

# QUAGMIRES OF POST MODERN CIVIC SOCIETY AND BUDDHIST ANTICIPATIONS AND PRESCRIPTIONS

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by Neelima Dahiya\*

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## ABSTRACT

*The postmodern civic society across the globe is in the grip of formidable multidimensional quandaries. The social order, based on human-centric and anthropocentric conduct, is responsible for degenerating moral values and ethical system; socio-economic inequalities and disparities; and a social order laden with contradictions and conflicts on the one hand and irrational excessive use of resources- renewable and non-renewable- on the other.*

*In the absence of rational solutions to these contradictions and conflicts the postmodern civil society is encountering numerous manifestations of irrationalities such as terrorism, communalism, rampant consumerism, environmental pollution and ecological degradation, insensitivity towards animal kingdom and aqua cultures and contamination of natural flow of water, having serious implications for peace, harmony, and sustainable development.*

*If such degenerating shifts are allowed to continue unabated, sooner or later, there would be a big question mark even on the very survival of life on the planet earth, what to talk of much cherished dream of sustainable development. In order to save the planet earth from its dooms day, it is imperative that scientists, philosophers, policy makers*

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\*. Dr., Professor of Ancient Indian History and Culture (Rtd), M.D. University, Rohtak, India.

*and people at large earnestly appreciate the need for urgent effective corrective measures and actions to put an immediate check on the process of degeneration.*

*As we know that various groups of scientists, philosophers, policy makers and social activists world over are engaged in spreading awareness and in suggesting possible ways and means to stem the rot and salvage the damages. Likewise, religion with its moral authority can also act as a catalyst in restoring and maintaining environmental purity, ecological balance, peace and harmony on the globe.*

*An in depth study of the Buddhist literature brings to light the Buddhist concerns for an array of issues pertaining to society, environment, ecosystem and their mutual interdependence (Patīccasamuppāda). It shows that Buddha, as far as 2600 years ago, could anticipate that the degeneration initiated by deluded human behaviour, if not corrected, would ultimately put mankind in a serious quandary: the existential dilemma.*

*In the Buddhist literature there are frequent references to various preventive measures to keep environment clean. We also find suggestions for and illustrations of corrective actions to ensure safe and secure abode as well as food and water for all living beings including the micro-organisms. If we put together the Buddhist tenets, principles, ethical system, practices and concerns, we could clearly perceive that the Buddhist philosophy has been earth-centric and eco-centric as against human-centric and anthropocentric nature of post modern civic social structure.*

*The need of the hour is to establish a biosphere friendly social order facilitating sustainable global peace, harmony and progress and in this endeavour the Buddhist doctrines and practices may serve as a spring board for framing policies and action plans with a focus on inter and intra generational equity and earth-centric development.*

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The Post-modern civic society across the globe is in the grip of formidable multidimensional quagmires. The discomfort is being felt almost at all fronts - social, economic, cultural, environmental and ecological. The social order, based on human-centric and anthropocentric conduct, is responsible for the continuous degeneration in moral values and ethical system on the one hand and irrational and excessive use of resources-renewable and non-

renewable - on the other.

The civic society today is under great stress and strain. The fear of the crash of civilization is the hot concern of the contemporary society. Owing to the moral degeneration, the society is infested with a multi-pronged crisis. Warfare is being justified in the name of justice and democracy. Terrorism is perpetuated to meet ulterior motives. Both the developed and the developing societies are facing erosion of humanistic, ethical and moral values. The continued presence of the global terrorism, violence, corruption, racism, communalism, religious fundamentalism, crimes against women and children, nuclearization, militarization, food chain security crisis, social marginalization and deprivation, etc. are rendering the planet earth a miserable place to live in. We find that a big chunk of the budget of a nation is being allocated for militarization at the cost of social development. An alternative use of such an allocation may work as a magic wand to eliminate illiteracy, to improve health care and to provide basic social security. The post-modern society has been submerged into gross inequality. Just the top 20% of the population is utilizing more than 85% of the resources. The crime is all pervasive-crime at public place, crime at a workplace, a crime on road side, and crime at a domestic front. A recent research shows that in a large number of families the environment at home is more stressed than at the workplace. The 'Honour killing', a soul searing crime, found in more than 40 countries, is being committed by the members of the family. In most of the rape cases, the relatives or close family friends have been found involved.

The modern economics is based on unbridled consumerism and ruthless exploitation of renewable and non-renewable resources. Limitless growth and consumption are unsustainable and potentially self-destructive. A large number of experiments conducted in South- Asia have revealed that the soil fertility vis-à-vis nutrient supply capacity of most of the soils has either already depleted or is in the process due to the overuse of farm land. If such a situation is allowed to persist the world may soon face a serious food crisis<sup>1</sup>. In developing economies food crisis has some other

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1. SAARC Workshop on nutrients use held at CSSRI, Karnal, Tribune, dated 10-09-09.

more challenging dimensions: overuse of insecticides, pesticides, chemical fertilizers and use of untreated sewerage water and/or river and canal water mixed with harmful industrial effluent and other kinds of pollutant material have laden the cereals, vegetables and fruits with harmful chemicals much above the safety level assessed for human consumption. Some recent researches on cow milk reveal that even the cow milk, produced under standardised hygienic conditions, has some contamination on account of the fodder used. The harmful chemicals in the fodder reach the body of the cow and ultimately go into the milk. Thus, modern economics is totally based on the profit-driven principle without caring for its effects upon people and the environment.

The excessive use of environmentally abhorrent material and wanton exploitation of natural resources have resulted in serious environmental disruption and the ecological devastation. These adverse effects might have been initially slow and even imperceptible but with the passage of time, have assumed serious dimensions. We all could see that its impact on ecology is already getting pandemic in nature and ruinous in effects. For instance at the end of the first world war, the pandemic influenza initially broke out on the western front and thence buried its venomous fangs around the world.<sup>2</sup> A more recent instance is that of the pandemic swine flu which broke out in Mexico first and then rolled down to various other parts of the world via USA. C. S. Elton, in order to highlight the gravity of the threats of the ecological devastation, terms it the 'Ecological Explosion'<sup>3</sup> The insatiable lust, greed and craving for more and more material gains and the maniac industrialisation have resulted into holes in the ozone layer of the atmosphere causing global warming, melting of snow, receding glaciers, floods, frequent eruptions of volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis and progressively increasing sound, air and water pollution. The global warming and the greenhouse gas emissions have become the bane of humanity. The living beings are destined to consume poisonous substances and inhale health hazardous gases like the carbon dioxide and the

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2. Elton, Charles, S, *The Ecology of invasions by animals and plants*, Methuen & Ltd, London, reprinted, 1966, p. 15.

3. *ibid.*

carbon monoxide. One-quarter of Humanity has no access to clean drinking water. Millions of people die every year by the water borne diseases. The world commission on water for 21st century<sup>4</sup> reports that 50% of the world's major rivers are going either dry or polluted. Australia's Murray-Darling river basin is stressed by draught owing to over allocation of water and the climatic change. In India, the river Sarasvati has already disappeared. The Yamuna has been reduced from perennial to seasonal stream and the Ganga has been contaminated beyond repair. Ever since the evolution of man on the earth, the animals have been his great support system, earlier as his prey and later as a great source of economy and entertainment. Animals have contributed in a significant way in the development of practically every aspect of the human civilization, yet they met and still continue to meet the treatment they never deserved. Carol Adams<sup>5</sup>, a renowned scholar, observes, 'we have institutionalized the oppression of animals at least on two levels: 1) in the formal structures such as the slaughter houses, the meat markets, zoos, laboratories and circuses. 2) Through our language.' As Colman McCarthy<sup>6</sup> has pointed out that the language shapes the attitude and the attitude shapes the behaviour. We call each other by animal names in a derogatory sense such as a dog, pig, donkey, monkey, fox, so on and so forth and accuse each other by using animal similes such as snake in the sleeve (aastiin ka saap), as Stubborn as a mule (adial Ghoda). It reflects our callous behaviour towards animals. The animals have just become the objects of human use, a medium of commodity production and surplus generation. The millions of animals every year are used in schools, colleges, universities and in research institutes for teaching and research purposes. All the medicines at testing stages are used on animals before declaring them safe or otherwise for human beings. Millions of animals suffer and die in the laboratories because of vivisection. The indiscriminate and unplanned deforestation and denuding of the upper crust of

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4. Eccles, B, *Towards understanding of the primary ecological challenges of 21 century*; The Activist, vol. 16, No 2 (on line) available at [www.theactivist.org](http://www.theactivist.org)

5. Adams, Carol J, *The Sexual Politics of Meat : A feminist- vegetarian critical theory*, New York: cotinum, 1990, cf Singh, A.K, Buddhist attitude towards animals in early Buddhism, an unpublished thesis, Department of Buddhist studies, University of Delhi.

6. *Ibid.*

the earth, hilly or otherwise, urbanization and industrialization at an alarming rate have endangered the survival of wild life. The surveys conducted by the conservation biologists make it amply clear that 10-40% of all known species on the planet are on the verge of extinction. The exotic species such as parrots and coral reef fish are captured in millions for the pet trade. Most of them die before they reach the place where to be sold.<sup>7</sup> The African elephants and the various kinds of Rhinoceros are closer to extinction as they are being killed for their ivory and horns respectively.<sup>8</sup> Even the ocean fishing is so intensive that their population is fast dwindling. Eighty percent of the primary forests have been harvested compelling the wild animals to come out of their natural habitations and move towards the cultivated areas and the human habitats in search of food and water. In India, every third day there is a news of the wild animals such as tiger, elephant entering into village/ town that falls near their natural habitation. The continuous squeezing of their habitats has exposed them to starvation, unlawful killing and challenges to procreation.

The man has transformed himself in a ruthless predator. He has become species which is no longer in co-evolved balance with its environment. The ecology is like an enormous jigsaw puzzle<sup>9</sup>, each organism of the biotic community has requirements of life which interlock with those of many others in the area. They, therefore, develop interrelationship and interdependence. Let me cite two illustrations in support of the contention: a) the yucca plant supplies food for the moth but is dependent on the moth for fertilization and perpetuation.<sup>10</sup> b) the green plants capture solar energy and combine it with chemical raw materials from soil, water and air. The food these plants produce support all the animal lives including decay organisms which in turn enriches the soil for plants to use once more<sup>11</sup>. Likewise, the man is also a part of the biosphere and depends on its continued functioning for his very

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7. Champ man, J L and Reiss, M J, *Ecology- Principles and application*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, p. 257.

8. *Ibid*, p. 257.

9. Champ man, J L and Reiss, M J, *Ibid*, p. 3.

10. Trevedi, R.P, et al, *International Encyclopaedia of ecology and environment*, vol.I:p.13.

11. *Ibid*.



existence and survival. One should not forget that a break down in any of the biosphere systems would imperil the human survival. The conservation of the ecology is not only for the sake of other organisms but is the part of the global need to preserve the biosphere as a habitable system for us and for our progeny too.

According to a report,<sup>12</sup> if the world continues to remain in the grip of these quagmires, soon, owing to combined climate- carbon crisis alone more than 100 million people will die by 2030 and the global economic growth will be cut by 3.2% of GDP. 05 million deaths occur each year from air pollution, hunger and disease. If the climate change and the carbon- intensive economies not monitored, the toll is likely to rise to 06 million a year by 2030<sup>13</sup>. As a result, as Meadows et al, in their report (1972) say, “doomsday is not far off.” A similar warning issued by a Union of environmental scientists in 1992 to humanity, ‘Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course. Human activities inflict harsh and often irreversible damage on the environment and on critical resources. If not checked, many of our current practices... may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner that we know.’<sup>14</sup> The message is very clear; humanity cannot afford to sweep these messages under the carpet any longer. Plate nos.1 to 11 (annexed) highlight the intensity and gravity of the crisis the humanity is shackled with.

Since such a hazardous situation is the creation of our own short sightedness, unbridled greed, and the anthropocentric conduct, the onus lies on us alone - individually and collectively – to restore and sustain the planet earth as a safe, secure and clean place to live in and to ensure a congenial environment for the survival, procreation and the growth of all the organisms on the earth. As we know that world over a minuscule section of scientists, social scientists philosophers, academicians, policymakers and social activists are already engaged in sensitizing the people by spreading awareness and suggesting possible ways and means to stem the rot and salvage the damages. But the objective cannot be achieved without the active involvement of

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12. A report commissioned by 20 countries, *Hindustan Times* reporting, New Delhi, September 27, 2012, p. 12.

13. The report conducted by humanitarian organization DARA, *Ibid*.

14. Eccles, B, *op. cit*.

each and every section of society. Religion as an institution with its moral authority could act as a catalyst in restoring and maintaining the environmental purity, ecological balance, peace and harmony on the globe. One cannot ignore the fact that millions and billions of people all over the world draw their inspiration and guidance from their respective faith and religions. Even the politicians, media persons and people at large cite instances from the province of their faith in support of their contention. What is required is a revisit to the principles and canons of different religions in the context of the requirements of the post Modern civic society.

Some scholars are against such efforts and argue that “Delving into cultural heritage with the objective to find inspiration for the present may result into a wealth of beautiful imagery but its merit can hardly be claimed to be congruent with historical facts and reality”<sup>15</sup>. It may be true in case of those religions that are just meditative vehicles. However, a close scrutiny of the Buddhist teachings and practices would show that it is not true in the case of Buddhism. Buddhism, as hammalawa Saddhatissa<sup>16</sup> asserts,” does not recognise a conflict between religion and science as it is a practical spiritual application of the principles of science. He further says that since practical realization rather than abstruse disputation is expected of a bhikkhu that is why probably theology did not develop in Buddhism. Thakur also of the same view “... it needs to be asserted that it was its (Buddhism) articulation of the worldly problems that was possibly the crucial factor for its immediate success and impressive reception”.<sup>17</sup> To quote Rhys Davids, “Had the Buddha merely taught philosophy, he might have had a small following as Comte.”<sup>18</sup> No doubt, the issues of the modern world are very different from that of Buddha’s time, yet the basic teachings, principles, and tenets of Buddhism are still as

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15. Nugteren, Albertina, *The Conflict use of religion symbolism in Indian environmental Movements*, Paper presented in xix World Congress of the international Association for the history of religion, held in Tokyo, 2005.

16. Saddhatissa, Hammalawa, *Buddhist Ethics*, Wisdom Publication, Boston, Massachusetts, p.17.

17. Thakur, V.K, *Deforestation, Ecological Degradation and Buddhist Response in Early India: a Preliminary Inquiry*, Proceedings of Indian History Congress 60th session, 1999, p.80.

18. *Ibid*.



relevant and applicable as were during Buddha's time. Buddhism is widely respected for its benevolent and humane moral values. It has all the ingredients of handling the dilemmas of the modern world squarely. The in-depth study of the Buddhist literature brings to light the Buddhist concerns for an array of issues pertaining to the society, environment, ecosystem and their mutual interdependency (*Patticcasamuppada*). It shows that Buddha as far back as 2600 years could anticipate the degeneration initiated by deluded human behaviour and could also perceive that such behaviour, if not corrected, would ultimately put mankind into a serious quandary: The Existential Dilemma.

In the Buddhist literature, there are numerous references and stories that highlight the Buddha's ecological ethics that make relations between the man and the flora and fauna congenial, smooth and loving so that human and non-human beings could coexist happily without any fear and foe. Out of the total 550 stories of Jatakas, at least half of them (around 225) is having animals as their main characters and 70 species of animals have found a place in these stories. Through these animal characters, the wisdom, compassion and moral behaviour expected of mankind towards all living beings have been emphasised.

According to Buddha like humans, all the other sentient beings to feel and do appreciate happiness and feel and dislike pain, though the level of intensity and sensitivity may vary. The *Karniya Mata Sutta*<sup>19</sup> speaks of radiating loving kindness to all types of beings. Both the human beings and the animals respond warmly to those who they feel are friendly to them. This is shown in the following stories. The *Nandi-Visala Jataka*<sup>20</sup> which concerns a Bull who, only when the master stopped using harsh words to get him going, would pull 100 loaded carts to win his owners bet. Once when the Buddha was away from monks, a wild elephant and a monkey attended on him<sup>21</sup>. Even the mad *Nalagiri*<sup>22</sup>, an elephant, was tamed by Buddha by his kind words and compassion. On another occasion, Buddha

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19. *Samyayutta Nikaya*, vol IV, p. 302.

20. *Nandi-Visala Jataka*, JI, 191.

21. *Dhamma Padma*, 158.

22. *Vinaya II*, 194 -96.

told that the reason a monk was bitten by a snake and had died was that he failed to radiate loving kindness to the snake<sup>23</sup>. Through such stories, Buddha has tried to preach that man and animals can live together in harmony if the man shows compassion and loving kindness towards them.

The Angutra Nikaya and the Vinya Pitak are full of compassion and kindness to animals and add a new dimension to the relationship between human beings and animals by highlighting the theory of mutual dependency for their mutual survival and growth of which, the scientists and environmentalists of today are talking. The numerous stories in the Jatakas help us to appreciate and analyse the mutual interdependency in a wider and broader context of the relationship. In Sasa Jataka, a rabbit offers his body to a hungry Brahmana for food, jumping into fire piled up by the rabbit himself. The Avadanakalpalata talks of an elephant who throws himself off a rock in the desert to rescue starving travellers. A lion and an elephant rescue some people from a dragon, sacrificing their lives. Likewise, there are numerous stories which tell of human sacrificing their flesh to keep animals alive. In the Jataka Mala, the suvarna prabhas and the Avadana Kalplata there is a story of a Buddhist who throws himself before a hungry tigress so that she may feed her cubs.<sup>24</sup> During draught, Bodhisattva would ensure that no wild animals go without water<sup>25</sup>. In another story: once the Bodhisattva threw his leftover to feed fish and for that act of compassion, he was saved from a disaster.<sup>26</sup>

Into Buddhist cosmology, the animal occupies an important place in the categories of human, Gods and other forms of life. According to the doctrine of kamma and rebirth, an animal may take the same form, form of different animals or advance to human or Godly status in the next birth. In the Buddhist tradition Humans may reborn as animals and vice-a-versa depending on one's kamma. In one of the Jatakas<sup>27</sup> there is a story of a Brahmana who once

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23. *Angutra Nikaya*, II, 72-73.

24. *Jataka*, II, 423.

25. *Jataka* II, 449-51.

26. *Jataka*, II, 423.

27. *Jataka Tale XVIII*, trans., Francis, H.T and Thomas, E.J, Cambridge University Press,

sacrificed a Goat as an offering to his deity. For this act of violence and disregard to life, he was condemned to 500 rebirths as a Goat. In another story: once the Bodhisattva threw his leftover to feed fish and for that act of compassion, he was saved from a disaster.

The tremendous emphasis on Ahimsa (non-violence) is yet another manifestation of the Buddhist attempt to have a humanistic attitude towards animals. Non-violence or ahimsa is the central theme of the Buddhist philosophy which means not to cause any discomfort or injury to other living beings in thoughts, words, and deeds. Various Jataka stories contain explicit preaching on the theme of Ahimsa. Not to injure or harm living beings is the first precept in the Buddhism (*panatipata*). In Vinya Pitak, the Buddha proclaims, "Monk who has received ordination ought not intended to destroy the life of any living being down to a worm or an ant".<sup>28</sup> The Buddhist ethical conduct (*Sila*) is structured in vast conception of universal love and compassion for all living beings and Buddha's concept of Ahimsa is the key component of the Sila (*Sil*). According to Buddhism the destruction of or injury to man, animal, and plant involves sin. The Buddha puts the profession of butcher, hunter, fowler, and fisherman in the category of violent occupations liable to get heavy punishment. A Buddhist must not hate any being and should not kill a living creature even in thought.<sup>29</sup>

However, the Buddhist principle of Ahimsa is not without contradictions. Buddha himself died of meat eating as claimed by some scholars though refuted by others. It is a matter of debate and without going into the controversy it might certainly be deduced that the Buddhist text and actions of the Buddhist monks have sought to discourage the tendency of meat eating. The Mahayana Sutras unmistakably condemn meat eating. The Surangama Sutta tells us that if we eat meat (flesh) of living creatures we are destroying the seeds of compassion. The Buddha was very critical of animal sacrifice too. The sacrifice of animals in order to earn

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1916.

28. *Mahavagga*, I.78 in Vinay Text, trans, Rhys Davids, T.W, Oldenberg, Motilal Banarasi Das, 1974; Sacred Books of the East XVII, 30; XX 128.

29. Hardayal, *The Bodhisattva doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature*, London: Kegan Paul 1931, 197.

merit had posed a serious threat to the existing balance between the human and the non-human beings. The Buddhist response in the form of nonviolence emerged as a major saviour of all kinds of life. The Jataka stories are full of instances where the sacrifice of living creatures is forbidden. In the Kutadanta Sutta there is a reference of a sacrifice that Buddha himself performed for a king in the past life. In this ceremony no animal was killed, no tree was felled to be used as a sacrificial post, no forced labour was used as help and the offering items were products like butter and honey. The Buddha, it shows, did not just condemn the animal sacrifice but also presented an alternate model of performing the sacrifice.

The Buddha has shown his concern over disappearing species. A verse in the Khuddakapatha runs as: 'come back o tiger to the wood; let it not be levelled with plain. For without you the axe will lay it low, you without it forever homeless go.'<sup>30</sup> It suggests that the Buddha, even as back as 2600 years, could anticipate the danger of gradual disappearance of various species. He, therefore, advises to protect the animals and their habitats and not to resort to deforestation.

The Buddha's concern not to destroy life was not limited to men and animals rather it goes up to the plant life. In the Vinaya Pitak<sup>31</sup> there is a reference that the monks stopped travelling in vass (rainy season) because it is felt that by doing so they crush the green herbs, they hurt vegetable life and destroy the lives of many small living beings. Buddha's love for flora is evident from the fact that nature has been a witness to every important event of his life, right from birth to the mahaparinibbana. He was born in the forest of Lumbini under Sal tree; left royal house and changed his robe on the bank of Rohini river saying goodbye to his horse, Kantak, and sarthi, Chena; meditated under banyan tree and ate milk rice (Khshir) offered by Sujata and took bath in Naranjarariver; attained Buddhahood under bodhi tree; delivered first sermon at Sarnath in deer park; and attained Mahaparinibbana at Kushinara in sal grove. For Buddha, the perfect man is one who, 'abstains from causing

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30. Khuddakapatha, London pali text of Chatsumarn, Kabil Singh, Buddhist view on nature, Engaged Buddhism, ed., Arnold Kotler, Prallax Press, Barkley, p. 65.

31. *Mahavagga in Vinaya Text*, III, I.I.

injury to seed life and plant life.’<sup>32</sup>

The Buddha was fully aware of the need for conserving ecology. That is the reason that the constructions of parks and pleasure groves for public use have been identified in the Buddhist traditions as an important source for gaining merit.<sup>33</sup> The Buddha also laid down certain rules for conservation of water and told to his disciples to refrain themselves to contaminate the resources of water. Not only that he also laid down instructions for the construction of toilets and water wells.

In short, in the Buddhist literature there are frequent references to various preventive measures to keep the environment clean by avoiding the contamination of water; denuding the earth’s surface by indiscriminate felling of trees; and open disposal of leftovers; other wastes; etc. We also find suggestions for and illustrations of corrective actions to ensure safe and secure abode as well as to ensure enough food and water for all living beings including the micro-organisms. The Buddha repeatedly emphasizes that ecological balance should be preserved and man should follow the principle of live and let live. The flora and fauna have as much right to live as human beings. If we put together the Buddhist tenets, principles, ethical system, practices and concerns, we could clearly perceive that the Buddhist philosophy has been earth-centric and eco-centric as against human-centric and anthropocentric nature of the postmodern civic social order. In nutshell, the planet earth and its bounties are to be shared by all living beings rather than monopolized by human beings alone.

As opposed to modern economics, the Buddhist economics is based on renewable resources. According to Buddhism, limitless growth and consumption are unsustainable and potentially disastrous. The Buddha’s approach to economics was that growth is good only to the point of sufficiency. For a Buddhist material satisfaction merely provides a starting point for the pursuit of higher goals. In Buddhism spiritual growth and material, wellbeing is not enemies but natural allies. A Buddhist concept of economic

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32. *The Book of Gradual Sayings*, II, 222; Pacciyānos 10 and 11.

33. *The Jātakas*, vol. 1, ed. by Fousboll, 7 vols, London, 1977-97.

development avoids gigantism. The Buddhist economy, as sarao<sup>34</sup> says, is based on the happiness and welfare of the maximum number of people and the Buddhist approach to economics makes a meaningful distinction between misery, sufficiency, and glut.

The Buddhist doctrines aim at eliminating sorrow (*dukha*) from the life of the individuals as well as from the society as a whole. Like a seasoned physician, the Buddha begins with the identification and diagnosis of the ailment –the *Dukha*. Once the factors causing *Dukha* are identified, Buddha proceeds to provide the prescription. He identifies greed (*lobh*), hatred (*dwesh*) and illusion (*moha*) as the root causes of all the ills and miseries of the society and its constituents. All immoral actions spring up from greed, hatred, and craving. According to a verse of the *Dhammapada*, ‘there is no fire like lust, no grip like hate, there is no net like delusion, no river like craving<sup>35</sup>’. In *Digha Nikaya*, a detailed description is found about how happy the human being has been prior to his behaviour becoming greed, hatred, and illusion oriented. If the greed, hatred, and illusion are controlled and monitored, the life on the planet earth would be safe, secure, peaceful, harmonious and progressive. Universal love (*Metta*), Compassion (*Karuna*), Sympathetic Joy (*Mudita*), and Equanimity (*Upekkha*), the four sentiments of Buddhism, are beyond the bounds of time, space or class. The application of these could break all the barriers of caste, colour, and creed responsible for the unnatural division of society. These cardinal tenets of Buddhism could serve as an antidote to human greed, hatred, and illusion. The application of the Buddhist ethical system would enable us in the endeavour to build up healthy, compassionate and biosphere friendly society.

So it is fairly clear from the above discussion that Buddhism carries all the insights and applicable solutions to the quagmires of the post-modern civic society. The socially engaged Buddhist individuals and groups are doing commendable work in their respective areas of operation by addressing the area specific as well as some global issues related to world peace, global environment,

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34. Sarao, K.T.S, *Buddhism and Consumer ethics*, A paper presented in a SSARC writers conference, Buddha as a peace maker in post-modern saarc ,held in New Delhi, 2009.

35. *Dhammapada*, Verse 251.



and terrorism. For instance, a group of Buddhist monks in Thailand, known as 'the ecology monks', are engaged in ecology conservation project. They teach ecologically friendly practices to Thai farmers. Likewise, Tibetan Buddhist monasteries are doing a commendable job in the conservation of snow leopard. However, the quantum of their efforts is not in proportion to the size and strength of the lurking demon confronting humanity. The need of the day is that all the sensitized forces - Scientists, Artists, Philosophers, Government Agencies, NGOs, Religious Preachers and Individuals or Group of individuals - should act quickly and unitedly in a coordinated manner to free the post-modern civic society from the agonizing quagmires. C.Kabil Singh<sup>36</sup> rightly observes "If we cannot hand over a better world to a future generation, it is only fair that they have at least as green a world to live in as we do." And Thich Nhat Hanh has rightly said that these mindfulness based practices are the right medicine for our time. Thus, the Buddhist doctrines and practices could serve as a spring board for framing policies and action plans focussing on inter and intragenerational equity and earth centric development.

The Buddhist tenets, directions, and practices not only provide the basic prescriptions to treat the agonizing quagmires of the post-modern civic society but also serve as a guide for promoting a humane, just, healthy and harmonious globe culture and social order.

In the end, I would like to conclude my discussion with the Master's teaching; "Victory creates hatred, defeat creates suffering, the wise one never desires victory or defeat. Anger creates anger. He who kills would be killed ... revenge can be overcome by abandoning revenge." Buddhism means: all pervasive universal Compassion, tolerance, nonviolence, humanism, and enlightenment. An honest commitment to these guiding principles would ensure the meaningful solution to the quagmires of post-modern society.

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36. Chatsumarn, Kabil Singh, Buddhism and Nature Conservation Thammasat University Press, Bangkok, 1998. P.144.

Deficiency	Health effect	No. of cases	Deaths per year (in millions)
Proteins and Calories	Stunted growth, Kwashiorkor, Marasmus	750 1 million	15-20
Iron	Anaemia	350 million	0.75-1
Iodine	Goitre, Cretinism	150 million, 6 million	
Vitamin A	Blindness	6 million	

■ WORLD FOOD PROBLEMS

Fig 1: Impacts of malnutrition

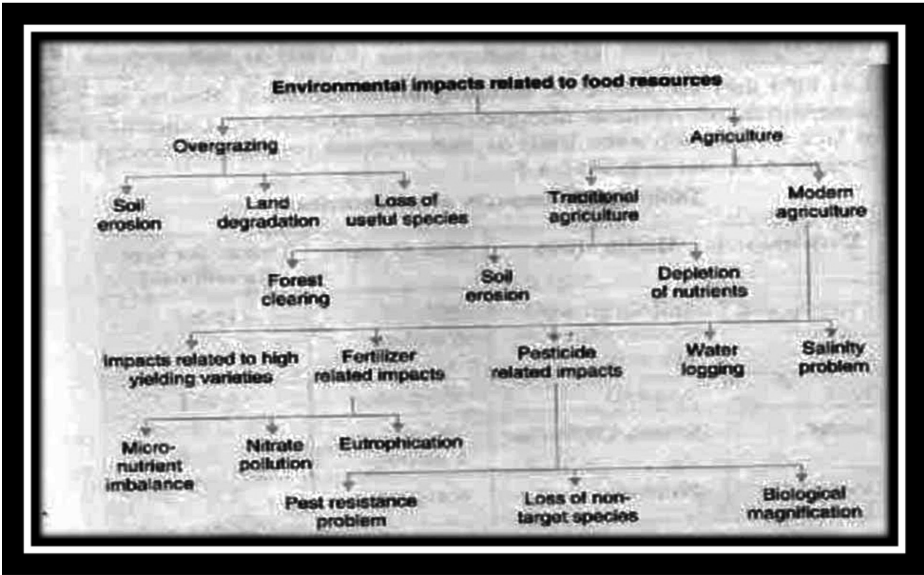


Fig 2: Impacts of overgrazing and agriculture

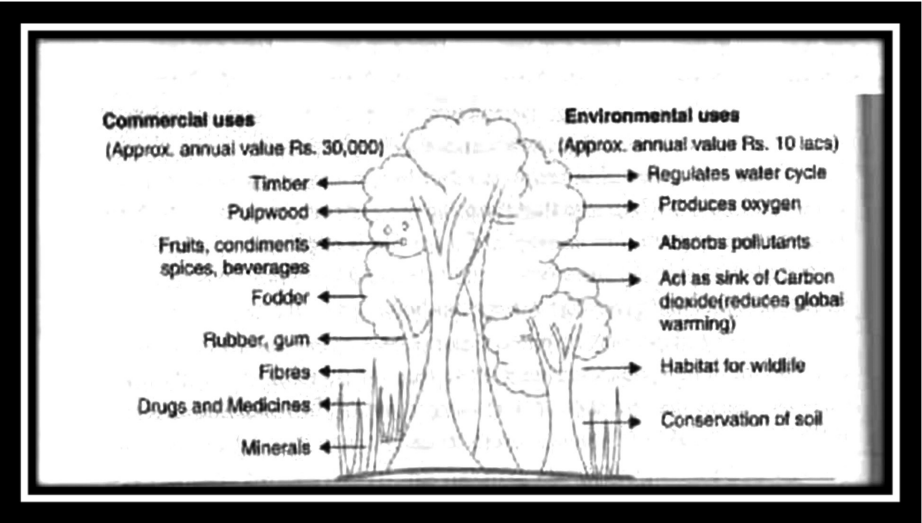


Fig 3: Economic vs Environmental value of forests

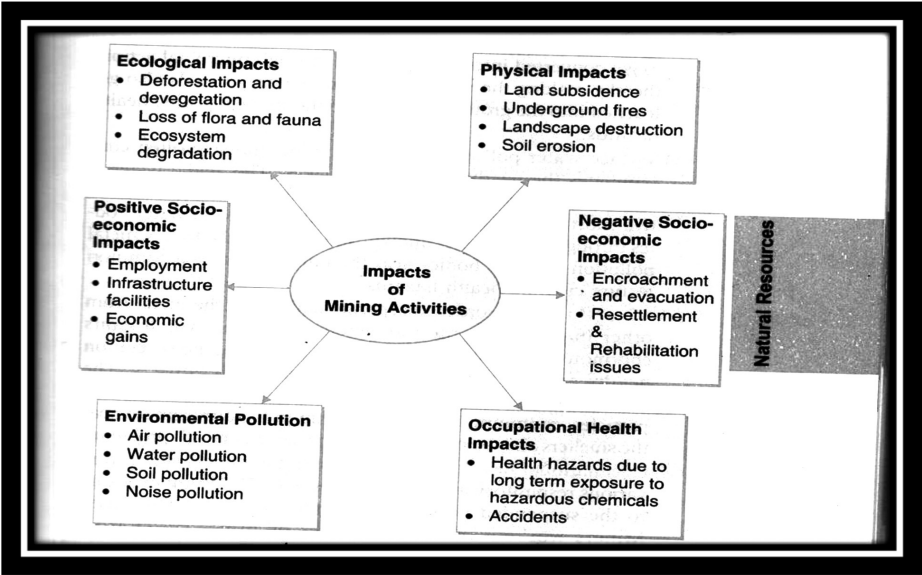


Fig 4: Impacts of mining activities

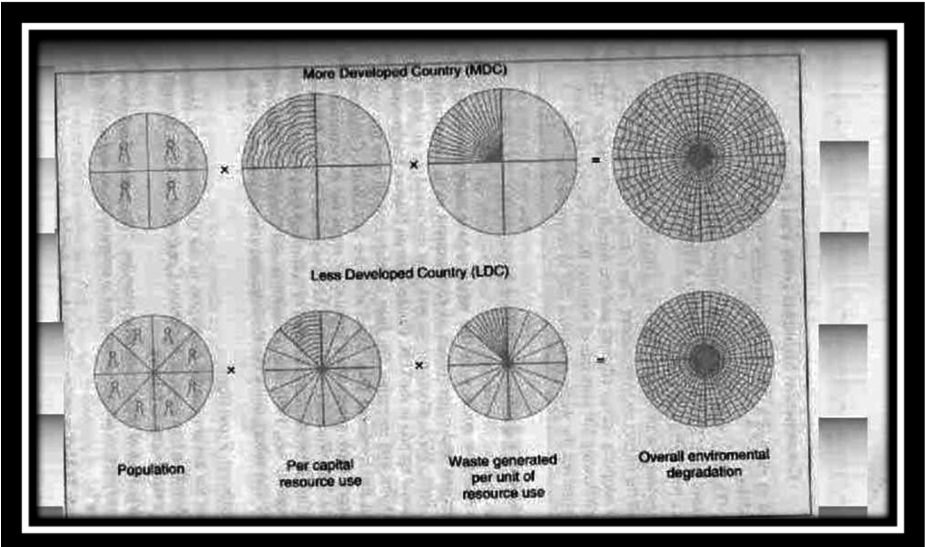


Fig 5: Relationship of population, consumerism, waste production and environmental impacts

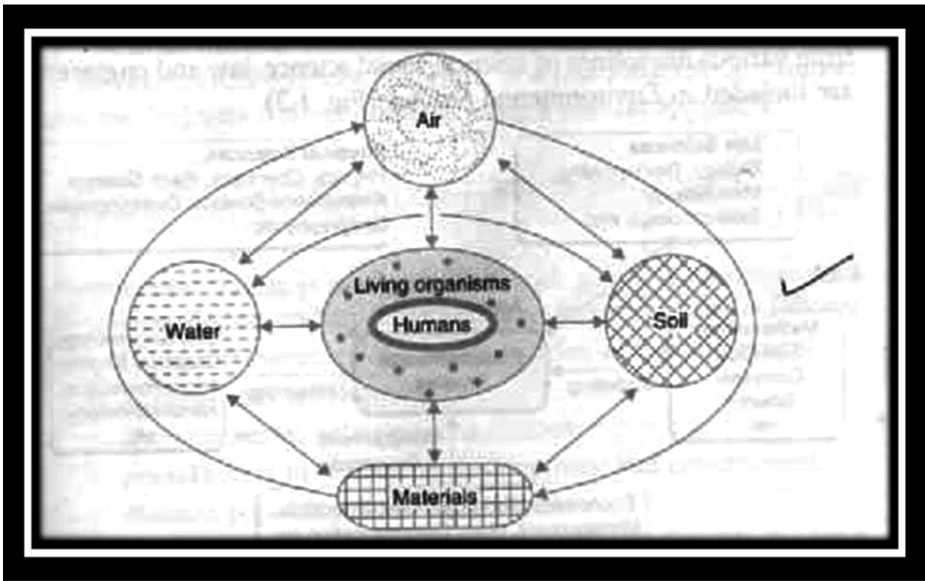


Fig6: Air, water, land, living organisations and materials surrounding us and their interactions together constitute Environment

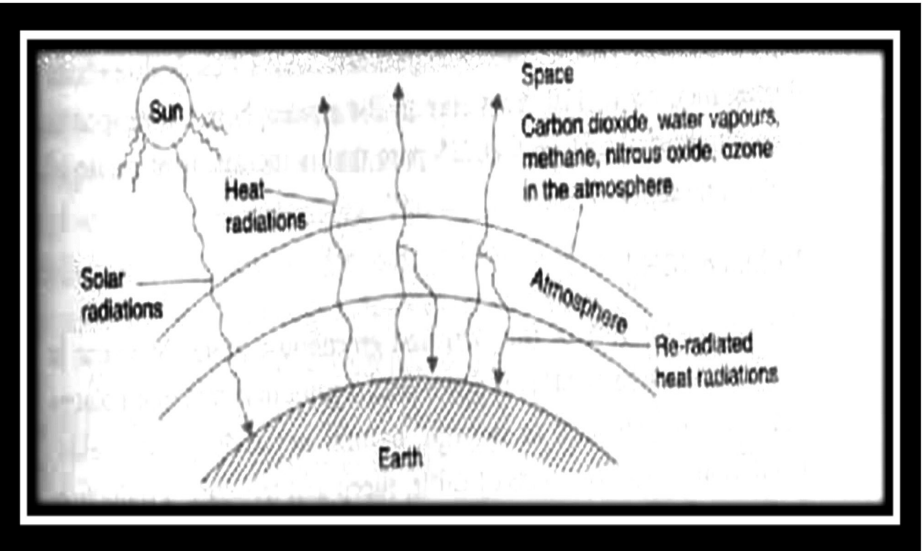


Fig 7: Greenhouse effect

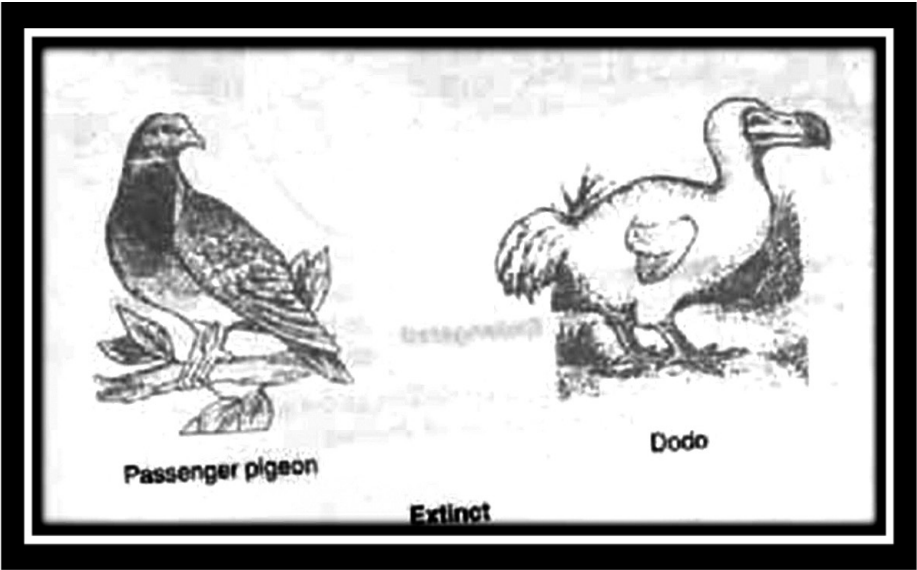


Fig 8



Fig 9: Some important extinct and endangered Indian species of animals

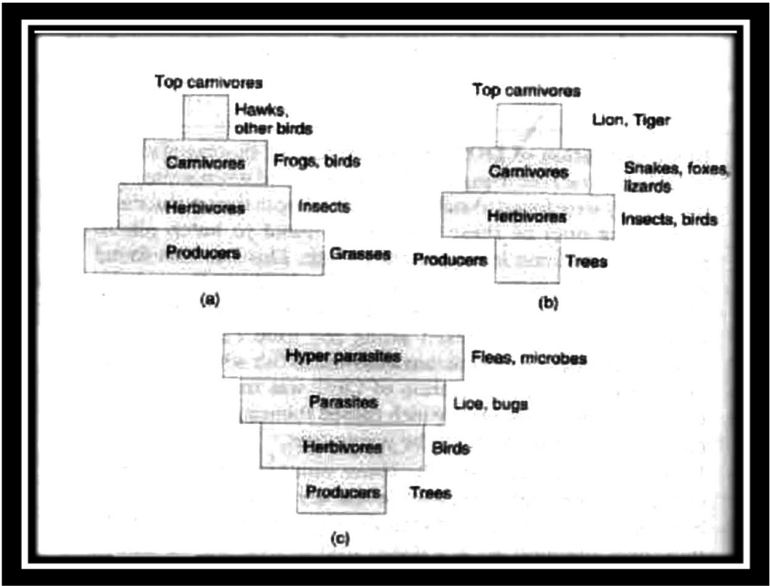


Fig 10: Pyramid of numbers a) grassland b) forest c) Parasitic food chain



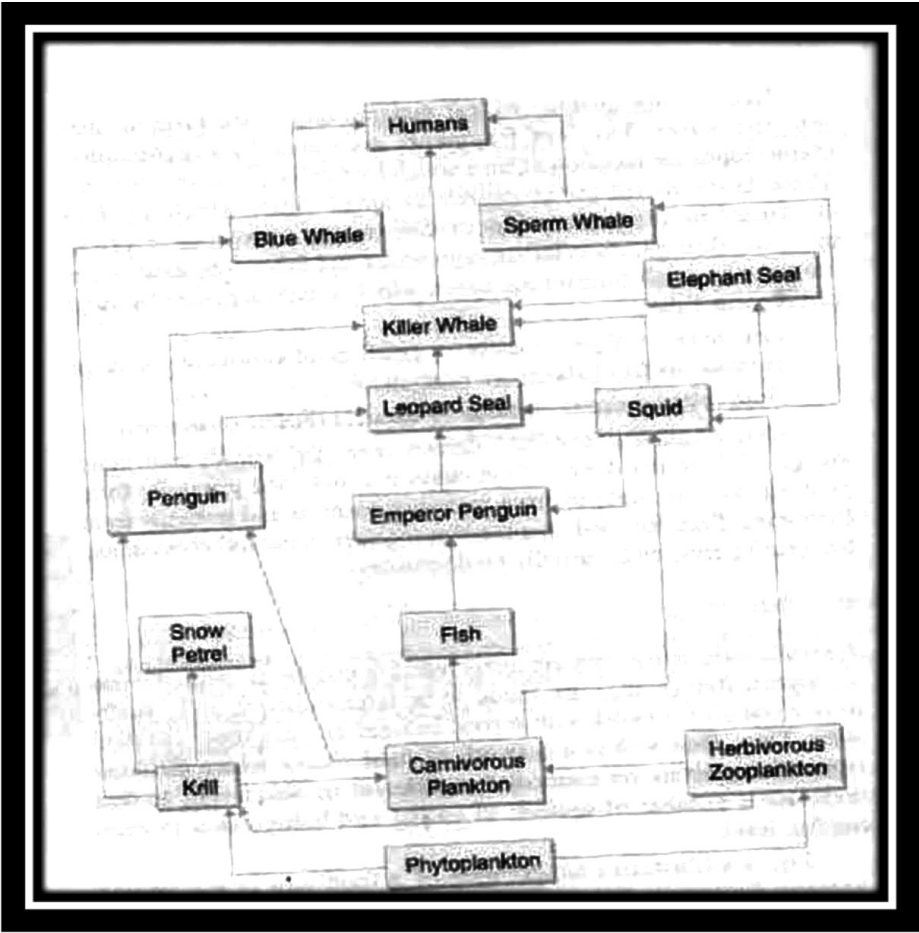


Fig 11: Food web in Antarctic ecosystem

Source of the Plates: kaushik, Anubha and Kaushik, C.P, *Perspectives in Environmental studies (Third Edition)*, New Age International Publishers, New Delhi, 2008.

