind and ultimately feel for the society at large and live in harmony with all species of the biotic community. In this connection he emphasizes on the threefold training of human mind and the seven factors of enlightenment. The three fold training of mind enumerated in *Mahāparinibbānasutta* of the *Dighanikaya* incorporates civilization of ethical conduct (*śīla*), meditation (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*pañña*). This is intensely connected to Buddha's doctrine of seven factors of enlightenment- mindfulness (*sati*), discrimination of principles (*dhamma-vicaya*), energy in pursuit of the food (*virya*), rapture (*pīti*), tranquility (*pasaddhi*), concentration (*Samādhi*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*). These are, in fact, essential for enhancement of one's moral development.

The Tanhabaggo chapter of *Dhammapada* clearly states that pollution of one's inner mind crops up due to his intense thirst for worldly enjoyment and pleasure which he endeavours to quench even by adopting injury to human and non-human beings including

environment. He therefore advises individuals to eradicate the root of such greed and lust by adopting the three fold path and following the doctrine of seven factors of enlightenment or in other words through the weapon of wisdom which he calls *panna cchindatha*. Thus, the true solution to the present global crisis involves the rectification of individual's inner self the path of wisdom which would gradually lead to the evolution of a significant number of human beings to a higher level of awareness and a higher ethical sensibility. Every individual possesses the potentiality to reach to the aforesaid high level of ethical sensibility. Such a state can be attained, according to Buddha, by following the path of wisdom which incorporates *ahimsā*, *maitrī* and *karuṇā*. Buddhism, as a religious path therefore strives hard to devise effective methods for transformation of one's inner self.

That Buddhist teachings are related to ecology or maintenance of ecological balance are revealed through the prescriptions of Ashoka the Great, the emperor of India during 3rd century B.C. Ashoka became a disciple of Buddha after the Kalinga war. The merciless killing of innumerable soldiers in the battlefield greatly affected Ashoka. He became an ardent devotee of Lord Buddha and transformed himself to a saint from a warrior. He became aware and concerned about the environment around him and therefore prescribed planting of trees along the roadsides, prohibited indiscriminate killing of birds and animals for food and merciless plundering of trees and plants for instrumental use. Moreover, he opened up hospitals for treatment of sick animals. Such actions amply display Ashoke's concern for environment and maintenance of ecological balance.

The sermons delivered or advocated by Buddha included strict rules and regulations for Buddhist monks which prohibited them from harming and destroying the natural environment. Brahmajalasutta of *Suttapitaka* too refers to the Buddhist concept of *śīla* (virtue) that incorporates abstinence from injuring or destroying seeds and plants.

Application of at least some of the Buddhist sermons will gradually bring down the problem of environmental degradation to some extent. Maintenance of ecological balance or a proper natural order for healthy habitation of human beings along with the animate and inanimate species of the natural world was emphasized in the teachings of Buddha. According to him, human beings were considered to be a part of nature, and destruction of nature, even a blade or lump of grass, which is a form of life was forbidden. These were considered as pieces of evil work and strict codes of punishment were laid down by Lord Buddha, especially for the Buddhist monks. Through his teachings he propounded the concept of modest life with a minimum necessity. Such a thought in the early past is very much relevant today when the world is facing acute environmental problems. Buddhist prescriptions through Pali literature highlighted appropriate use and consumption of nature in such a manner so that a continuity of a beneficial relationship of man and nature is not threatened. Such a way of life (*dharma*) portrays the modern concept of social ecology that tends to safeguard the social balance and thereby forbids plundering of nature.

According to Buddha, all species of the natural world are for the welfare of the society and therefore subject to moral sensibility. His religion advocates the attitude of love, care and co-operation among all members of the biotic community through the four types of virtue called *brahmavihāra*. Mutual co-operation between the species is a necessity on account of mutual interdependence for survival (*pratītasamutpāda vāda*). This is in fact the principle of dependence arising in Buddhism which states that all entities within the biosphere are interdependent. This further indicates that all biotic entities are equally valuable and each need to exist for the other as none of the species can afford to live all by itself.

According to Buddha, the four evils which destroy the harmonious balance of nature are bias (*chanda*), ill-will (*doṣa*), fear (*bhaya*) and delusion (*moha*). Eradication of these evils through purification of

human soul and conduct will surely bring about a change in human behaviour and attitude towards nature. Buddhism as a religious faith advocates an ideal way of living in the world on the basis of interdependence and interconnectedness. Its emphasise on interconnectedness of life, guides one to develop a mutual sensitivity towards all living species which in turn forbids individuals to harm living creatures including even the micro-organisms. The present global crisis, as said earlier, arises from self-centred greedy attitude of individuals, rampant consumerism and non-ethical use of technologies. The religion therefore advocates regaining of balance between plants, animals and humans through a change of our mindset by self cultivated virtues of love, kindness and compassion. It may therefore be said that Buddhism pleads for an ethics for mutual co-operation and interdependence where there is no place for human subjugation over nature.

Harmonious living if humans with nature can be made possible by following the four '*samyak karmānta*'- constitutes of performing right action. They are '*ahimsā*' or non-violence; the precept of not taking what is due to others (*adattadānavirati*), not performing sensual or sexual misdeeds (*kāmasumicchavirati*), and abstaining from all forms of intoxication (*sura-moureyya-madamadakantha-virati*).

The first precept, i.e. '*ahimsā*' or non-violence which forms the keynote of Buddhism preaches individuals to abstain from killing and slaughter of animals, birds, pests and even the smallest insect. He strongly recommended a purely vegetarian diet which was strictly followed by his disciples. Life of every creature living on earth was considered precious which expressed his attitude of care and respect for the environment and the total biotic community. This is inevitably tied up with the self cultivated virtues of love, kindness and compassion which unify the religious and cultural tradition of Buddhism with the bio-ethical ideal of living non-violently and developing a reverential attitude towards all forms of life.

The second precept of 'non-taking' recognizes the right of other's possession. This actually emphasized the fact that none possesses the right to exploit nature and its resources at the cost of the basic needs of others. The use of nature's resources beyond one's necessity is considered as a kind of theft according to Buddhism.

Similarly, sensual and sexual misdeeds and intoxication is condemned by Buddha since it affects nature adversely directly or indirectly.

Love and compassion for nature in Buddhism is expressed through certain strictures for Buddhist monks and recluses who are advised to remain within the monastery particularly during the rainy season since their footsteps may cause injury to the newly grown lush green grass and the small insects numbering in that season. The monks are even forbidden to harm or destroy even a single leaf or plant without necessity (*petavatthu*). Buddha was fully aware of the direct and indirect utilities of forest and its importance in human life. He therefore propagated prescriptions on conservation of reserved forests (*rakkahitavana*). Influenced by his teachings, the Maurjana king Ashoka the Great, a renowned disciple of Buddha, encouraged large scale plantation of trees and preservation of medicinal plants for curing of ailments. All such prescriptions go against deforestation. Thus, it may be said that Buddhist teachings advocates conservation of forest and preservation of bio-diversity.

As said earlier Buddha encouraged meditation which fostered the cultivation of four cordial virtues, i.e. loving-kindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuṇā*), emphatic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekṣhā*). By practicing *metta bhāvanā*, one is in such a state of love that the boundaries amongst oneself, the beloved and the foe are gradually obliterated. All seem to be equal and therefore subject to equal treatment with love and respect. Similarly, practice of *karuṇā bhavana* or compassion enables one to come out from the boundaries of 'self happiness' and think about the happiness of all. Such a dedication is to be followed by *muditā bhāvanā* that enables one to experience

emphatic joy by seeing others and making others happy. Such a feeling of oneness through meditation of the cardinal virtues can be applied to meet the ecological challenges which the world is facing at present. Such meditation practice enables individuals to overcome jealousy, hatred, greed and violence which will bring down exploitation of nature and its species. The attitude of possession according to Buddhism is the prime cause behind the global ecological crisis. The teachings of Buddha therefore advocate 'a sense of belongingness' as an ideal relation on our part to nature. It encourages us to change our mindset from 'having mode' to 'being mode' of life. Human beings ought to realize that they are an integral part of nature due to interconnectedness and interdependence of different animate and inanimate species.

In the blind race for fulfillment of his materialistic desire man has gradually cultivated an intense individualistic outlook and attitude which has made him forget the famous dictum 'live and let others live'. His relentless march towards scientific and technological development has marred his caring attitude towards nature. The present force of materialism has made him a ruthless exploiter of nature. He uses nature for his own individualistic benefit but fails to perform his duty towards the same. Man's endeavour for the fulfillment of his materialistic greed is expressed through his notorious actions like deforestation, utilization of chemical fertilizers in agriculture, greater use of hydrocarbons, more industrialization and urbanization. Such fallacious human activities have damaged the environment. The ozone layer has been depleted, the air is full of noxious gases where living species find it difficult to breathe, there is global warming, melting of glaciers, increase in the frequency and dimension of floods, devastating earthquakes, reduction in the fertility of the soil and several other stories of environmental degradation. His gallop towards individualism and consumerism has destroyed his inner self or inner environment.

The present situation is alarming and is in dire need of the proper solution. It is high time for man to realize the causes behind the present environmental crisis and bring about the change of his inner self. In such a situation, the noble ideas and preaching of Lord Buddha comes with a shining light. An ethical approach towards nature based on the precepts of non-violence, love and compassion advocated by Buddhism can be made applicable to solve the present ecological crisis. As mentioned earlier, nature, according to Lord Buddha, is there to satisfy the basic needs of the people but not to satisfy the greed of the masses possessing a consumerist outlook. Buddhist ways of life based on noble precepts guides individuals to restrain themselves from satisfaction of greed. The practice of non-slaughter days and vegetarianism are active and positive steps towards maintenance of non-violence. Exploitation of nature leads to the destruction which eventually impairs the smooth livelihood of its species. In this respect Buddhism advocates a 'co-operative' instead of an 'exploitative' attitude towards nature which encompasses forgiveness (*kasma*), fearlessness (*abhaya*) and universal loving kindness (*metta*). The noble Eight-Fold path of Buddhism guides an individual to develop a balanced personality and a good mentality. The ideals of *Brahmavihara* meticulously guide individuals to think about the betterment of the society at large. The Buddha and his followers opine and emphasize that the planet earth can be saved from catastrophe through development of a strong bondage or linkage between commerce and morality, science and technology with humanity, knowledge with character and work with pleasure and conscience. Buddha beautifully compares the collection of nectar by bees with man's utilization of nature. According to him bees accumulate nectar from flowers and convert it into sweet honey by not disturbing the beauty and fragrance of the flowers. He advised human beings to utilize nature and accumulate wealth in a similar manner without disturbing or destroying nature. Such a protective utilization of nature will only be possible through a change of human attitude

towards nature, i.e. from an 'ego-centric' to an 'eco-centric' one, based on forgiveness, kindness, non-violence and compassion. Thus, in order to make the planet earth a peaceful abode of all living creatures, human beings ought to utilize skillfully, rationally and judiciously the unique powers achieved through the progress of science and technology so that nature's harmony remains undisturbed and such a state of harmony can be attained by linking ethical elements of restraint and virtues to our newly acquired scientific and technological powers. Buddhism encourages individuals to follow the ethical path which leads to the development of a healthy and peaceful environment and society. The noble sermons of Lord Buddha are capable enough to guide individuals even today to remove ecological imbalance and restore a healthy and worthy living environment.
