

Bypassing the Triple Gate to Ecological Hell

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Introduction

A fairly universally accepted Hindu axiom has it that *moha* (delusion)¹, *lobha* (greed), and *krodha* (anger) are the "triple gate to hell." It seems not inappropriate to analyze the roots of our ecological crisis in terms of *moha*, *lobha*, and *krodha*. In fact, it proves to be quite revealing in terms of ecological ethics, and it gives us an ethical handle in suggesting remedies.

Few would doubt that much of the ecological crisis is due to *lobha*, avarice and greed. Similarly it is fairly evident that *krodha*, anger and hatred, both against humans and nature, is responsible for much environmental depredation: the science-based technical revolution began with Francis Bacon's demand that nature be "put on the rack," to extort her secrets for the benefit of humanity. *Moha*, delusion and overreaching, is not only the root of *lobha* and *krodha* but it is also the root of the ecological crisis, designating the fundamental ignorance of modern humanity concerning its place in the cosmos leading to the hubris that tries to put nature under the control of technology. Indian traditions—Hindu, Buddhist and Jain—widely agree on the issue and

they have a large amount of practical advice on how to counteract *lobha*, *krodha*, and *moha*.

While traditional religious writers focus almost exclusively on the individual and the individual's salvation, one can apply, without forcing the issue, their teachings to humanity as a whole. Again, without doing violence to it, one can update traditional ethics and expand its principles so as to include issues not perceived at the time of their first articulation. L. G. Hewage, a prominent contemporary Buddhist scholar speaks of the need to address the "psycho-sphere" in which greed, hatred, and illusion are located, in order to get at the root of the ecological crisis.²

It has been stated often that in spite of all the technological advances, human nature has not changed very much within known history, and that the basic human drives have proven fairly constant through the ages and across different cultures: present humanity operates under the same human constants as former generations. The ecological crisis appears to be not so much a mere technological glitch that could be fixed by the very same technology that had caused it, but as culturally conditioned. In W. Ophuls' words: " The ecological crisis is primarily a moral crisis in which the ugliness and destruction outside in our environment simply mirror the spiritual wasteland within: the sickness of the earth reflects the sickness of the soul in modern industrial man, whose life is given over to gain, to the disease of endless getting and spending."³

The Traditional Indic Ethos

In spite of the many divisions that characterize contemporary Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, there had always been, and there continues to be, a strong undercurrent of commonly accepted rules for ethic and propriety. *Sadacara* (translated either as "good conduct" or the "behaviour of good people") is recognized as fundamental by all the different *sampradayas* and its definition is surprisingly common to all of them. The well known "Indian Ten Commandments" as articulated in the five *yamas* and five *niyamas* of the *Yogasutras* can be found in a large number not only of Hindu, but also of Buddhist and Jain writings. They express the traditional Indic ethos and can be counted upon even today as basic. If the ecological crisis has to be met with an ecological ethic, Indians, regardless of sectarian affiliation, would probably base it on this common tradition.

In his exposition on ethics, detailing the features of the people with "god-like" as well as those with a "demonic" disposition Krishna calls *kama*, *krodha*, and *lobha* the "triple gate to hell, leading to the ruin of the soul" (BG XVI, 21). Letting go from these passions brings about release and "the highest state." Krishna ends his exhortation by saying: "Knowing what is declared by the rules of scriptures, you should do your work in this world." This triad of "deadly sins" has been accepted by virtually all schools of Indian thought that dealt with ethical issues and it can be found not only in Hindu but also in Jain and Buddhist texts.

The Naiyayikas, the most systematic exponents of Hindu orthodoxy, have adopted the formula of *raga* (passionate attachment to sense-gratification), *dvesa* (strong aversion to someone or something), and *moha* (lack of understanding of the transcendent nature of reality) as the basis for their treatment of *dosas* (faults, root-sins) as the commentaries to *Nyayasutra* I, 1, 19 ff. demonstrate.⁴ The analysis of the (self)-destructive tendencies of humans, which have to be counteracted by positive action, is a valid starting point for a discussion of the roots of the ecological crisis and of possible remedies.

In the so-called developed countries the overexploitation of natural resources is not necessitated by real needs and basic requirements but by an insatiable appetite for luxuries and indulgence. Only a fraction of our industries caters to basic necessities—a much larger portion is busily creating new and artificial needs that it is then prepared to satisfy at the expense largely of the environment.⁵ Similarly, it is fairly evident that anger and hatred, directed against humans and against nature, is responsible for much environmental depredation. The wars that have been fought in our century, and in which most of the world was or is involved, have caused not only hundreds of millions of human casualties, but have also inflicted untold damage to the environment. Not only are vast areas of forests and fields directly ruined through technological warfare,⁶ the production, storage and disposition of vast amounts of weaponry depletes non-renewable resources, destroys nature and often leaves irreparable damage—as with chemical and atomic weaponry—to areas set aside for military exercises. Aside from such vast and evident destruction caused by hatred of humans against each other, there is a curious hatred against nature evident in the wanton destruction of young trees by school children, the damage done to forests by arsonists, the churning up of meadows and fields by bikers and moto-racers, and many other instances of not only careless dealing with nature but of active and deliberate destruction.

For the Naiyayikas, *moha* is the root of the other two "defects." The specific self-delusion under which modernity suffers is the belief that humankind owns the earth and that science would transform the planet into a paradise for the exclusive enjoyment of humans. Whether one traces that delusion to a literalist reading of Genesis I, 28 (establishing the dominion of humankind over nature) or to a Baconian hubris (suggesting that nature's only purpose is to serve human purposes) does not make much of a difference. The extension of this analysis would suggest that if we are not counteracting these moral/spiritual defects (*dosas*) individually and collectively we might find ourselves soon not only in an ecological crisis but in an ecological hell, which some places on earth already appear to resemble.

Traditional Indian ethicists were not content, however, with describing a bad situation and predicting worse to come, but they offered advice on how to get out of it and to establish, if not paradise on earth, at least a condition conducive to the pursuit of human life in dignity. They assumed that the overcoming of delusion, hatred and lust for luxuries would in and by itself bring about an orientation towards a life that is guided by higher principles. It would be a life lived in "fearlessness, purity of mind, steadfastness in knowledge and concentration, clarity, self-control, study, austerity and uprightness." (BG XVI, 1) The people would practice "non-violence, truth, compassion for all living beings." Free from anger, covetousness and malice they would be gentle, modest, and vigorous.

Sadacara

Traditional Indian society was structured according to hierarchical principles that implied ethical ranking. Ideally, "higher" did not mean richer or more privileged materially, but nobler and more ethical. The "noblemen" were considered to be ethical models for the rest of the population. The life-practice of the leading people was one of the norms of traditional ethic. This was true in a general way, as attested by *Manusmṛti* and other non-sectarian texts, and it was also true of later sects who laid great emphasis on sharing life with the adepts (*satsang*) and imitating their actions. The people of India were apparently convinced that one could learn how to live rightly only from those who lived exemplary lives, and that "right living" was an integral part of what is called "religion" today. Within that concept of *sadacara*

different schools of thought accommodated a variety of ideals of life. However, there was always a strong enough common basis to guarantee social cohesion and commonly honoured norms. The great universal ontological, ethical, and epistemological bracket that keeps everything in place and that explains "right action" is *dharma*. It is an "unseen" reality. Its intimation is the sign of true humanity. It impels to (good) action by and in itself. It is the ground and the end of all correct human activity. By observing *dharma* humans reach their own ultimate aim (*moksa*: personal freedom) and also realize the good of the world (*lokasangraha*: ecology). The essence of *dharma* as far as it is (human) ethic is expressed in the *yama-niyama* rules—its opposite is action impelled by the *dosas* (*moha*, *lobha*, *krodha*). The interdependence of not only all material aspects of the universe, but also of consciousness/conscience is expressed by *dharma* and needs to be recovered under whatever name. *Dharma*, meaning "support," is a sufficiently generic concept to be acceptable.

Part of the Indian *dharma*-tradition is the fairly universal acceptance of the four *purusarthas* as "ideals of life." They balance enjoyment of the world with renunciation, and accumulation of wealth with respect for the whole (*dharma*). Ecological consciousness must not necessarily appear as anti-human and as a denial of all enjoyment in life. Nature is generous and as long as we know and respect the limits of this generosity we can also enjoy it. It is not a question of denial but one of balance and measure. The overcoming of *moha*, *lobha*, *krodha* is a *sadharana-dharma*, i.e., a duty incumbent on everyone, regardless of creed, class, status. It not only is a "moral" issue, but an issue of realizing true human nature and in the process establishing the right kind of relationships with the entire environment, human and non-human. Indian tradition was convinced that if humans order their own inner lives outer life too would fall into place.

The interrelation of humans with the universe as a whole has many dimensions. It is easy for everyone to see that the physical components, from which our bodies are made, derive from molecules that were formed in the early history of life on earth. These in turn consist of atoms "cooked" for billions of years in the fires of stars that had their origin in subatomic particles emerging shortly after the so-called "big bang." Increasingly, we also understand that human consciousness is not just the passive recipient of "information" about a world out there, but is co-creating it and forming the universe in many ways: consciousness appears to be informing the cosmos as a whole and our individual human consciousness shares some of its properties.

Indian karma-theory connects human moral actions with events in the world at large. It assumes that human action creates a kind of "field" that shapes the interaction of everything within that sphere. There is no need for the yogi who has reached perfection in *ahimsa* to go out, preach and "convert" people to *ahimsa*: they are influenced by the "field" that he created and they become non-violent by themselves. What at one level sounds like a truism—viz. that we are not only influenced by our environment but also influencing it—becomes a very profound and far-reaching insight on the ontological level. The mutuality between humankind and nature at large goes very deep and far beyond what readily appears to the senses. Indian traditions like yoga had always known about this and they built their "ethics" on it.

At an even more profound level, the Vedantic insight of the ultimate identity of everything in *atman/brahman* would suggest co-responsibility for everything. At the core of our selves we are one with nature—nature is not an "it" standing over against us as an "object" but nature is us and we are nature. Sankara passionately rejected Samkhya dualism, which postulated an unconscious matter (*pradhana*) as a component of reality. For Sankara, the only "agent" is *atman* and *atman* comprises everything—quite literally.⁷

Theodore Roszak's "Ecopsychology" (postulating an "ecological unconscious" as the core of the mind⁸) recalls the Upanishadic *kosa*-theory of self: the "person" consists of five (or more) concentric "layers," each identified as a realm of being associated with, and linked to, other species. Thus the *annamaya kosa* creates connection between the individual and all that is *anna* (food). However, the innermost core is *atman*, self-consciousness. Its repression causes alienation on all levels: "Self-finding" is the key to finding the right relationships to the rest of beings. The notion of transmigration too, presuming the mobility of *jiva* as concerns life forms—from plant to insect to mammal to *deva*—has important ecological implications.

Roszak seems to assume that as infants we all possessed the right ecological instinct that became culturally/socially repressed and has now to be recovered in an eco-therapy. Edward Wilson, connecting with ancient Western traditions, speaks of a *Biophilia*, an inborn friendship between humans and all other living beings⁹. Based on this one might postulate that all humans are "naturally" cooperative, friendly towards fellow human beings, and that this natural instinct becomes warped by socialization and turned into egotistic and hostile behaviour. "Socialization" into the present industrial urban culture (especially if one has the ambition of becoming a "leader" in it) requires the

repression of a great deal of ordinary human sensibilities: only the ruthless, the egomaniac, the thick-skinned seem to make it. One has to be prepared to sacrifice not only one's personal comfort, but also one's friends, one's feelings, one's need for quiet and reflection, and many more "natural" desires, in order to make it in public life and in industry. Considering the fact that culture creates a "second nature," the question arises whether genuine altruism, genuine care for one's natural environment, genuine sensitivity does not have to be "learned." Humans are at least as much determined by culture, by education and intra-human relationships as by natural instincts.

Today's widespread insensitivity and brutality is also an "acquired" feature and culturally "learned": the entertainment industry, reflecting real life, where apparently only ruthlessness and treachery succeed, has become a powerful educational instrument. Unlearning wrong notions is more difficult than learning right ones anew. That appears to be the real challenge. It is not enough to point out what is (ecologically) right but we have to eradicate an already imprinted negative pattern. Whether this is possible, we do not know. Individually as well as collectively the "bad habits" may have been so deeply ingrained that the species may be doomed.

Arthur Koestler thought that the whole of humankind was suffering from a collective suicidal madness. Is the residue of sanity in humankind still large enough? Is the "initial grace" with which newborns are endowed and which lets each person begin life with hope and enthusiasm real? Do we not carry a genetic load that also has ethical ramifications? It is not easy to believe that there is a way back to sanity from where humankind has arrived. Indian tradition assumes that humankind is inexorably sliding down the fateful slope of the Kaliyuga—till a new age begins, initiated by a new manifestation of God. *Sadacara* would not save the world but only lead some rare individuals to their personal fulfillment.

Ahimsa paramo dharma

The mediaeval Indian logician Jayanta Bhaöa identified *moha* as the *papätama*¹⁰, i.e., the root of all other vices. He believed that by overcoming (self-) delusion, the rest would follow and one would be delivered from the other two root-vices, *lobha* and *krodha*. While ultimately delusion, misunderstanding of the true nature of reality, obtuseness, intellectual and spiritual, may be the root of all our suffering (and, in the context of a belief in karma, the cause of being

enmeshed in *samsara*) the more immediate cause of the unhappy situation we are finding ourselves in are *krodha* and *lobha*, anger and greed. They are the motors that keep wars going and that increasingly ruin the natural environment. The most needed "virtue" to reverse the situation seems to be *ahimsa*, "non-violence" in its broadest sense. That appears to have been the conviction also of the Jainas and the Buddhists from early on, and in our own time so deeply scarred by violence at all levels, of Mahatma Gandhi. "Non-violence is the core of religion and the center of all ethic": that would be a fair English rendering of the adage *ahimsa paramo dharma*. Consequently, the means that have been developed over the centuries by these traditions to deal with anger, hatred, and destructiveness should be studied and practised as a constructive contribution to our ecological situation¹¹.

If *moha*, *lobha*, *krodha* are focused on as key factors in the ecological crisis, and if counteracting them is the way towards ecological health, one should not think these unconnected with each other and with the rest of reality. The sustained practice of *ahimsa*, *satya*, and *asteya* is fundamental to *dharma*. *Dharma* is a concept that spans the entire spectrum of culture and stands, in a sense, for "culture" (in a positive sense) as a whole. Our global ecological crisis will only worsen, if we are not willing to adopt a culture that reflects the *dharma*.

Traditional Buddhist teaching considers the cultivation of the four *brahmaviharas* (*metta*, universal friendliness; *karuna*, universal compassion, *mudita*, finding joy in others' happiness; *upekha*, equanimity) the best way for overcoming the basic negative human tendencies. Equally, the traditional Hindu virtues of gratitude, reverence, and humility counterbalance the destructive competitive behaviour that characterizes our present urban-industrial civilization. They would also address the ecological crisis.¹² The five *yamas* and the five *niyamas* constitute *sadharana dharma*, a "global ethic" in the sense that they are valid for all humans irrespective of affiliation. In the same vein, *moha-lobha-krodha* constitute common human propensities, which have to be counteracted for the sake of the well-being of humans as well as of the world at large.

S.K. Maitra, a greatly respected 20th century Indian philosopher, seems to agree with that assumption. He translates *mudita* as "peace with all sentient creatures." *Mudita*, the harmony of the individual with the rest of creation represents only the objective side. "The subjective side is represented by the virtue of equanimity (*sama*). *Sama* is a state of internal equilibrium and self-harmony, while *mudita* is harmony with creation in general"¹³.

Moksa in the sense of "losing/finding one's self," must ultimately incorporate all conscious living beings, as it ought to include, on a different level, all "laws of nature." The urge to understand, as expressed in the sciences, is part of liberation, and integral to the process of losing the fixation of "being" on to the small ego and its immediate naive self-conscious understanding of things. Being conscious of the immensity of space and the incredible intricacies of the structures that sustain our lives gives us a quite unique "feel of life" both individually and collectively.

Sources for an Ecological *Dharma*

Looking for a clue to identify the sources of the new global ecological *dharma* as a continuation of the historic Indian notion of *dharma*, I found it tempting to take recourse to Manu's famous *sloka*:

*vedo akhilo dharmamulam / smrtisile catadvidam /
acaras caiva sadhunam / atmanastustireva ca //*

In Georg Böhler's translation (SBE Vol. XXV, p. 30):

"The whole Veda is the (first) source of the sacred law, next the tradition, and the virtuous conduct of those who know (the Veda), (further) also the customs of holy men, and (finally) self-satisfaction."

For the purpose of constructing a contemporary ecological *dharma*, let us take a "naïve," modernist reading and disregard the background that Manu had in mind and the specific Indian circumstances, and give the word *veda* its original meaning "science," render *smrti* as "the major moral traditions of humankind," give to *acara sadhunam*, the meaning "the example of ecologically active groups," and take *atmanastusti* to mean "contemporary ecological reflection," and let us see how far we can get with establishing the sources for a contemporary global "ecological *dharma*."

1. Veda, as its very word-meaning suggests, is knowledge, true knowledge, truth—the foundation of all theory and practice that guides life. For the majority of people today the sciences are identical (by the very word-meaning!) with knowledge, true knowledge, and truth. Unless something is "scientifically established" it is considered

unproven, not fit for being made the foundation for either social policy or medical practice.

Today, is not science progressing, changing, and overturning its findings of yesterday? Is not science largely responsible for the ecological crisis? Is it not science that creates the toxic fumes of the chemical industry, the poisoned soils of agri-business, the choking masses of automobiles, the deadly radiation of nuclear reactors? And is not science behind the living nightmare of a global nuclear disaster and a global ecological collapse? All this is true. But today there is no real alternative to science. Science is not only responsible for most of the evils which we deplore and which, in their accumulation, brought about the ecological crisis, but also for most of the goods on which we have become dependent for our physical and intellectual existence.

There is hardly a morsel of food today anywhere which does not have its origin in scientifically bred varieties of plants, or that has not been transported, processed, preserved with the help of science and technology, and both our education and the instruments it uses are unthinkable without science. Science has transformed not only the world in which we live but also our ideas about the world. Our modern worldview is largely the result of the sciences, our methods to acquire knowledge have been shaped by scientists and any attempt to devise policies affecting larger numbers of people must be backed by scientific expertise.

We need the sciences as a basis for dealing with our ecological crisis—the sciences have to supply the basic knowledge for the new ecological *dharma*. But we need a science with a conscience; a science that is not the thoughtless and soulless application of mechanical laws on a supposedly inert nature, but a science that has become sensitized to the reality of a living nature, aware of non-material dimensions of reality, and conscious of consciousness. I believe that such a science is already emerging and that some of the greatest scientists such as Albert Einstein, Werner Heisenberg, Wolfgang Pauli, Erwin Schroedinger, Konrad Lorenz, Erwin Chargaff, Sir Arthur Eddington, Ilya Prigogine, Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, David Bohm and others have already laid the foundations for just such a science with conscience; a new Veda. They are the very people who are able to appreciate the truth and knowledge contained in the "Veda" in the more specific sense, the scriptures, which proclaim a "revealed truth," which offer knowledge of dimensions of reality that is not accessible to the sense.

2. *Smṛti* is the etymological equivalent of traditions, "the collective memories" of peoples. A global ecological *dharma* cannot rest on a single uniform (enforced) tradition but has to recognize their plurality and find a way to accommodate differences. In our case here we have to try to identify resources within the major cultural traditions that would help to tackle the ecological crisis. What traditions can help us do better than the sciences to link ecologically beneficial thinking with human and social concerns, to underscore the spiritual side of ecology?

3. We have difficulty today in learning what the *acara sadhunam* might mean. The behaviour of most of those who were traditionally called *sadhus* in Indian society or "religious" in other societies is often no longer either considered socially an ecologically relevant or even morally ideal. Many of the traditional "persons of respect," the leaders of institutions, the representatives of the people (elected or otherwise) have lost lustre and model character; so much corruption and misuse of trust and office have become public, it is almost assumed by everyone that politicians of all stripes are self-serving, that religious leaders are narrow-minded and bigoted, that we get partisan views and opportunistic advice from whomever we turn to.

Would the members of Greenpeace, PETA, Earth First, Chipko, Swadhyaya, Sarvodaya and such like organizations exhibit *acara sadhunam*? Some undoubtedly do. It is also gratifying to see a large number of young people enthusiastically engaged in work to "Save the Earth." A kind of elementary sense of fairness is at work in the youth of today, focused on the ecological crisis.

4. Bühler translates *atmanastusti* as "self-satisfaction." I understand it to mean the role of *dharma* as addressing our deepest concerns for truth, goodness, and beauty. A contemporary ecological *dharma* must also uplift and sustain the deepest in us—our soul. It must recover something of the holistic vision that characterized the great ages of humankind. Henryk Skolimowski thinks that: "any movement which attempts to replace today's vast scientific-empiristic worldview is obliged to propose and articulate its own cosmology, its own ethics and its own eschatology. In addition, it must demonstrate that the three fit coherently into one structure as they do in traditional worldviews where cosmology and ethics remain in a feedback relationship." Skolimowski speaks in this context of "ecological values" and their interdependence with life and reverence: "We have to learn not only to think about reverence, but to think reverentially. We have to teach reverential thinking to children and students. Reverential thinking is a new kind of thinking whereby the objects of our understanding and thinking are

embraced by our mind in the framework of empathy. The act of reverential thinking helps life to grow, helps us to be inwardly connected." ¹⁴

In addition to reverence, Skolimowski identifies responsibility and compassion as important "ecological values," i.e., attitudes which we need to survive the ecological crisis—attitudes which up to now are clearly lacking in the majority of people. He demands a "responsibility, which exceeds one's own ego, the responsibility for the environment, for the whole planet, for other human beings, for other living beings, for the cosmos at large." Compassion he understands as "a mode of understanding and an ecological value at the same time." From a life perceived through reverential thinking, lived with responsibility and steeped with compassion, a lifestyle of frugality follows, "not a form of poverty, self-denial or abnegation, but a positive value: doing more with less—something that nature does so beautifully so often. In the human universe frugality can be defined as 'grace without waste.' It is important to repeat that all the essential elements in a culture are interconnected: one cannot realize sincerity and openness in a totalitarian state and one cannot practise reverential thinking, compassion, and frugality in a society that is driven by cut-throat competition."

Towards a Global *Dharma* of Ecology

Indian tradition has always maintained that *dharma*, by its very nature, was *sanatana dharma*, i.e., universal and eternal. In traditional Indian *dharma*, there were, no doubt, many elements that were found restrictive and unjust by many people, which could neither be justified as eternal nor as universal. Nevertheless, the "dharmic civilization of India" as Chaturvedi Badrinath called it, was built on foundations that can be globally applied, its deepest concern being with the human condition as such. *Dharma*, he says is "not any positivistic order but the natural order that was inherent in all life." *Dharma* is a universal order of man's existence and not derived from some theological doctrine. *Dharma* cuts across all polarity of the secular-religious. It is not derived from the idea of God and is not theo-centric. It does not place man in opposition to nature or other living being: "Even if there is no God, everything is still not permissible. For the ethical foundations and limits of man's conduct towards another are already inherent in his being, in the force of *dharma*, and nothing is permissible unless it is in harmony with the universal law of man's being. *Dharma* is not just

conceptual order...it seeks to discover the true nature of order and disorder in which, respectively, man's life is sustained and plunged into darkness. As a method for reflecting upon man's existence in all its diversity, *dharma* cuts across, too, the familiar western dichotomy between rationalism and empiricism.... Its meaning lies in its practice, but practice does not exhaust its meaning... the meaning of *dharma* is to create and sustain individual and social conditions where each individual is able to explore the potential of his or her life and bring it to fruition."

There is no doubt, that a *dharma*, to be effective, needs to be clearly and simply articulated and also institutionalized. In an attempt to rectify the ecological deficiency of traditional Bible-based ethics, Walter Lowdermilk, a hydrologist with a Christian background, suggested to add an 11th commandment to the Biblical Decalogue, emphasizing the need to preserve the productivity of land. Similarly, the ecologist H. T. Odum formulated "Ten commandments of energy-ethics for the survival of man in nature."¹⁵ While interesting in their own way, the new Ten Commandments are marred by their technology-oriented language and their lack of ontological foundation, which is the most important part of *dharma*, its *satya* character. If we find new ontologically founded values, we need not be overly concerned with the mechanics of propagating them. As V. Frankl has said: "Values do not drive a man, they do not push him, they rather pull him.... Man is never driven to moral behavior, in each instance he decides to behave morally."¹⁶

The passing of an age, as we witness it today, is no small thing and it is connected with tremendous upheaval and suffering, as we can see, too. As long as we can see meaning in the suffering, light at the end of the dark tunnel, we are prepared to accept turmoil and loss. The "new age," if there is to be one, will require a drastic change in the lifestyle of many people. Changes in lifestyle do not come easily and are usually not the result of rational reflection and persuasion.

We will have to return to the source of our thinking and being—nature. As E. Kohak has said: "To recover the moral sense of our humanity, we would need to recover the moral sense of nature."¹⁷ Nature must not be seen as "a dead, mechanically ordered force field, conceived on the model of the world of artifacts, but a living *physis* whose multiform strivings are guided by a hidden yet powerful purpose, each creature charged with its task. The human too is part of the vast cosmic order—and can be so, because the cosmos with its vital order is not alien to, or discontinuous with, the order of meaningful life." Over and above the

general law a special law applies to us humans: "In the case of humans... the vital order of creation assumes the guise of a moral order. The human is called to recognize and to choose to obey voluntarily the same cosmic law which instinctually guides the plan."

We must also recognize at this point the mutuality of *dharma* and society: a sound ecological *dharma* can only be upheld by a sound society. Society can only be sound if it follows an ecologically sound *dharma*. If one would remark that this sounds like the chicken-and-egg dilemma, I would agree and point out that there are, in nature, both chicken and eggs and that sound chickens come from sound eggs and sound eggs come from sound chickens. Nature does indeed move in circles—and the relationship between *dharma* and society is no exception to this rule.

Conclusion

The term "global ethic" is gaining a new meaning when we relate ethics to the welfare of the planet and to the interrelation between humans and the rest of the earth. Obviously, the source of such an ethic cannot be any particular historical book or an opinion of a majority party but it must be reality itself, emerging from a dialogue between humans and nature. Such dialogue has been taking place throughout history. Unfortunately, it was usually the insensitive power-hungry individuals who controlled the fate of nations (and of the earth) and not the sensitive ones who were attuned to humanity as well as to the universe. One can only hope that education can change this situation so that a majority forms—one that is more sensitive and more willing to act according to its insights.

The Indian notion of *dharma*, as originally understood, was such a web of rules of life that took into account the multiple social and cosmic interconnections. Without knowing it, Theodore Roszak articulated its essence when he says: "The needs of the planet are the needs of the person, the rights of the person are the rights of the planet." Terms like "animism," "synergy," and "nature-mysticism" are gaining new credit as opening access to "real reality," not only the reduced version of a "reality" that was presented by politicians, dogmatists, and entrepreneurs who needed humans without sensibilities to succeed with their schemes.

A notion that is at the heart of virtually the entire Indian cultural traditions (although expressed in what often appears contradictory wording) is the "expansion of the self" so as to embrace eventually everything, and to become the Self. We have more reasons than ever to embrace such an understanding. The bodies in which we live contain atoms that originated in long-extinct stars that continue to be produced in still existing ones. They are built up of molecules that were formed billions of years ago on this earth; molecules that are common to myriad living things. They represent the (discernible) end-point of an evolution that, in as yet largely "un-understood" ways, operated towards greater and greater complexity and towards consciousness. Our consciousness, although individualized, is not only "ours": it is one of many similar consciousnesses, which makes it possible (and even necessary) to communicate and to learn. "Expansion of consciousness" means in many ways "to become what we become conscious of."

Potentially, that is all there is and we do have an intuitive feeling that we grow personally when we overcome the "ego" in the narrow sense that persuades us to limit our thinking, and providing a narrowly understood self-interest.

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species*. Harvard University Press.

Notes

¹ Sometimes *moha* is replaced by *kama*, lust or desire.

² L. G. Hewage, "Survival and Development – Towards a Buddhist Perspective" In: *Mahabodhi* April-June 1982, pp. 103-114.

³ Ophuls, *Ecology and the Politics of Scarcity*, W. E. Freeman: New York, 1992.

⁴ The exact wording and the context in which *moha*, *lobha* and *krodha* are introduced in the *Nyayasutras* are of interest: I, 1, 17: *pravattir vag-buddhi-sarira-arambha*.

I, 1, 18: *pravarttana-laksnana-dosa*.

I, 1, 19: *punar-utpatti pretyabhavah*.

I, 1, 20: *pravrtti-dosa-janito-arthah phalam*.

Pravrtti: rise, origin, source, manifestation, propensity, activity, participation in life, production which can be initiated either in/by word, thought or body is prompted by *dosa*, explained as *moha*, *lobha*, *krodha* and leads to rebirth in which the fruit of the "fault generated" reality must be consumed.

⁵ Cf. Th. Roszak, *The Voice of the Earth: An Exploration of Ecopsychology*. Touchstone Books 1992.

⁶ H. John Lewallen, *Ecology of Devastation* (Baltimore: Penguin Books 1971) writes about "ecocide" in connection with the Vietnam war, in which the U.S. not only unloaded an unprecedented mass of explosives upon the countryside but also chemically attacked vast areas of jungle, turning it into a veritable moonscape: he entitled the chapter "Lunarizatio."

⁷ It appears to me that this notion of *atman* (or the Buddhist *nirvana*) is a much more profound and legitimate "ecological ego" (T. Roszak) than the pseudo-Freudian substratum of ego/id.

⁸ op.cit. p. 301f

⁹ *Biophilia: The human bond with other species*, Harvard University Press, 1984.

¹⁰ Jayānta Bhatta's *Nyayasutra* in his commentary to Gautama's *Nyayasutra* 1,1,18 (Kashi Sanskrit Series No. 106, p.71) Chowkhambha Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi 1969.

¹¹ *Dhammapada* Ch. XVII deals with anger and "how to put it away."

¹² Lina Gupta's "Ganga," in Carol Adam (ed.) *Ecofeminism*.

¹³ S. K. Maitra, *The Ethics of the Hindus* (Third Edition), University of Calcutta, 1963, p. 203.

¹⁴ Henryk Skolimowski, *The Theater of the Mind: Evolution in the Sensitive Cosmos*. The Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton Ill. 1984, pp. 76 ff.

¹⁵ Howard T. Odum, *Environment, Power and Society*, Wiley Interscience: New York, 1971, p. 244.

¹⁶ Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Touchstone 1962, p.108.

¹⁷ Erazim Kohak, *The Embers and the Stars: a philosophical enquiry into the moral sense of nature*. The University of Chicago Press, 1984, p.68.