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Chapter 4: Attitude to and Treatment of the Natural World

Humanity's place in nature

Buddhism does not see humans as a special creation by 'God', nor as having been given either 'dominion', or 'stewardship', over animals etc.. Like all other sentient beings, they wander in the limited, conditioned realm of *saṃsāra*, the round of rebirths. Nevertheless, a human rebirth is seen as a very rare and fortunate one - a 'precious human rebirth' (see p.30 of the printed edition of this book) - as it is the only one where the key work for enlightenment can be accomplished. Accordingly, in the Buddhist account of the types of rebirth - gods, humans, animals, ghosts and hell-beings - humans are listed in one group, while all other animals (i.e. land animals, birds, fishes, worms, insects: M.III.167-9) are listed in another. That is, while all sentient beings are 'in the same boat' - *saṃsāra* -, humans are in a specific compartment of this. This is because they have a greater freedom and capacity for understanding than animals (and a greater motivation for spiritual progress than gods). Most moral and spiritual progress, or its opposite, is made at the human level. This is not to say that animals are all seen as amoral automatons. Buddhist *Jātaka* stories often attribute noble actions to such animals as monkeys and elephants, and there is also a reference to some animals keeping the five precepts (Vin.II.162). Nevertheless, animals clearly have much less of a capacity for choice than humans, and if they are virtuous, for example less greedy, or generous, this is more an expression of their existing character, or a response to an encouraging human example, than any deliberate desire for moral development (Story: 1976). Moreover, it is clear that there is a gradation among animals as regards their relative degree of freedom, or capacity for virtue (AKB.IV.97b-c). Insects would seem to have little, if any, of either.

The relatively special place of humans in the Buddhist cosmos means that they can be seen as at a 'higher level' of existence than animals. This, however, is not seen as a

justification for domineering and exploiting animals. Humans are 'superior' primarily in terms of their capacities [151] for moral action and spiritual development. The natural expression of such 'superiority' is not an exploitative attitude, but one of kindness to lesser beings, an ideal of *noblesse oblige* (Hall, 1902: 229-47). This is backed up by the reflection that one's present fortunate position as a human is only a temporary state of affairs, dependent on past good karma. One cannot isolate oneself from the plight of animals, as one has oneself experienced it (S.II.186), just as animals have had past rebirths as humans. Moreover, in the ancient round of rebirths, every being one comes across, down to an insect, will at *some* time have been a close relative or friend, and have been very good to one (S.II.189-90). Bearing this in mind, one should return the kindness in the present.

The Western concept of 'nature' is one which places humans and their artifices over and against the 'natural' world of animals, plants and the physical environment. In the present century, industrialisation etc. has led to many environmental problems, and thus to reflection on how humans should act and live so as to be in a less destructive and self-undermining relationship with 'nature'. As the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh says, though:

We classify other animals and living beings as nature, acting as if we ourselves are not part of it. Then we pose the question 'How should we deal with Nature?' We should deal with nature the way we should deal with ourselves! We should not harm ourselves; we should not harm nature. ... Human beings and nature are inseparable (Eppsteiner, 1988: 41).

Rather than divide the world into the realms of the 'human' and 'nature', the classical Buddhist perspective has seen a more appropriate division as that between sentient beings, of which humans are only one type, and the non-sentient environment, the 'receptacle-world' (*bhājana-loka*), in Sarvāstivādin terminology (AKB.III.45). In this division, plants would generally come on the non-sentient side of the line, but there is some ambiguity here, and differences of view (see pp.174-7 of this book). The key quality, then, is sentience, the ability to experience and to suffer, and the related ability, in this or a future life, to transcend suffering by attaining enlightenment. A good image of this notion of the community of sentient beings is a genre of painting popular in Japan, showing humans, gods, and variety of animals mourning at the death of the Buddha (Suzuki, 1959: 377-80).

Another Western dichotomy is, indeed, between the 'supernatural' - the realm of God, or gods, and angels etc. - and the natural world, with man partaking of something of both. Within the Buddhist perspective [152], the gods are themselves sentient beings subject to the natural law of karma. Their actions do not subvert natural laws, though they may go against the *normal* course of things. In the same way, meditation-based psychic powers, such as walking on water, are not seen as supernatural or miraculous, but as law-governed natural manifestations of certain potencies latent in the human mind. Except for *Nirvāṇa*, everything in the universe is subject to Conditioned Arising, the natural process of law-governed arising-according-to-conditions. In this sense, there *is* nothing 'supernatural', except perhaps *Nirvāṇa*. The gods, then, and also humans, are part of the play of natural processes that is *saṃsāra*.

Gods are seen as existing at various levels, with some being seen as (normally) invisible

beings sharing the earth with humans. Buddhist texts refer to certain gods living in large trees (Vin.IV.34-35) and even in healing herbs (S.IV.302; M.I.306): thus one should not anger such a being by damaging or destroying his or her home (Hall, 1902: 248-71). Other gods dwell on the land. Thus a Thai custom, upheld even in the busy modern city of Bangkok, is to build a small 'spirit house' next to a building erected on a previously open plot of land. This is to house any gods displaced from the land: to be considerate to them and thus not rouse their anger. Similarly, in Ladakh, a ceremony at the first planting of the year likewise seeks to pacify the spirits of the earth and water, as well as worms and fish, all of which might be disturbed by agricultural activity (Batchelor & Brown, 1992: 43).

As part of Conditioned Arising, humans are seen as having an effect on their environment not only through the purely physical aspects of their actions, but also through the moral/immoral qualities of these. That is, karmic effects sometimes catch up with people via their environment. It is thus said that, if a king and his people act unrightiously, this has a bad effect on the environment and its gods, leading to little rain, poor crops and weak, short-lived people (A.II.74-6; see pp.115 of this book). Right actions have the opposite effect. The Buddha is also seen to have had a positive effect on his environment: when he lay down between two *sāl* trees to die and pass into final *Nirvāṇa*, these are said to have burst into a mass of unseasonal blossom, which fell on him in homage (D.II.137-8). Likewise, in the Mahāyāna '*Sūtra on the Buddha Teaching the Seven Daughters*', it is said that, after the Buddha taught, 'One-hundred year old trees bore fruit and flowers... the blind could see ... Hundreds of birds and beasts were harmonious in their cries' (Paul, 1979: 24).

The environment is thus held to respond to the state of human morality; it is not a neutral stage on which humans merely strut, or a sterile [153] container unaffected by human actions. This clearly has ecological ramifications: humans cannot ignore the effect of their actions on their environment. This message is also strongly implied by the *Aggañña Sutta*¹, which gives an account of the initial stages of the development of sentient life on earth. This occurs when previously divine beings fall from their prior state and, through consuming a savoury crust floating on the oceans, develop physical bodies, and later sexual differentiation. At first their environment is bountiful, but it becomes less so the more they greedily take from it. They feed off sweet-tasting fungus, and then creepers, but these in turn disappear as the beings differentiate in appearance and the more beautiful ones become conceited and arrogant. Then they feed off quick-growing rice, gathering it each day as they need it. But due to laziness, they start to gather a week's supply at a time, so that it then ceases to grow quickly, necessitating cultivation. Consequently, the land is divided up into fields, such that property is invented, followed by theft. Here, then, is a vision of sentient beings and their environment co-evolving (or co-devolving). The beings are affected by what they take from their environment, and the environment becomes less refined and fruitful as the beings morally decline.

All this takes place according to the principle of Conditioned Arising (see p.33 and 124-5 of this book), in which nothing exists on its own, as each thing depends on others to condition its arising and existence. In Eastern Buddhism, the inter-relationship of all things (and thus of humans and their environment) is particularly strongly emphasized. In the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* is an image, the 'Jewel Net of Indra', explained by Fa-tsang (643-712),

¹ D.III.84-93; cf. Batchelor and Brown, 1992:11-13.

a master of the Hua-yen school, as follows. In this infinite net, a jewel is placed at each knot, such that each jewel reflects every other one, including their reflections of every jewel, and so on to infinity (Cook, 1989: 214). This is seen as a simile for reality as a web of interdependence, in which each thing is 'interpenetrated' by every other. Each item is made possible by, and reflects, every other, for they all condition it in one way or another. Nothing can exist by itself, but it also makes its own contribution to the whole. Thus the *Sūtra* says, 'Every living being and every minute thing is significant, since even the tiniest thing contains the whole mystery'. Likewise, the Ch'an monk Sêng-chao (384-414) said, 'Heaven and earth and I are of the same root, the ten-thousand things and I are of one substance' (Suzuki, 1959: 353). Cook sees this perspective as one of 'cosmic ecology' (1989: 214).

[154] In the lands of Eastern Buddhism, the traditional ideal has been one of harmony with nature. This has been particularly emphasized by the Ch'an/Zen school, in such actions as blending meditation huts into the landscape, not wasting any food in monasteries, landscape painting, landscape gardening, and nature poetry (Suzuki, 1959: ch.11). In paintings, human beings are simply one part of a natural scene, not the focus, with nature as simply a background, as often seen in Western art (Cook, 1989: 217-18). Great attention is paid to seemingly insignificant aspects of nature, for insight into them can give an intuitive appreciation of the indescribably and mysterious 'suchness' which runs through the whole fabric of existence. Such insight requires a mind in which ego-centred thought has been stilled and disciplined, but in which a natural spontaneity wells up from deep within. The seventeen-syllable *haiku* poem form is a favourite medium for the expression of such intuitions (Suzuki, 1959: ch.7). Of the following examples, the first three are by Bashō (1643-94), one is by Kikaku (1660-1707) and one by Jōsō (1661-1704):

- | | | | |
|------|--|-----|--|
| i) | An old pond, ah!
A frog jumps in:
The water's sound! | ii) | On a dry branch
A raven is perched:
This autumnal eve. |
| iii) | Lice, fleas -
The horse pissing
By my pillow. | iv) | A little frog
Riding on a banana leaf,
Trembling. |
| v) | Under the water,
On the rock resting,
The fallen leaves. | | |

Such an attunement to natural phenomena is also evident in a number of the poems attributed to the early *Arahats* in the *Theragāthā* (Thag.), a Theravāda text. A number are attributed to Mahā-Kassapa (vv.1062-70), an ascetic character claimed by the Ch'an/Zen school as the first teacher in their line. He speaks of his appreciation for the delightful rocks, 'cool with water, having pure streams, covered with Indagopaka insects' (v.1063), resounding with elephants and peacocks, 'covered with flax flowers as the sky is covered with clouds' (v.1068):

With clear water and wide crags, haunted by monkeys and deer, covered with oozing moss, those rocks delight me (vv.1070).

Sāriputta affirms, 'Forests are delightful, where (ordinary) people find no delight. Those rid of desire will delight there; they are not seekers after sensual pleasures' (v.992). That is, the enlightened appreciate nature [155] in a non-attached, non-sensual way. Indeed, Mahā-Moggallāna speaks of his living at the root of a tree in the forest, contemplating the foulness of the body (vv.1146-52). He is also without fear of natural phenomena: while lightening flashes around the mountain, 'gone to the cleft in the mountain the son of the incomparable venerable one meditates' (v.1167). Likewise Bhūta speaks of contentedly meditating in a cave at night, while outside the thunder rumbles, the rain falls and fanged animals roar (v.524). In a more tranquil vein, Rāmaṇeyyaka says, 'Amidst the sound of chirping and the cries of birds, this mind of mine does not waver, for devotion to solitude is mine' (v.49). Non-attached delight is, again, expressed by Tālapuṭa, who meditatively admires the beautiful necks, crests, tail feathers and variegated wing feathers of birds (vv.1135-36). Moreover, after rain, 'when the grove is in full flower, like a cloud, I shall lie among the mountains like a tree' (v.1137). That is, he will be rooted and 'earthed' through strong mindfulness, while in full mastery of his formerly wayward mind. For such early wilderness-meditators, the environment could itself be a teacher, especially of constant change and impermanence. As Vimāla says, 'The earth is sprinkled, the wind blows, the lightening flashes in the sky. My thoughts are quietened, my mind is well concentrated' (v.50). The environment could also be an example, such as a mountain as an image of unshakeability (v.1000). Thus Mahānāma says that he is 'found wanting by the mountain with its many shrubs and trees' (v.115). All in all, the mountain and forest environment loved by such early saints is one in which a person can develop such qualities as non-attached joy, fearlessness, energy, and full enlightenment. As Kāḷudāyin boldly affirms, 'While the wind blows cool and sweet smelling, I shall split ignorance asunder, as I sit on this mountain top' (v.544).

Such appreciation for the forest is also found in Mahāyāna texts. Thus the poet Śāntideva praises the forest as a delightful place conducive to not clinging to anything as 'mine' (Bca.VIII.25 & 27). In his *Śikṣā-samuccaya*, he cites the *Ugradatta-paripṛcchā* as saying that the forest-dweller should seek to be like the plants and trees, which are without a sense of self or possession (Ss.193). He also says that if a *Bodhisattva* has to be away from the forest for a while, to teach or learn from others, he should retain a "cave-and-forest mind" (Ss.194).

While communal monastic life has always been important in Buddhism, time alone in the forests and mountains has also been so. It is an opportunity for developing certain qualities away from the support - and hindrances - posed by other humans. For all their positive potential, [156] humans can also have many negative traits. Thus the Buddha agrees when a disciple says that humans are a deceitful 'tangle', while animals are a (relatively) 'open clearing' (M.I.340-41). Consequently, a time in the company of animals and nature may be an aid to spiritual development. The Buddha's own association with and appreciation of such surroundings can be seen from the location of key events during his life. He was born under one tree, enlightened under another, gave his first sermon in an animal park, and died between two trees. Nevertheless, he spent much of his time in and around towns and cities, teaching people. If he had been one who grasped at the beauties of nature, he would have kept clear of these.

Given all that has been said so far, it is clear that the Buddhist ideal for humanity's

relationship with animals, plants and the landscape, is one of harmonious co-operation. Buddhism emphasises a disciplining and overcoming of the negativities within the conditioned nature of the human heart. Such an approach goes hand-in-hand with a friendly attitude to the environment. This can be seen in Dṭṣuzuki's talk of making a 'good friend' of a climbed mountain, rather than of 'conquering' it (Suzuki, 1959: 334).

Non-harming of animals

As an example of the pan-Indian value of *ahiṃsā*, or 'non-injury' (Tähtinen, 1976; Chapple, 1993), the first of the five precepts is to abstain from 'onslaught on living beings (literally: breathers)' (see pp.67-9 of this book). Its place as the most important precept is reflected in the fact that Sri Lankan villagers often sum up what Buddhism requires of them as, 'not to kill animals' (Southwold, 1983: 66). While it is difficult to follow this fully, clearly a Buddhist should strive to minimize intentional injury to living beings. The law of karma backs up compassion as a motive for following the precept: it means that one *cannot* intentionally harm beings without this bringing harm to oneself at some time. Thus when the Buddha found some children molesting a snake with sticks, he said, 'Whoever seeking his own happiness harms with rod pleasure-loving beings gets no happiness hereafter' (Dhp.131).

The Theravādin commentator Buddhaghosa explains that it is worse to kill a human than an animal, or a larger or more substantial animal than a smaller or less substantial one (see p. 52 of this book). Among animals, it is worse to kill an elephant, which is both large and noble, and bad to kill a cow, which gives much to humans through its milk. In the monastic [157] code of discipline, it is an offence requiring expiation if an animal is intentionally killed (Vin.IV.124-5). This is a lesser offence than killing a human, which requires permanent expulsion from the order, but an offence nevertheless. An offence requiring expiation is also committed if a monk uses water while knowing that it contains breathing creatures that will be killed by his action (Vin.IV.125); to avoid this, a water-strainer is part of the traditional kit of a monk (Vin.II.118). Again, it is an offence to sprinkle water on the ground if it is known that there are living creatures there that will be harmed by this (Vin.IV.48-9).

Animal sacrifice

An obvious abuse of animals during the Buddha's day was the killing of them as part of elaborate Brahmanical sacrificial rituals. The Buddha, along with leaders of other non-Brahmanical renunciant groups, was very critical of this, both because of the cruelty involved and because it did not bring about the objectives the brahmins hoped for. Denying the brahmins' view of it as a wholesome action leading to a happy rebirth, he saw it as having the opposite qualities (A.II.42). Such criticisms led to a great decrease in the use of animals in this way. The Buddha praised brahmins of old for not sacrificing animals - probably historically correct - and, in the *Kūṭadanta Sutta* (D.I.127-49), describes a sacrifice which he had himself conducted for a king in a past life. In this, no animals were killed, no trees were felled to act as sacrificial posts, workmen were not forced to help, and the only offerings were items such as butter and honey (D.I.141). Such a description was clearly meant as a contrast to the current mode of sacrificing! The emperor Asoka in fact banned animal sacrifices, at least in his capital city (Nikam & McKeon, 1959: 55).

Meat eating

Of course, the main reason why animals are killed is to eat them. Buddhist texts, and the actions of Buddhist leaders, have sought to discourage this. The *Mahārāja-kaniṣka-lekḥa*, addressed to a hunting emperor, says:

why do you commit such dreadful acts upon deer? Your eyes are similar to the eyes of a young deer. When the deer are startled, they look about with revolving eyeballs. Should you not therefore have compassion for these (deer)? (cited by Jampal, ASP.71-2).

[158] The *Bodhisattva-bhūmi*, a Mahāyāna text, states that the *Bodhisattva*'s great generosity should not include giving away nets for catching animals², or a piece of land on which animals might be hunted or killed². A popular *Jātaka* story (J.I.145-53) tells of a king who drove two herds of deer into an enclosed park, so as to hunt them more easily.

Nevertheless, when the king or his cook came to take a deer, many were still hurt and frightened in the chase. The herds' two leaders thus negotiated with the king and all agree that there should be no chase. Each day, the single deer to be killed would be chosen by lot, and would go quietly. One day, it fell to the turn of a pregnant doe, so she appealed to the leader of her herd to postpone her turn until she had given birth. As he refused, she appealed to the leader of the other herd, known as the Banyan deer, who was the Buddha in a previous life. As he could not assign any other deer to take her place, he volunteered himself. When the king came and found him ready to die, he was astonished, for he had granted immunity to the two herd-leaders. On being told what had happened, he was so impressed by the deer's noble compassion that he spared the lives of both him and the doe. In response to the Banyan deer's requests, he then went on to spare all the other deer in the park, all deer outside the park, all four-footed beings, all birds and all fishes. The deer then wander free.

Such granting of the lives of animals is therefore a respected ideal, known as the 'gift of fearlessness' (*abhaya-dāna*). The emperor Asoka made fifty-six official 'no slaughter' days per year, approximately four per lunar month, when no fish could be captured or sold, and animals might not be killed even in game reserves (Nikam & McKeon, 1959: 56). He gave up hunting trips, the favourite sport of Indian rulers, but went on pilgrimages instead. He banned the killing of a wide variety of non-food animals, birds and fishes, and drastically reduced, then eliminated, the slaughter of animals to feed the large royal household (Nikam & McKeon, 1959: 55-6). In Sri Lanka, a number of Buddhist kings prohibited the slaughter of animals, either wholly, or in certain circumstances. In China, the emperor Wu, in 511 C.E. prohibited the use of fishing-nets, and exhorted his subjects to avoid killing beings especially on the days dedicated to ancestor-worship. In Japan, the emperor Temmu, in 675 C.E. restricted the use of some types of hunting devices and eating the meat of cows, horses, dogs and monkeys (Chapple, 1992: 57).

[159] *Meat eating in early and Theravāda Buddhism*

It is often seen as surprising that vegetarianism (Prasad, 1979; Ruegg, 1980) is not more widespread among Buddhists than it is, given Buddhist teachings. In fact, the Buddha's emphasis was on the avoidance of killing. So it is worse to swat a fly - an immediate act of

² 48b-49a; see Dayal, 1932:175.

killing - than to eat the carcase of an already dead animal. Only in certain Mahāyāna texts is vegetarianism advocated. The position in early Buddhism, and in Theravāda lands, is as follows.

In the Buddha's day, vegetarianism was practised by Jains, though Jains see the vegetables eaten by them as containing a life-principle or soul (*jīva*). On one occasion, Jains accused the Buddha of knowingly eating an animal that had been specifically killed for him. The donor denied this, and the Buddha explained that a monk may eat meat provided it is 'pure in three respects': if the monk has not seen, heard or suspected that the animal had been killed specifically for him (Vin.I.237-8). The commentary (on Vin.III.172) explains that, if a monk has suspicions, due to his having seen or heard of the donors hunting, fishing, or slaughtering an animal recently, he should ask about the meat and can only eat it if the being was not killed in order to feed him (Vin.A.604-06; Bapat & Hirakawa, 1970: 395-6). Elsewhere, the Buddha explains that a monk receives food as a gift from a donor, and his lovingkindness for donors and other creatures is not compromised by such eating, if it is 'blameless' by being 'pure in three respects' (M.I.368-71). He goes on to emphasize, though, that a donor generates much bad karma by killing a being so as to give alms to himself or a monk, due to: i) giving the order to fetch the animal, ii) its pain and distress as it is dragged with a rope around its neck, iii) giving the order to kill the animal, iv) its pain and distress while being killed, v) the offering of the meat to a monk if it is of a type not allowable for a monk. Here, it can be noted, the evil of the act resides both in the actual actions of the killer and the suffering of the killed.

Non-allowable food for monks, perhaps offered at times of scarcity, are: elephant or horse flesh, as people regarded these animals as royal emblems; dog-flesh and snake-flesh, as people saw them as disgusting; the flesh of lions, tigers, panthers, bears and hyenas, as such animals would smell the eaters and attack them (Vin.I.219-20). These prohibitions were both to preserve people's faith in the *Saṅgha*, which was good for both the monks and lay people, and to protect monks from danger, a prudential, not moral, reason.

It is clear from the above that the Buddha would have frequently eaten [160] 'blameless' meat given as alms. Thus the debate (e.g. Kapleau, 1981) over whether his last meal, literally 'pig-mild' (*sūkara-maddava*; D.II.127), was pork, or truffles dug up by pigs, is rather beside the point. It is notable that the Buddha actually resisted an attempt to make vegetarianism compulsory for monks (Vin.II.171-2). This was proposed by his cousin, the monk Devadatta, who is portrayed as having been proud and jealous of the Buddha's influence. In order to foment a schism, he proposed to the Buddha that all monks should be both vegetarian, and follow a number of previously optional ascetic practices, such as living at the root of a tree. The Buddha refused, reaffirming that the practices were optional and meat was acceptable if it was 'pure in three respects'. Devadatta then attempted to lead his own order, under these rules, seeking to gain support from those who 'esteem austerity'. Elsewhere, such a purely external way of assessing someone's spiritual worth is seen as unreliable (A.II.71). Prior to his enlightenment, in his ascetic phase, Gotama had himself tried the teachings of those who taught 'purity through food', i.e. living off small amounts of only one type of food, be it jujube, beans, sesame or rice. Such externally-orientated practices only made him thin and weak, though (M.I.80-1). The link between vegetarianism and extreme asceticism is also found in another passage, where it is included among the practices of self-tormenting ascetics, along with such

things as nakedness, eating once a week, never sitting down, and pulling out of the hair (M.I.342-3). Such ascetic acts are not seen to 'purify' a person (Sn.249), and meat is not what is to be seen as 'tainted fare', but breaking the precepts is 'tainted fare' (Sn.242).

It is notable, above, that the Buddha did not even regard vegetarianism as an optional ascetic practice for monks. If they were given flesh-food, and it was 'pure' as described above, to refuse it would deprive the donor of the karmic fruitfulness engendered by giving alms-food. Moreover, it would encourage the monks to pick and choose what food they would eat. Food should be looked on only as a source of sustenance, without preferences. To believe that being a vegetarian is itself spiritually purifying would seem to be an example of the spiritual fetter of 'attachment to virtues and vows'. It is certainly the case that a feeling of moral superiority is a common danger among vegetarians: though it can be avoided! Likewise, vegetarians can in time become disgusted with meat, which can be seen as a form of negative attachment. In any case, as the above suggests, there are many worse actions than eating meat.

The above discussion is concerned with what is acceptable for a monk or nun, who must, with few exceptions, eat what is given to him [161] or her. The considerations for a lay Buddhist are similar, but not identical. A layperson has more control over his or her food supply; ingredients must be directly obtained or bought. Laypeople, within the limits of their means, make many preference-directed choices over what they eat. So for a layperson to avoid flesh-food (except, perhaps, when a guest) is not to refuse what someone has graciously offered, and not, as such, more 'picking and choosing' than is normal for a layperson. A lay vegetarian must, though, be wary of feelings of judgemental moral superiority, and negative attachment to meat. The latter is best dealt with by not refusing meat if one is someone's guest. While it is in some ways more feasible, then, for a layperson to be a vegetarian than a monk, one feature of Buddhism weighs against this leading to vegetarianism being more common among the laity. Normally, higher standards of behaviour are expected of a monk than a layperson. If even monks are not expected to be vegetarian, a layperson might well think, 'why should I?'

In Theravāda countries, vegetarianism is universally admired but little practised³. There is a minority witness of vegetarians, however - such as the one-time governor of Bangkok -, and most people have an uneasy conscience when they *think* about meat-eating. Most lay-people eat meat, though some abstain on observance days, or during periods of meditation. In Thailand, a few monks let it be known that they would prefer vegetarian food (Bunnag, 1973: 69-70). In Burma, Mahāsi Sayadaw recommends that the safest way for monks to ensure their food is 'pure in three respects' is to be vegetarian (Mahasi, 1981: 45-7), and some nuns are vegetarian in periods of more ascetic practice (Kawanami, 1990: 27). In Sri Lanka, most nuns are vegetarian (Bartholomeusz, 1994: 140), many 'Protestant Buddhists' (see pp.112 of this book) have recommended vegetarianism, as does the Sarvodaya Śramadāna movement (see pp.225-34 of this book) (Bond, 1988: 280), and some see meat eating as hindering success in meditation (Bond, 1988: 200-04).

In general, it is seen as preferable to eat the meat of an animal which is less intelligent, and/or smaller (cf. 52 of this book), than the opposite. Thus it is worst of all to eat beef (in Burma prior to British colonisation, it was a crime to kill a cow, as it was in the period 1960-62). It is seen as less bad to eat pork, then goats or chickens, and less bad again to eat

³ Gombrich, 1971: 26-02; King, 1964: 281-4; WFBR, 1983.

eggs. Nevertheless, eggs are always regarded as having been fertilized, so to boil or crack an egg is seen as killing a living being (Terwiel, 1979: 188). [162] This means that, in Sri Lanka at least, no eggs are used in Buddhist monasteries, and pre-cracked 'Buddhist eggs' are sold to the middle-class pious Buddhists. It is seen as least bad to eat fish, an unintelligent form of life that needs little effort to kill. Fish is by far the most common form of flesh eaten, as is reflected in a saying on the abundance of food in Thailand, 'There are fish in the water, there is rice in the fields'. Nevertheless, the Buddhist ideal rules out even killing fish. This is expressed in one *Jātaka* story, where the Buddha in a past life is said to have been a crane who only ate fish when he found them already dead (J.I.206-08).

It is clearly the case, though, that any lay Buddhist should not kill an animal for food, or tell someone else to do so. Either action clearly breaks the first precept. The question arises, though, as to whether buying meat from a butcher is participating in wrong action by encouraging it. One passage (A.II.253) says that a person will be reborn in hell if he kills and encourages others to do so. 'Encouraging' alone is not specified as having this effect, but in any case, such encouraging would normally be seen to be of a direct form, for example 'why don't you go hunting?', or *ordering* a carcass from a butcher (Mahasi, 1981: 46). Clearly, to ask a butcher to kill an animal for one is to break the first precept. In the West, most food animals are killed in large abattoirs, and 'butchers' only sell the meat. Buddhist countries lack such large-scale slaughter-houses (they would be seen as hells on earth) and so obtaining meat is more likely to have the attendant danger of being directly involved in an animal's death. This probably helps to reduce the extent of meat-eating.

To make one's living as a butcher, hunter or fisherman clearly comes under the category of 'wrong livelihood' (A.II.208), to be avoided by all sincere Buddhists. Certainly one finds that, in Buddhist societies, butchers (slaughterers and meat salesmen) are usually non-Buddhists, often Muslims (Spiro, 1971: 45). By making a living by or from killing, they are seen as depraved people, and are often treated as outcasts. Buddhist fishermen are more common, though they have a low status in society due to their livelihood. In Sri Lanka, the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress recommended, in 1985, that the government should not support commercial fishing through having a Ministry of Fisheries (Bond, 1988: 118). Yet, as fish are seen as a lower form of life than land animals, it is seen as less bad to kill them. The excuse is sometimes made that they are not *killed*, but just die when taken out of the water. This is evidently a case of trying to distance oneself from what is recognized as [163] an unwholesome action. In Southeast Asia, people often catch their own fish, which clearly breaks the first precept; but if a living is not made from this, it is not seen as 'wrong livelihood'.

Meat eating in Mahāyāna Buddhism

In the Mahāyāna tradition, Śāntideva aspired that all should avoid meat (Ss.33), and cited the *Bodhisattva-Prātimokṣa* as saying that flesh food should not be given to a monk, but if it was, he should eat it (Ss.143). Some texts give arguments for vegetarianism, such advocacy clearly having been facilitated by the climate of opinion that the Buddhist emphasis had helped to create. Jain criticism of meat-eating by Buddhists may have also played its part, but the Mahāyāna emphasis on compassion seems to have been a key factor. Thus the *Mahā-parinirvāṇa Sūtra* says that eating meat 'extinguishes the seed of great compassion' (Kapleau, 1981: 34), and has the Buddha explicitly saying, 'I order the various disciples

from today that they cannot any more partake of meat'. Ruegg (1980) notes that vegetarianism was first emphasized in texts, such as this, which focused on the idea of the *Tathāgata-garbha*, or Buddha-potential, in all beings. This concept is also found in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, in which a late section has a series of arguments against meat-eating⁴, and has the Buddha *denying* the scriptural idea of it being 'blameless' to eat meat that is 'pure in three respects'. Such a direct contradiction of an earlier scriptural idea is unusual in Mahāyāna texts; non-acceptable ideas are generally subverted, reinterpreted, or seen purely as a 'skilful means'. The arguments of the *Sūtra* can be summarised as follows:

- 1) all beings, in some past rebirth, have been one's close relative, such as one's mother, or friend. One should look on all beings as if they were one's only child, i.e. with lovingkindness, and not eat them.
- 2) the smell of a meat eater frightens beings and gives a meat-eater a bad reputation.
- 3) eating meat by Buddhists means that the *Dharma* will be spoken ill of, and the *Bodhisattvas* will lose their hearers.
- 4) meat stinks.
- 5) meat-eating prevents progress in meditation, and leads to arrogance, as do onions, garlic and alcohol (here the influence of Hindu yoga ideas seem apparent). [164]
- 6) the meat-eater sleeps uneasily, with bad dreams (cf. lovingkindness is said to lead to good sleep); he is anxious, with bad digestion and bad health. It is karmically fruitful for a *Bodhisattva* to eat grains, beans, honey, oil, ghee, molasses and sugar etc., and also healthy to do so.
- 7) meat-eating leads to a bad rebirth as a carnivorous animal, or a low caste human; vegetarianism leads to a good rebirth.
- 8) if no meat is eaten, no-one will destroy life, as there will be no market for the bodies.

Here, various types of argument are used: an appeal to love, and to the duty of returning past kindnesses (i); prudence (ii); the need to protect the *Dharma* (iii); disgust (iv); spiritual pragmatism (v); mental and physical health (vi); karmic effect (vi and vii); and good indirect consequences of abstinence (viii). The *Sūtra* concludes that it is karmically fruitful to avoid flesh-food, that the arguments defending meat-eating are spurious, and that the Buddha never ate meat.

By the early fifth century C.E., in the Buddhist heart-lands of north-east India, nearly all classes but the lowest came to be vegetarian (Legge, 1886: 43). This influenced Hinduism such that, today, members of the higher castes are often vegetarian. Outside India, it is in Eastern Buddhism that Buddhist arguments for vegetarianism have had a notable effect. The emperor Wu, in 511, included a ban on meat-eating among other animal-protecting legislation. This helped lead to the long-term reduction of meat-eating by Chinese Buddhists, and the virtual end of meat-eating in Chinese monasteries and temples (Welch, 1967: 112-113). Such a requirement for vegetarianism by monks and nuns is enshrined in the supplementary monastic code of Eastern Buddhism known as the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* (Dharma Realm, 1981; De Groot, 1893). Among pious lay-people, vegetarianism has been common, being seen as an implication of either the first precept or the *Bodhisattva* vows (Welch, 1967: 365). Vegetarian feasts have been common at festivals, and when the Communist government came to forcibly laicize many monks, quite a proportion turned

⁴ Suzuki, 1932:211-23; 1930: 368-71.

to running vegetarian restaurants. For Chinese Buddhists, to see Theravāda monks eating meat often comes as a shock, as it is seen as very un-monkly behaviour!

Chinese attitudes have also broadly prevailed in Korea and Japan. It is claimed that Japan was 'essentially a vegetarian country' until the middle of the nineteenth century (Kapleau, 1981: 34). Certainly, beef was not eaten. Since the opening of Japan to the West, in 1868, though, [165] western meat-eating habits have gradually come to have a considerable influence. The monasteries, especially Zen ones, remain formally vegetarian, though it has been observed that trainee monks do eat meat when away from the monastery (Kapleau, 1981: 27).

In Northern Buddhism, while the tradition is Mahāyāna, the harsh, cold climate, yielding little plant protein, has meant that most people, except for some Lamas, eat meat (Bell, 1928: 217-34). Those Lamas who eat meat, though, may do a ceremony to help the dead animal gain a good rebirth. A common livelihood is as a nomadic herdsman up on the high pastures of Tibet or on the steppes of Mongolia, so livestock play an important part in the economy of these regions. Nevertheless, people often abstain from meat on observance days - when, in pre-Communist Tibet, slaughtering was banned -, and butchers are despised. The most direct method of killing an animal - with a knife - is generally avoided, suffocation being the preferred method. While Theravādins prefer to eat small creatures, the Tibetans reason that it is better to kill a few large animals (cattle, sheep and goats) than many small ones (Ekvall, 1964: 75). The fact that this fits in with the abundance of fish in Theravāda lands and cattle etc. in Tibet, is surely no accident! The widespread avoidance of fish and fowl is also related to the practice of disposing of human remains by compassionately making them available to birds and fish. Tibetans are noted for their kindness to animals, and even have scruples about eating honey, for this is seen as entailing theft from bees, a view also found in Sri Lanka (Schmithausen, 1991b: 43). A similar restraint is seen in a story about the Tibetan hermit-saint Milarepa (Mi-la-ras-pa; 1040-1123). When given some meat by hunters passing his isolated cave, he used this very sparingly to supplement his existing diet of nettles. Once maggots started eating the meat, though, he stopped doing so: not out of disgust, but because he felt that clearing out the maggots and eating the meat would be stealing it from them (Evans-Wentz, 1951: 199)!

In the West, vegetarianism among Buddhists is more common than in many parts of Buddhist Asia. This is due to Western expectations of what 'non-harming' Buddhists should do, a general increase in vegetarianism in the West, along with ease of obtaining good vegetarian food, and the influence of the Eastern Buddhist model, particularly via America. In Britain, when food is offered to Western monks trained in the Thai tradition, Thais often give dishes containing some flesh, but Westerners give vegetarian ones. This is gradually having the effect of the Thais offering more vegetarian ones. [166]

Animal husbandry

The emperor Asoka prohibited the castration or branding of animals on various holy days, as well as completely banning the killing of young goats, lambs or pigs, or of their mothers while still in milk for them (Nikam & McKeon, 1959: 56-7). In China, the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* code says that one should not sell domestic animals, nor raise cats, badgers and silk worms (cf. Uss.76 & 82). In Theravāda countries, the 'wrong livelihood' of 'trade in flesh' is generally seen to include raising livestock for slaughter. In rural Sri Lanka, people raise

chickens and pigs for slaughter, though they may evasively refer to their goats as 'pets' (Gombrich, 1971: 261). In Burma, there has been little domestication of animals, except as beasts of burden. The keeping of pigs and chickens has existed on a small scale, but government attempts to increase it have not been very successful (Pfanner & Ingersoll, 1962: 345), and it is rare to find a Buddhist cattle-raiser (Spiro, 1971: 45). In Thailand, around a third of people in a typical village might raise pigs and chickens, on a small scale, and there has been a modest rise in numbers of animals (e.g. a rise from 3.15 million pigs to 5 million between 1950 and 1970), though many people are reluctant to respond to government encouragement to keep cattle. Of those who do raise animals for slaughter, some see it as an evil occupation, but say 'I have to make a living'. Older people, who are generally more religious, are least likely to be involved in animal husbandry, even of chickens (Pfanner & Ingersoll, 1962: 355).

In the cold climate of Tibet, herding animals is a common form of livelihood, but killing them is seen as a necessary evil. It is avoided by older, more pious members of herding families, and it is preferred if an animal has a natural death, e.g. falling off a cliff (though this is sometimes deliberately engineered).

In Japan, a common practice is for those who live from killing animals to conduct memorial rites (*kuyō*) for them: for cows by farmers, fish by fishermen, game by hunters. These are done as a kind of thanks, and perhaps apology, and to ease the animals on their way to a better rebirth. Such rites, though, are even done for intimate inanimate objects such as an old pair of spectacles, and are now also done for pets (Hoshino & Takeda, 1987: 310).

Pest control

The elimination of pests clearly presents an ethical problem for Buddhists: Vasubandhu says that it is deluded to say that poisonous pests [167] *should* be killed (AKB.IV.68d), and Asoka's edicts include a ban on the killing of vermin (Nikam & McKeon, 1959: 56). Where possible, there is often a preference for removing pests to a safe distance and then releasing them⁵. This is done with such as rats, mice, insects and even snakes, except the most vicious and deadly ones⁶. Nevertheless, Ingersoll (1966: 203-4) cites the opinion of a pious Thai villager, in 1960, when he heard that the government were killing some of the many stray dogs, some rabid, in Bangkok: it would be better not to kill them, and they would only bite one if it was one's karma. Likewise, Burmese villagers have been generally unwilling to assist in D.Dt. spraying to kill malaria-spreading mosquitos (Spiro, 1971: 45). Behaviour towards pests does vary, though. In Thailand, mosquitoes are readily killed, and insecticides are used if they can be afforded (Terwiel, 1979: 191). Thais will generally kill rodents and vermin which infest gardens and paddy fields (Bunnag, 1973: 143), though Tibetans do not harm the bold rats and mice that they share their homes and monasteries with (Ekvall, 1964: 76). In Sri Lanka, insecticides are used, though with some remorse and sadness; most people - even monks - (Gombrich, 1971: 262) will kill harmful insects, but will put up with considerable annoyance from others, and step aside to avoid treading on them (Southwold, 1983: 67-8). Richard Gombrich reports that Sri Lankan villagers, in killing small creatures such as insects, 'do not display the compunction or squeamishness

⁵ King, 1964:280; Ekvall, 1964:76.

⁶ Spiro, 1971: 46, 449; Hall, 1902: 234-6; Southwold, 1983:67.

sometimes found in the urban middle class' (1971: 262). Beyond this, though, uneasiness sets in. Likewise, Barend Terwiel reports that for Thai villagers, the killing of animals larger than insects 'is often accompanied with a marked discomposure' (1979: 191), though Jane Bunnag says that most in central Thailand 'appeared to feel no compunction' in killing a pig feed their family (1973: 143).

If Buddhists do decide to kill pests, they may seek to do so in roundabout ways. For example, when a caretaker military government took over Burma in the late 1950s, it wanted to decrease the large stray-dog population in the capital, Rangoon. So as not to be too offensive to Buddhist sensibilities, only *some* of the meat put down to poison the dogs actually contained poison. This meant that it could be argued (?) that the dogs chose the poisoned pieces (and that when they did so, it was due to their past bad karma) (cf. King, 1964: 281). Similarly, in a valley of Kashmir bordering Tibet, Buddhists feel that they have to kill predatory wolves, but seek to do so in a way which obscures personal responsibility [168] (cf. pp.54 of this book). In Tibet, bugs found in clothing will only be removed, not killed, though garments may be hung out on very cold nights, so that the bugs die without being directly 'killed'. Such an act is still seen to generate bad karmic results, though (Ekvall, 1964: 76). From Burma comes the example of people's ground-nut crops being ravaged by a horde of rats (Pfanner & Ingersoll, 1962: 345-6). The villagers consulted the monks, the more 'liberal' of whom said that killing the rats was an evil but was unavoidable; moreover, some of the money from the saved crop could be used for religious donations, so as to generate karmic fruitfulness and hopefully counteract the evil. Most of the farmers agreed with this line of reasoning. Another possible attitude in this matter is to say that, if pests must be killed, it should be done in a spirit of lovingkindness, or, if this is seen as self-contradictory, at least lack of cruelty. In line with this, perhaps, is the Japanese practice of conducting memorial rites for dead vermin (Suzuki, 1959: 379), such that a company which exterminates white ants has built a memorial tower to these at a Buddhist site (Hoshino & Takeda, 1987: 310). Sometimes a monk may seek to get round the detailed monastic rules against any participation in killing by indirectly suggesting to a layperson that they should kill a pest. Gombrich even gives the example of a monk *telling* a young temple servant to kill a cockroach when clearing out a cupboard; but the pious boy merely swept it outside (1971: 262).

Animal experimentation

The Buddhist ideal of non-injury to animal life clearly has implications for the use of animals in product testing, and in medical research and training. The modern world 'uses' animals for these purposes in large numbers. From a Buddhist perspective, this might be seen as analogous to the animal sacrifices of ancient Brahmanism. In one case, the animals were sacrificed in the name of religion, in the other in the name of 'science' and 'knowledge'. In both cases, the *motive* is, in part at least, to bring benefit to human beings. In the West, the public mood has swung increasingly against the abuse of animals through cosmetics testing. There is also some degree of disquiet concerning the use of animals in school biology classes, where much or all of the knowledge gained could be obtained from video-tapes, slides and models. The use of animals in medical research at least has strong utilitarian arguments in its favour. Buddhist ethics, though, are not generally based on the principle that the ends justify the means (except in certain versions of Mahāyāna 'skilful

[169] means' theory). From the traditional Buddhist perspective, it is more certain that killing an animal is wrong than that generating better drugs etc. from experiments on it is good (cf. King, 1964: 281). If the early Buddhist attitude to meat-eating is applied in this area, though, it would be acceptable for a Buddhist to take drugs which others have developed using animal research. The Mahāyāna ethic would give an ambivalent answer: the precedent of vegetarianism would suggest opposition to drug-testing; the principal of skilful means (see pp.134-8 of this book) might suggest it was acceptable, where really necessary. However, the precedents of skilful means cases only give possible legitimation for killing someone about to do a heinous act: not for killing innocent beings to supposedly help other beings. Nevertheless, the Western Zen monk Saidō Kennaway regrettably accepts that many developments in modern drugs and surgery have depended on animal dissections and experimentation. He goes on to say:

From a Buddhist point of view, anyone prepared to do this has to know and accept the karma of his actions. This would entail trying to do as little harm as possible, using alternative methods if available, killing only if absolutely necessary, treating the being with tender respect and making sure the knowledge is put to good use (Shasta Abbey, 1980: 23).

Of course, much testing is not necessary, but arises from an atmosphere of commercial secrecy and rivalry. It might also be pointed out that many modern ills arise as the result of chosen life-styles, e.g. from smoking, drinking and diet. One might ask if animals should pay the price of alleviating the products of human folly (Story, 1976: 369-71). But, from a Buddhist perspective, that does not rule out compassionate help for those who thus suffer. In any case, most Buddhists would see any angry and violent means of opposition to animal experimentation, by groups such as the (UK) Animal Liberation Front, as unwholesome. Action more in line with traditional Buddhist behaviour would be to liberate animals by *buying* them from establishments that would otherwise experiment on them. Jainism is faced with a similar dilemma as Buddhism. In India, where Jains are very active and influential in the pharmaceutical industry, animals are used for drug testing if really necessary, but are then 'rehabilitated' by recuperation facilities maintained by the laboratories; if possible, they are then released back into the wild (Chapple, 1992: 59).

As regards debate on this issue in modern Buddhist countries, information is sparse. In Thailand, graduate nurses connected to Mahidol [170] University, which has a 'Center for Animal Experimentation', now have bioethics courses which include a discussion of animal rights (Lindbeck, 1984: 25). Japan also uses laboratory animals, and the tension with Buddhist norms is dealt with by many companies and research facilities doing annual memorial rites to honour the animals they 'use'⁷. Among Western Buddhists, there is the Buddhist Animal Rights Group, in Britain, and the Buddhists Concerned for Animals group in America (WFBR, 1984: 73-9). The latter focuses on animal experimentation, as well as factory farming and trapping.

Positive regard, and help, for animals

As all sentient beings like happiness and dislike pain, however much their specific desires and sensitivities vary, the *Karaṇīya-metta Sutta* speaks of radiating lovingkindness to all types of beings (see pp.104-5 of this book). The eleventh century *Bodhisattv-āvadāna-*

⁷ Hoshino and Takeda, 1987: 310; LaFleur, 1992: 145.

kalpalatā says 'I cannot endure the pain even of an ant' (Dayal, 1932: 199-200), and one *Jātaka* story concerns a bull who would only pull one hundred carts, to win his owner a bet, when the latter stopped using a harsh tone to get him going (J.I.191-93). Thus 'hard words gall even animals'.

In the nineteenth century, Fielding Hall remarked that animals were very well treated in Burma as compared to those in India. They were well fed, even ownerless dogs, and also very tame. He describes the Burman's attitude to animals as that of 'the gentle toleration of a father to very little children who are stupid and troublesome often, but are very lovable' (1902: 239). Yet while Buddhists are encouraged to be kind to animals, sentimentality is not encouraged, for this goes against the ideal of non-attachment. In principal, this means that lovingkindness should no less be shown to alien, 'uncuddly' creatures such as lobsters than to dogs or cats.

Both humans and animals respond better to those who they feel are friendly, so that lovingkindness is seen to protect a person. Accordingly, the Buddha is said to have halted the charge of the rampaging elephant Nāḷāgiri by suffusing it with lovingkindness, so that it ground to a halt and bowed its head to him (Vin. II.194-96). On another occasion, he taught that the reason a monk was bitten by a snake and had died was because he had failed to radiate lovingkindness to the snakes and other wild animals (A.II.72-3). Even today, monks meditating in the forests of [171] Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka radiate this quality to the forest animals, including prowling hungry tigers, as a protection. There are many stories of this working (Tambiah, 1984: 86-87, 88-90).

Animals are seen as responding in a positive way to those who have a kindly presence. Once, the Buddha retired to the forest to be away from some quarrelsome monks. There, an elephant and a monkey were [172 (plate omitted on p.171)] his companions, bringing him offerings⁸. In the 'Three Worlds According to King Ruang', a 14th century Thai work, it is said that, due to emperor Asoka's goodness, pigeons and parrots brought him high quality rice, wild rats nibbled it so as to produce white rice, bees came to make honey for him, bears brought his cooks firewood, and beautiful birds came to display and sing for him (Reynolds & Reynolds, 1982: 175)!

In the Theravādin monastic code, monks are allowed to release trapped animals or fish, if this is from compassion rather than a desire to steal (Vin.III.62-3). In a more positive vein, a *Jātaka* story tells of the *Bodhisattva* as a hermit who, during a drought, ensured that wild animals got water (J.I.449-51). In doing this, he was so busy that he had no time to get himself food, so that the animals gathered it for him, in thanks. In the *Jātaka-māla*, it is said that, as a boy, Gotama saved a goose which his cousin Devadatta had shot with an arrow, and went on to nurse it back to health (Chapple, 1992: 53). One famous story, from the *Mahāyāna Suvarṇa-prabhāsottama Sūtra*⁹, says that the Buddha, in a past life, even gave his body to a starving tigress that was too weak to sustain herself and her cubs, thus bringing his generosity to full perfection. In Eastern Buddhism, the *Bodhisattva* code known as the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* says: 'One should be willing to forsake one's entire body, one's flesh, hands and feet as an offering to starving tigers, wolves, lions, and hungry ghosts'¹⁰. Altruism towards animals can also be at a very simple level, thus it is said that it is

⁸ Vin.I.352-3; Dh.p.A.I.58-60.

⁹ Sv.b.202-40; Conze, 1959: 24-6; see also *Jātaka-māla* (Khoroché, 1989, ch.1).

¹⁰ Dharma realm, 1981, 150; cited by Chapple, 1992: 53.

karmically fruitful even to throw dish-washing water into a pool or cesspit for insects and other creatures to feed on (A.I.161). The Mahāyāna philosopher Nāgārjuna also advised a king to offer food to hungry ghosts, dogs, birds and ants before and after eating himself, and even to have men put food at the openings of ant-hills (RPR.249-50).

The Zen monk Ryōkwan (1758-1831) acted lovingly even to the lice with which he was afflicted. On early warm winter's days, he would carefully remove them from his underwear to warm in the sun, and then pop them back (Suzuki, 1959: 372)! An even more altruistic act is attributed to the great Indian scholar-monk Asaṅga (fourth or fifth century C.E.). For twelve years he meditated in a cave with a view to gaining a vision of the *Bodhisattva* Maitreya, the embodiment of lovingkindness. One day, frustrated at his lack of success, he saw a poor dog afflicted with a maggot-filled sore. He wished to help the dog, but not harm the [173] maggots. To pull them from the sore would harm them, so, with great compassion, he coaxed them out onto his warm tongue, and then was about to give them a small portion of his own flesh to feed on. At this point, the dog and maggots disappeared, and Maitreya stood where they had been: Maitreya's testing of him had elicited great love, and thus the long-awaited vision (Thurman, 1981: 22-4).

Among the charitable deeds of the emperor Asoka was the planting of medicinal herbs, and the development of wayside wells and shade-trees, for both humans and animals (Nikam & McKeon, 1959: 64). This accords with one of the duties of compassionate *Cakkavatti*: protecting animals and birds (D.III.61). One also finds 'retirement homes' for cows in Burma. Buddhist veterinary care would not naturally include the killing of an ill or injured animal, for this would still be a breach of the first precept, and is seen as not unlike killing an ill human. Buddhist compassion would urge the caring for the animal, but not 'putting it to sleep' (Schmithausen, 1991b: 46).

Buddhism also regards the liberating of animals from death as a karmically fruitful act, and in Eastern Buddhism, the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* code requires this. In Chinese Buddhism, particularly at the time of certain festivals or holy days, crabs are returned to the sea, birds to the air, and chickens saved from slaughter (Welch, 1967: 378-82). Livestock are sometimes released into the care of large monasteries, perhaps with contributions for their upkeep. Such monasteries may also have a pool for fish rescued from fishmongers. Unfortunately, they are not always properly fed. Liberating beings may be an act of worship to Kuan-yin, the *Bodhisattva* embodiment of compassion, or to generate karmic fruitfulness to ward off a natural disaster. Thus Hong Kong Buddhists, during a very bad draught in 1963, released sparrows, turtles, monkeys, deer, tortoises, shellfish, crabs, snakes and eels. Such liberated beings have the three refuges recited on their behalf, to help them towards better future rebirths.

In Burma, people feed the protected turtles and fish at monasteries, and it is seen as good to rescue fish from drying out pools, and transfer them to a river. The freeing of domesticated animals is seen to be very karmically fruitful, and is done collectively in a special ceremony, to protect the community (Spiro, 1971: 271-2). In 1962, the government closed slaughter-houses for three days and released 602 animals, when astrologers predicted a world calamity. Fielding Hall also tells how he went without a meal of chicken when someone bought the bird destined for the pot from his cook, paying over the odds (1902: 231). In Sri [174] Lanka, the monks of isolated communities occasionally organize a boycott of a butcher's shop, so as to save lives (Gombrich, 1971: 260). The forest monks

also look after orphaned animals such as squirrels or bear cubs (Carrithers, 1983: 291). In Thailand, a person might leave some money in their will for the dogs living in a monastery compound (Bunnag, 1973: 119), and retired draught animals are sometimes allowed to live out their days in peace (Terwiel, 1979: 192). At certain festivals, people also buy birds from traders, so as to do the good deed of releasing them. An unfortunate side-effect of this custom, though, is that birds are deliberately captured for this purpose! Turtles released in monastery canals are also sometimes over-crowded and not properly fed (Burns, 1977: 25-37).

Plants, trees and forests

From the beginning of Buddhism, the forest has represented the ideal place for meditation for monks (see pp.154-5 of this book), as seen in the refrain, 'These are the roots of trees, these are empty places. Meditate monks...' (e.g. M.I.118). Indeed, Theravāda monks specializing in meditation are known as 'forest monks', whether or not they actually reside in the forest (Carrithers, 1983; Tambiah, 1984). For lay-people, forests may not be so inviting, but there is karmic fruitfulness in planting groves and fruit-trees for human use (S.I.33). Devotion to the Buddha may also be shown by watering of, and making offerings before, the type of tree under which Gotama attained Buddhahood (*ficus religiosa*), known as *Bodhi* trees ¹¹.

The Buddhist ideal of non-harming is one that extends to all sentient beings. What, though, of plants? ¹² The Jains certainly thought that plants, and even minerals, contained life-principles or souls (*jīvas*) and were part of the round of rebirths. Buddhist texts, though, do not say that it is possible to be reborn as a plant ¹³, or for a plant to be reborn, and later texts explicitly deny this (AKB.IV.36a-b). Nevertheless, the Buddha is described as having avoided harm to seed and plant life (D.I.5), and there are monastic rules against harming trees and plants. It is [175] an offence requiring expiation (by acknowledgment) for a monk to fell a tree or to ask someone else to do so (Vin. IV.34-5). Here, the occasion for making the rule is that a god who had lived in a felled tree complained to the Buddha. In addition, lay people complained that Buddhist monks, in felling trees, were 'harming life that is one-facultied' (*ekindriya jīva*): i.e. only possessing the sense of touch (Vin.A.575), an idea found in Jainism. The Buddha thus bans the destruction of 'vegetable growths' by monks. One might speculate that the 'one-facultied life' could refer to the many small insects living on trees and plants. However, the explanation of the above rule only refers to various kinds of plants and trees: not to the insects that live on them. Indeed, the rule against monks wandering during the rainy season is so as to avoid people's accusations that Buddhist monks are 'injuring life that is one-facultied and bringing many small creatures (literally: breathers) to destruction' by trampling growing crops and grasses (Vin.I.137; emphasis added). Nor could 'one-facultied life' refer to the tree deity in the above passage: as it is seen as conversing with the Buddha, it could hardly be seen as lacking all senses except touch. In another passage on tree-felling, after a reference to

¹¹ Harvey, 1990; Gombrich and Obeyesekere, 1998: 384-410.

¹² For a developed discussion on plants and sentience in early Buddhism, see Schmithausen, 1991a.

¹³ An exception is the 'Tale of *Saṅgharakṣita*', cited in the *Śīkṣā-samuccaya* (Ss.58-9) as referring to bad monks as reborn as 'trees, leaves, flowers and fruit'. As this also has the nonsensical idea of such monks being reborn as non-organic things such as walls and mortars, though, it is of little significance.

people's concern over 'one-facultied life', the Buddha criticises a monk who has cut down a large tree used as a shrine, saying 'For, foolish man, people are percipient of a life-principle in a tree'¹⁴ (Vin.III.156). There is also a rule against monks digging the ground or asking someone to do so (Vin.IV.32-3). Here, there is again reference to concern over 'one-facultied life', and then to 'people are percipient of life-principle(s) in the ground'. In both cases, the motive of the rule seems to be to avoid offending popular sensibilities. The belief in 'one-facultied life' is not endorsed by the Buddha, but nor is it actually criticised. After a careful examination of the evidence on this in early Buddhist texts, Lambert Schmithausen holds that plants were seen as a 'border-line case' as regards sentient life, and there was no real interest in resolving the matter as a theoretical issue (1991: 69). The *Abhidhamma*, though, lacks reference to 'one-facultied life' in its very detailed analysis of phenomena. In practice, though, plants were still be included within the ambit of non-violence for monks (Schmithausen, 1991b: 6-7).

The relationship of a tree-deity to 'its' tree is generally seen [176] as a close one. In some texts, while a deity may be harmed in the process of felling its tree, it may move on to another one (Vin.IV.34). In one *Jātaka* story, though, such a deity is referred to as being 'reborn' (*nibbata*) in its tree, and the tree is referred to both as the deity's 'mortal body' (*sarīra*) and its 'mansion' (*vimāna*). In this case, the god's life will last only as long as his mansion does (J.IV.153-6).

There are no rules against lay-people felling trees (Miln.266), but it is seen as an act of treachery to a friend to cut off the branch of a tree under whose shade one has rested (J.V.240; Pv.II.9.v.3). Nevertheless, it is seen as bad form for a tree-deity to prevent its tree from bountifully fruiting, if this is simply because one ungrateful individual has cut a branch off it after enjoying its fruit (A.III.369-70). In this case, it is said that the god Sakka will summon the tree deity to instruct it to 'keep tree-*dhmma*': to allow people to take from its roots, bark, leaves and fruit without getting upset. If the monastic ideal is one of complete non-violence to trees, then, the lay ideal is one of co-operative harmony with them and their deities.

In a similar way, the monastic prohibition on digging the ground has some effect on lay practice, too. In Tibet, people are careful in digging the ground for fear of hurting worms etc.. Likewise, in Southern Buddhist lands, some abstain from farming on observance days, to avoid injury to worms and insects. The image of the very pious layperson certainly reflects the monastic ideal. One early text (M.II.51-2) speaks of the behaviour of a lay 'Non-returner' saint, who was the supporter of a former Buddha:

Ghaṭṭikāra the potter, sire, is one who has laid aside jewels and wrought gold... does not dig the earth with a spade or with his own hands; willingly he makes a vessel from the soil of a bank that is crumbling or scratched out by rats and dogs.

Clearly, this is an ideal for an abstemious few, but it is an ideal nevertheless!

¹⁴ 'jīva-saññino hi moghapurisa manussā rukkhasmin'. I.B. Horner, in *Book of the Discipline*, vol. I, p.267, translates, 'For, foolish man, in a tree are people having consciousness as living beings'. While this is a possible translation, it is highly unlikely that any living being(s) within a tree would be seen as *manussā*: people or humans. It is much more likely that this refers back to the 'people' (*manussā*) who had expressed concern over 'one-facultied life'.

¹⁵ LaFleur: 1973-4; Shaw: 1985.

In China and Japan, there was much debate on the nature of plants and trees¹⁵. Mahāyāna teachings promised the enlightenment of 'all sentient beings'. Did this mean that plants, trees, and the land were excluded from enlightenment, and devoid of the Buddha-nature, the enlightenment-potential? In China, Chi-t'sang (549-623), of the San-lun school, held that non-sentient beings such as plants and trees had the Buddha-nature, but as they lacked a mind, they could not actualize this potential [177] by experiencing Buddhahood. The T'ien-t'ai monk Chan-jan (711-82), on the other hand, argued that as the Buddha-nature is the immutable mind at the base of all phenomena, even soil and dust, nothing could be excluded from Buddhahood. Certainly all could progress towards it by appropriate action, even if this were through the minute movements present in soil. In Japan, the indigenous reverence for nature fuelled the continuing debate. Ryōgen (912-85), of the Tendai school, held that plants were sentient and that their growth was a process of quiet, steady training towards enlightenment, which came when they bore fruit. Their stillness was that of a being in meditation. Shōshin (1189-1204), on the other hand, denied that plants and trees were sentient. He pointed out, moreover, that no *Sūtra* or treatise said that they could attain enlightenment. Kūkai (774-835), the founder of the tantric Shingon school, however, saw all phenomena, sentient or non-sentient, as manifestations of the body and mind of Mahāvairocana Buddha, and thus not devoid of mind, the prerequisite for Buddhahood. Dōgen (1200-1253), founder of Sōtō Zen in Japan, went even further. He saw the whole phenomenal world as not *manifesting* or *containing* the Buddha-nature, the ultimate, but as *being* it. While such Mahāyāna texts as the *Mahā-parinirvāṇa Sūtra* had denied that walls and stones had the Buddha-nature, he asserted they, like all else, *were* it. The whole changing flux of empty phenomena was nothing but the Buddha-nature, within which it was not possible to designate anything as 'non-sentient'. For him, 'There is a world of living beings in a blade of grass', as in water, air, fire, earth or a staff (Batchelor & Brown, 1992: 12). Each aspect of nature has an intrinsic value as part of ultimate reality, and to let go of oneself in full awareness of the sound of the rain or the cry of a monkey is to fathom this in a moment of non-dual awareness. As he put it:

The ocean speaks and mountains have tongues - that is the everyday speech of the Buddha. ... If you can speak and hear such words, you will be one who truly comprehends the entire universe (Nishiyama & Stevens, 1975: 104-5).

For Dōgen as for the nature-poet Saigyō (1118-90), being in tune with nature was salvific.

Conservation and environmentalism

The emperor Asoka prohibited the burning of forests without reason (Nikam & McKeon, 1959: 56), and the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*, popular in China, said that one should not set fire to hills, woodland or fields. [178] Nevertheless, conservation of species and habitat is not something that Buddhist cultures, in pre-modern times, have had to give much attention to, as Buddhist values have meant that the environment has not been over-exploited. Kabilsingh (1988) points out that on the small, crowded island of Sri Lanka, wildlife has not been virtually eliminated, as in many other regions of the world, this being largely due to religious sensibilities. Places such as the ancient Buddhist capitals of Anurādhapura and Polonnaruwa have acted as wild-life sanctuaries. Hunting is rare - being done by some poor people in remote areas (Gombrich, 1971: 261) -, as it is in Burma, where only non-Buddhists seem to do it (Spiro, 1971: 45). In pre-Communist Tibet, 'herds of wild blue

sheep, yak, deer and flocks of migrating birds would travel with Tibetan nomads...' (Kabilsingh, 1988: 19). Hunting of animals for meat occurred, but there were many extensive nature-reserves in central Tibet, especially round the capital or any monastery or sacred site (Ekvall, 1964: 76).

The situation in a number of Buddhist countries, though, is changing, due to the influence of Western values, whether in the form of consumerism, or communist state capitalism. In Tibet, Chinese exploitation of the country's natural resources has led to much of its wildlife being killed and its forests felled. In Thailand's laissez-faire capitalist economy, consumerism and rapid economic change is also having a deleterious effect on the environment. In 1945, 70% of the country was still forested; by 1989 it was around 15%, due to logging and the spread of agri-business, such as growing tapioca or tobacco, or prawn farms where there were once mangrove swamps. Government sanctioning of deforestation has also set a bad example for villagers, who have taken wood from remaining areas for fire-wood, charcoal, and to clear for cultivation. In the 1970s, many birds were killed by eating fish poisoned by D.Dt., and jungle fowl were being hunted out of existence. Even with tough penalties, there was much poaching in the forests. 50,000 birds, belonging to 40 species, were harvested annually from forests for food, and 375,000 birds of 350 species - including some protected ones - were used for non-food uses (MacAndrews & Sien, 1979: 108). The 1960 Wildlife Act imposed a fine of up to \$500, or one year in prison, for killing a member of a protected species, but the fine had to be doubled in 1972 as wildlife was still decreasing, partly due to poor enforcement (p.33).

Bhikkhu Bodhi, an American Theravāda monk, affirms that at the root of the world-wide 'ecocrisis' - in the form of pollution, resource depletion, erosion, deforestation - is the presumption 'that the means to [179] human well-being lies in increased production and consumption' (Sandell, 1987: vi), that is, in the ideal of unlimited material 'progress'. He refers to:

a number of assumptions specific to Western industrial society: that happiness and well-being lie in the satisfaction of our material needs and sensual desires; that the basic orientation of man to nature is one of conflict and struggle aimed at subjugation; that nature must be conquered and made subservient to the satisfaction of our desires (p. vii).

Bodhi thus sees the need for the practical implications of the Buddhist perspective to be articulated in a new way to the leaders of Buddhist lands currently under the sway of the Western model of development. As Klas Sandell expresses it, the Buddhist ideal is co-operation with nature, not domination - or passive submission to it (1987: 36). To seek to *overcome* external nature is likely to be an expression of human greed and attachment. Helena Norberg-Hodge (1991), who studied the traditional Buddhist life of Ladakh, an Indian region bordering Tibet, points out that life was 'based on co-evolution between human beings and the earth' (Batchelor & Brown, 1992: 43), but that, since the opening up of the area in 1974, the development of a cash economy and an influx of tourists has subverted this balance. To help the Ladakhis reach an appropriate accommodation with the modern world, she has helped in setting up the Ladakh Ecological Development Group (1983), to introduce environmentally-friendly technology such as greenhouses, solar ovens and hydraulic rams (p.53). While material progress brings undoubted benefits, it needs to be tempered by the Buddhist reflections that 'contentment is the greatest wealth'

(Dhp.204) and that craving is the root of suffering. As Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese social activist resident in France says, 'We must be determined to oppose the type of modern life filled with pressures and anxieties that so many people now live. The only way out is to consume less' (Batchelor & Brown, 1992: 108). A Buddhist movement which follows such a perspective is the Sarvodaya Śramadāna movement of Sri Lanka. Founded in 1958, this aims to improve the lives of rural people by awakening them to their own powers and abilities, over against unsympathetic urban modernisers. They aim at appropriate development, based on an economics of sufficiency, free from 'pollution' by materialist values. Accordingly, they concentrate on ten 'basic needs', including a clean, safe and beautiful environment, and activities include cleaning canals and building roads, wind-pumps and biogas generators (Macy, 1983; Batchelor & Brown, [180] 1992: 78-86). Their camps also include environmental and reforestation schemes (Ariyaratne, 1995: 9).

Even in rapidly modernizing Thailand, wild animals and fish in the region of monasteries are often left unharmed, so that the areas have been small nature-reserves. Accordingly, Wat Phailom, near Bangkok, has the last remaining breeding-ground in Thailand for the open-billed stork, thousands of which live there in winter and autumn (Kabilsingh, 1988: 17-18). Since 1966, a programme for training monks to help in community development has included advice on the preservation of nature. Moreover, sophisticated urban dwellers have come to appreciate the isolated forest monasteries of certain meditation masters such as Ajahn Chah, in the north-east. Their visits to such places, to develop more inner peace and wisdom, undoubtedly helps build an appreciation for the forest. An active conservation movement has now developed in Thailand, involving members of the royal family, pop singers, government officials, monks, and many ordinary people, with the Wildlife Fund Thailand sponsoring Buddhism and nature conservation projects, especially to highlight Buddhist teachings which relate to nature and conservation. Relevant material includes instructions to monks to recycle robes material (Vin.II.291), and not to pollute water or green grass with urine or excrement (Vin.IV.205-06), and the ideal of having a quiet environment (A.V.15). The Thai-Tibetan 'Buddhist Perception of Nature Project' has distributed 3,000 books of Buddhist stories and teachings related to the environment. It will be followed by 50,000 more, to be sent to all Thai monasteries and teachers in training colleges. Audio-visual and TV programmes are also planned. Similar literature is being distributed among Tibetans in India, and the project aims to expand to Korea and Japan. Its founder and co-ordinator, Nancy Nash, based in Hong Kong, says that, previously, Buddhists have passively protected nature, but now need to be more overtly active in doing so (Sandell, 1987: 73-5). Nash was herself inspired by the Dalai Lama's emphasis on 'universal responsibility'. In his 1989 Nobel Peace Prize lecture, the exiled Dalai Lama expressed his aspiration that, in future, the Tibetan plateau would become a 'Zone of Non-violence' which:

would be transformed into the world's largest natural park or biosphere. Strict laws would be enforced to protect wildlife and plant life; the exploitation of natural resources would be carefully regulated so as not to damage relevant ecosystems; and a policy of sustainable development would be adopted in populated areas (Piburn, 1990: 24; Batchelor & Brown, 1992: 112-113). [181]

In Thailand, a major concern has been with the effects of deforestation, which has led to land erosion, hotter, shorter rainy seasons, and flooding when the rains come. In 1978, the

government banned the export of much unprocessed wood, and started a reforestation project, though this has favoured quick-growing eucalyptus monoculture plantations. In 1989, the country was the first in the world to completely ban logging, stimulated by a public outcry after 350 people were killed by flooding and mud-slides, due to illegal logging. The measure was taken against the powerful vested interests of the logging industry, which then moved its activities to neighbouring forest-rich Buddhist lands such as Burma, Laos and Cambodia. The government also allows the import of timber from Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam.

Particular problems exist in northern Thailand, where various opium-growing hill-tribes have practised slash-and-burn agriculture, leading to forest loss and disruption of streams to the lowlands. Since the 1970s, Phra Ajahn Pongsak Tejadhammo, a forest monk, watched a tobacco company destroying much of the local lowland forest, then the locals finishing it off, then in-coming Hmong hill-tribes starting to destroy the higher, watershed forest with their slash-and-burn methods. His concern at this led him, since the early 1980s, to organize the villagers of the Mae Soy valley, near Chiang Mai, to protect the forests and help in reforestation of their now desertifying land and its watersheds. The aim is to aid river-flow and irrigation and so benefit villagers' livelihood through sustainable food production. Ajahn Pongsak teaches the villagers that they depend on the forest for water, and thus food, so it is their moral duty to protect and foster it with gratitude. It should be looked on as like a second parent, with the forest animals being like the villagers' brothers and sisters. He emphasises that a harmony with nature is the basis of true Buddhist morality, and that the healthy functioning of the forest is the key to the natural balance, which includes and benefits humankind. The forest ensures 'a healthy harmony in people's lives both physically and mentally' (Batchelor & Brown, 1992: 92). He strongly links Buddhism to respect for nature:

Dharma, the Buddhist word for truth and the teachings, is also the word for nature. This is because they are the same. Nature is the manifestation of truth and of the teachings. When we destroy nature we destroy truth and the teachings (Batchelor & Brown, 1992: 99).

Ajahn Pongsak emphasises that the villagers must have land to support themselves, or they will continue to destroy the forest. He urges villagers [182] to self-help and co-operative effort, not relying on government subsidies etc. for aiding their environment. The work is based on collective decision-making, and donation of labour (as in the Sarvodaya Śramadāna movement of Sri Lanka). By 1985, the movement involved 274 villages, had replanted half a square kilometre of forest, and was planning to replant eight square kilometres. Since then, many villagers have been involved in running a tree-nursery, terracing eroded hillsides, planting thousands of seedlings, and building reservoirs and canals. By 1992, over 1000 villages were involved, involving 97,000 people (Swearer, 1995: 128). Areas of forest land have also been fenced off for protection - which led to an attempt to prosecute Ajahn Pongsak for encroaching on government 'protected' forest! The government allows the Hmong to live on the watershed, growing subsidised cabbages instead of - hopefully - opium. Ajahn Pongsak, though, opposes this as a too easy form of 'compassion'. He prefers bringing them down to the lowlands - where opium cannot grow - and giving them land. This will also prevent the insecticides they use polluting water-courses.

In 1990, the UN Environmental Programme's 'Global 500 Roll of Honour' included Ajahn Pongsak - along with the Thai Prime-minister and a Thai villager who turned his land into a sanctuary for birds (Tangwisuttiji, 1990). Scores of monks in other areas are now following the example of Ajahn Pongsak, and a number of monasteries are actively acquiring land for reforestation. Ajahn Pongsak's activism has included participating in protests against allowing mining in forest areas. He is the founding head of Monks for Preservation and Development of Lives and Environment, formed in 1990. This has met at ecologically threatened sites, such as a proposed dam site in the south which would flood a large tract of ancient rain-forest. Monks participated by living in this forest, on a rota basis, to prevent this. In 1991, Phra Kru Udom Patakorn even ordained trees in the last remaining patch of ancient forest in his part of the north-east, to prevent them being felled for a eucalyptus plantation. Unfortunately Ajahn Pongsak disrobed in 1993 due to being charged with a monastic offence entailing expulsion, but he has continued his work as an eight-precept lay-person (Swearer, 1995: 128).

Thai activists have also made some contact with the Japan Tropical Forest Action Network. Japan, which has a weak, but growing, environmental movement, imports 45% of the world's tropical timber, which it uses mainly as disposable plywood shuttering for concrete buildings. It protects its own forests, though, and it has a good record on pollution control, energy conservation and recycling. [183]

In 1986, an inter-faith conference on the environment was called at Assisi, Italy. There, the (Tibetan) Buddhist representative affirmed, for example, that Buddhists should strive to protect habitats and ensure endangered species do not become extinct (Harris, 1991: 101). In a rather sceptical tone, Ian Harris questions how deep-rooted environmentalism is in Buddhism, suggesting that it is largely in response to fashionable concerns coming from the West. Its recent rise as a self-conscious concern among Buddhists, though, can be seen as largely due to an awareness of the destructive impact of modernization - which was first experienced in the West. Harris cites D.III.74-5, which describes a future golden age, where humans, after a moral decline into a period of great conflict, learn to be highly moral again, and the world is prosperous. Then, 'cities and towns are so close to one another that a cock can comfortably fly from one to the next. In this perfect world, only urban and suburban environments are left. The jungle has been fully conquered' (Harris, 1991: 108). Harris sees this as a vision in which civilization is compatible with the 'total destruction of the wilderness'. And yet, in the period of conflict, people are said to have retired to the jungle and mountains to avoid killing or being killed. The implication is, perhaps, that in a highly moral society, there is no actual *need* of wilderness, not that it should be 'conquered'¹⁶; and in any case, an urban environment may still have nature interspersed within it in semi-wild parks etc..

It is certainly appropriate, though, to question whether Buddhism has any particularly strong reasons for protecting *species*. The Buddhist concern has always been for the suffering of any sentient being, of whatever species. In an eons-old world of change and impermanence, it is to be expected that species will become extinct (though this is happening more rapidly than usual at present). Nevertheless, each dying species consists of suffering individuals, and Buddhist concern should certainly focus on these. Buddhist

¹⁶ Harris develops his views in Harris, 1994a, 1994b, 1995a, 1995b and 1997, while Schmithausen, 1991b and 1997 takes a somewhat more positive view on Buddhist support for environmental concerns.

principles might not strongly support saving 'the' whale, but they support saving whales! Where saving (members of) one endangered species involves killing members of another species, however, Buddhism would not be supportive. Moreover, classical Buddhist ethics would not, without being extended, see killing the last rhinoceros as worse than killing one when they were plentiful, or killing a cow, say. Although to deliberately kill a rhinoceros so as to try to end the species could be seen as worse, both because it would be a very destructive act [184] and would offend many people. A world without a particular species is still the conditioned world of suffering beings. If the human species became extinct, then an opportunity to be born as a being capable of enlightenment would be lost - at least in this part of the universe. While the same could not be said of any other species, the higher animals at least are seen as capable of some virtue, so their loss would also hinder the spiritual progress of beings. Accordingly, for some animals, to kill one when one knows that this will push its species closer to extinction, even if this is not one's intention, can indeed be seen as a worse act than if the species were not an endangered one.

One endangered species is the tiger, partly threatened by the traditional Chinese belief that eating parts of a tiger sustains virility. Thus tigers are still imported from the dwindling numbers of India and Bangladesh into Taiwan - supposedly as 'pets'. In 1986, it was reported that Buddhist leaders there planned to buy twelve such tigers to save them from being eaten at the Chinese new year. Other endangered species are various types of whales, which the Japanese are active in hunting 'scientifically' in spite of a world moratorium. Japanese whale-hunting can be seen as the product of several factors. The fact that Japan is an island has meant that the sea has been looked to as a great food-provider. The traditional preference for sea-foods was probably also strengthened by Buddhist concerns over meat-eating, for fish are seen as a low form of life. Philip Kapleau reports one whaler as saying 'If whales were like pigs or cows, making lots of noise before they die, I could never shoot them. Whales die without making a noise. They're like fish' (1981: 47) (in fact, whales in distress do make a noise: but those above water cannot hear them). With more powerful boats, and an increasing secularism, there has been much whale killing. In the post-war period, this was initially encouraged by the American occupying force, so as to help feed the starving population of Japan. Today, though, whale meat is not much eaten, and the carcasses are largely used for pet food and industrial products. To an average Japanese, killing a whale is no worse than killing a cow, though of course a pious Buddhist would not want to do either. Given the Buddhist concern for 'all sentient beings', Japanese whaling, and the Japanese emphasis on memorial rites, it is perhaps not surprising that Buddhist monks sometimes carry out memorial rites for the whales killed by whalers (Hoshino & Takeda, 1987: 310). Kapleau reports one such in 1979, put on by a Zen temple, and with government officials and executives of a large whaling company in the audience (1981: 46-50). Unfortunately, the service did not seem to contain any [185] discouragement to whaling, but was more like a way to salve people's consciences.

Beyond Asia, Buddhists have been active in environmental matters. In France, the Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh has set up the international Tiep Hien (Inter-being) order of meditators and social/peace activists. Among the precepts of the order is, 'Do not live with a vocation that is harmful to humans and nature...' (Eppsteiner, 1988: 151). Nhat

Hanh teaches his followers to use verses which remind them of their inter-relationship with the world, and their duties towards it. For example, when turning on a tap or drinking water, they should reflect:

'Water flows over these hands
May I use them skilfully
to preserve the planet (Batchelor & Brown, 1992: 106).

As Thich Nhat Hanh says, 'We, ourselves, are made of non-self elements, the sun, the plants, the bacteria and the atmosphere' (Badiner, 1990: 177). In a similar vein, Stephen Batchelor says,

We feel ourselves to be separate selves in a separate world full of separate things.
We feel separate from each other, separate from the environment that sustains us
and separate from the things we use and enjoy. We fail to recognize them for what
they are: part of us as we are of them (Batchelor & Brown, 1992: 32).

The image of Indra's net (p.153 of this book) is frequently alluded to by Buddhist modernists, both Western and Asian, who seek to infuse ecological activism with a Buddhist motivation based on a vision of the deep inter-relationship of all things¹⁷. The implicit logic, here, is that we should be aware that our negative actions towards the rest of nature go on to effect us, and respect the other beings and environment that we depend on. Those who abuse nature, in blindness to this, should be respected as human beings, but not aided.

Conclusion

For Buddhism, humans are a part of the community of sentient beings in a conditioned world where suffering is endemic. Humans are not seen as set over non-human nature as 'stewards', but as neighbours to other, less intelligent, sentient beings. The spiritual potential of humans means that they are to be more valued than members of other species, but that very potential is expressed and enhanced by compassionate regard for [186] any being. To deliberately kill or harm another being is to ignore the fragility and aspiration for happiness that one has in common with it. When it comes to indirectly causing harm to sentient beings, Buddhism's emphasis on an ethic of intention means that such actions are not necessarily blameworthy. Yet its positive emphasis on compassion means that the removal of causes of harm to beings is praiseworthy.

Abbreviations

Note that below:

Th.= a text of the Pali Canon or later Theravādin literature,
My.= a Mahāyāna text in Sanskrit, Chinese or Tibetan.

- A. *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (Th.); (tr. F.L.Woodward and E.M.Hare), *The Book of Gradual Sayings*, 5 vols., London, PTS, 1932–6.
A.A. Commentary to last item; untranslated.
AKB. *Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣyam* [of Vasubandhu; a Sarvāstivāda work]; (tr. from Louis de La Vallée Poussin's French translation by Leo M. Pruden, *Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam*) Asian Humanities Press, Berkeley, Cal., 1988–90.

¹⁷ See e.g. Badiner, 1991: 61; Batchelor and Brown, 1992: 11, 35; Macy, 1991; Sandell, 1987.

- References are to chapter and section numbers in original text.
- Asl. *Atthasālinī* [Buddhaghosa's commentary on Dhs.] (Th.); (tr. Pe Maung Tin), *The Expositor*, 2 vols, London, PTS, 1920 and 1921.
- ASP. *Ārya-satyaka-parivarta* (My.); (tr. L.Jamspal), *The Range of the Bodhisattva: A Study of an early Mahāyānasūtra*, 'Āryasatyakaparivarta', *Discourse of the Truth Teller*, Columbia University Ph.D thesis, reproduced on microfiche, Ann Arbor, UMI, 1991 (Tibetan text and translation, with introduction, pp.1–73). References are to page numbers of the translation.
- Asta. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* (My.); (tr. E.Conze), *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines, and its Verse Summary*, Bolinas, Four Seasons Foundation, 1973.
- Bca. *Bodhi-caryāvatāra* [of Śāntideva] (My.); translations as in: Shantideva, 1979, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life (Bodhisattvacharyavatara)*, transl. from Tibetan by S.Batchelor, Dharamsala, India, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. References to chapter and verse. Other translations are:
 –Crosby, K. and Skilton, A., 1996, *Śāntideva: The Bodhicaryāvatāra*, World's Classics series, Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press.
 –Matics, M.L., 1971, transl., *Entering the Path of Enlightenment: the Bodhicaryāvatāra of the Buddhist Poet Śāntideva* (from Sanskrit), London, George Allen & Unwin.
- B.C.E. Before the Christian era.
- Bv. *Buddhavaṃsa* (Th.); (tr. I.B.Horner), in *Minor Anthologies*, Vol.III, London, PTS, 1975. Also includes tr. of Cp.
- c. *circa*.
- C.E. Christian era
- Cp. *Cariyāpiṭaka* (Th.); (tr. I.B.Horner), in *Minor Anthologies*, Vol.III, London, PTS, 1975. Also includes tr. Bv.
- CR. *Conditional Relations*, U Nārada's translation of Pt. Vol.I, London, PTS, 1969.
- D. *Dīgha Nikāya* (Th.); (tr. by T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids), *Dialogues of the Buddha*, 3 vols., London, PTS, 1899–1921. Also translated by M.Walshe, *Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, London, Wisdom Publications, 1987, in one vol..
- D.A. Commentary to last item; untranslated.
- Dhp. *Dhammapada* (Th.); (tr. K.R.Norman), *The Word of the Doctrine*, Oxford, PTS, 1997; (tr. Nārada Thera), *The Dhammapada*, London, John Murray, 1954 (the same translation, accompanied by the Pali text, is also published by the Buddhist Missionary Society, Kuala Lumpur, 1978– available from Wisdom Publications, London); (tr. Acharya Buddharakkhita), *The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom*, Kandy, Sri Lanka, BPS, 1985. In verse.
- Dhp.A. *Dhammapada Commentary* (Th.); (tr. E.W.Burlingame), *Buddhist Legends*, 3 vols., Harvard Oriental Series, Harvard University Press, 1921; repr. London, PTS, 1979.
- Dhs. *Dhamma-saṅgaṇī* (Th.); (tr. C.A.F. Rhys Davids), *Buddhist Psychological Ethics*, London, PTS, 1900, 3rd. edn 1974.
- It. *Itivuttaka* (Th.); (tr. F.L.Woodward), *As it was Said in Minor Anthologies Part.II*, London, PTS, 1935; also tr. J.D.Ireland, *The Itivuttaka: The Buddha's Sayings*, Kandy, Sri Lanka, Buddhist Publication Society, 1991.

- J. *Jātaka with Commentary* (Th.); (tr. by various hands under E.B.Cowell), *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, 6 vols., London, PTS, 1895–1907.
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