

Guru Nanak College of Arts, Science and Commerce
in Academic partnership with Department of History,
University of Mumbai



Proceeding of
One Day National Seminar

on

"Ecological Disasters :Its Impact and Historicity –Perspectives From South Asia "

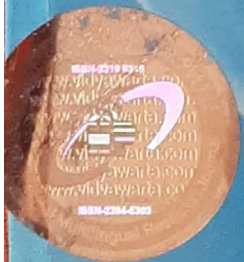
Special Theme for the year 2016 –

Water Scarcity and Rain Water Harvesting

Date: 24 th September, 2016.



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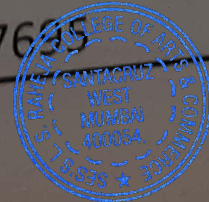
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Members of the Editorial Team

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From the Principals desk

The National Seminar and publication is upholding the tradition of the college of fostering original research .**The One - day -National Seminar on “Ecological Disasters :Its Impact and Historicity -Interdisciplinary Perspectives from South Asia on 24th September ,2016.** I am sure, the seminar will explore all the areas related to environment , natural calamities and its effects on Man and society . I wish the Organizing committee and the department of history a great success !!!!

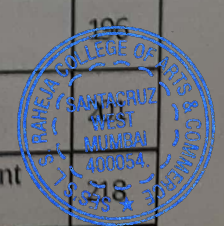
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Dr. Vijay Dabholkar,
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Sr. No.	Title	Writer	Page No.
1.	Bamboo Flowering: A Mysterious Disaster in Mizoram	Dr. (Mrs) Indrani Roy	6
2.	ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT AND CULTURAL POLITICS IN RACHAEL CARSON'S SILENT SPRING: A LITERARY ANALYSIS	Dr. AMBREEN KHARBE	17
3.	ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER: ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT AND COPING STRATEGY	Asst. Prof. Rina Patel Asst. Prof. Seema Sindgikar	33
4.	BUDDHIST TEACHING ON ECOLOGICAL CONSERVATION AND THE ROLE OF ASHOKA	Pooja U. Yadav,	46
5.	Environmental Issues In A Textile Cluster	Gazala Bhoje	52
6.	DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO CONSERVE AND MANAGE FRESHWATER SYSTEMS	Mrs. Bhuvaneshwari Radhakrishnan	62
7.	SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF JAMES BAY HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT AND ITS REFLECTION IN LINDA HOGAN'S SOLAR STORMS	DR. SAVITHA SUKUMAR	70
8.	TRADITIONAL WATER CONSERVATION SYSTEMS – AN OVERVIEW OF ERY (Tank) SYSTEM IN SOUTH INDIA	Mrs. R. Vijayalakshmi	79
9.	Ecological Challenges and Sustainable Urbanization: Lessons from the Indus Valley Civilization	Mr. Rewant Vikram Singh	96
10.	Understanding the Functionality of Water Related Grants in the Corpus of Ass-curse Steles	Harshada Wirkud	118
11.	TRADITIONAL WATER HARVESTING TECHNIQUES IN INDIA- A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	Dr. Meetali Das Gupta	130
12.	Understanding Mumbai Monsoon Flood on 26 th July 2005 & its Implication	Dr. Ramraj T. Nadar,	140
13.	JAINISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION	Dr. Hemali Sanghavi	150
14.	Methods adopted to deal with water scarcity in Mumbai	Prof. Subhashini Naikar Prof. Madhavi Nighoskar	156
15.	Ecological Disasters, Its impact and Historicity: Interdisciplinary perspectives from South Asia.	Dr. Anuradha K. Ranade	166
16.	THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL SUPPORT IN TIMES OF DISASTERS	Lynette da Silva Fortes, Dr. Michelle Fernandes,	175
17.	Urban Imperialism: Understanding Bombay City's Hydraulic System and Its Impact on the Hinterlands.	Dr. Madhu Kelkar,	184
18.	WATER RESOURCES IN THE NINETEENTH..	SAMINA SHAIKH	196
19.	The New edge in Sustainability: Business Opportunity in Tackling Sustainable Consumption	Dr. Pallavi Shah	218
20.	GUARDIANS OF THEMANGROVES A CASE STUDY OF SOONABAI...	Ms. Maithili Vijay Savant	218
21.	CONSERVING ENVIRONMENT THROUGH JAINISM	Prachi Manish Savla	226



BUDDHIST TEACHING ON ECOLOGICAL CONSERVATION AND THE ROLE OF ASHOKA

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Introduction:

Ancient civilization originated and spread in close associations with nature. All civilizations evolved by balancing the human needs and surrounding environment. Indian civilization was always dominated by diversity in cultures, traditions, language and religion. The 6th C. BC was a period of religious revolution in various parts of the world. It was a age when great religious teacher philosophers and thinkers lived. Their ideas made revolutionary changes in all aspects of life.

The Buddhist attitude towards nature:

The several Suttas from Pali canon show that early Buddhism believes there to be close relationship between human morality and the natural environment. This idea has been systematized in the theory of the five natural laws. They can be physical laws, biological laws, psychological laws, moral laws and casual laws. This means that the physical environment of any given area conditions the growth and development of biological component, i.e flora and fauna. These in turn influence the thought pattern of the people interacting with them. M



of thinking determine moral standards. The moral of man influence not only the psychological makeup of the people but the biological and physical environment of the areas as well.

Use of natural recourses:

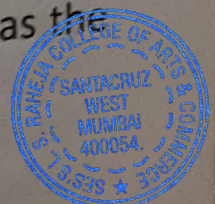
For optimum benefits man has to understand nature so that he can utilize natural resources and live harmoniously with nature. However 'nature can cater to man's need but cannot cater to man's greed'. Buddhism tirelessly advocates the virtue of non-greed, greed breeds sorrow and unhealthy consequences. The man leading a simple life with few wants easily satisfied is upheld and appreciated as an exemplary character. Buddhism advocate a gentle non-aggressive attitude towards nature. According to Pali canon a householder should accumulate wealth as a bee collects pollen from a flower. The bee harms neither the fragrances nor the beauty of the flower, but gathers pollen to turn it into sweet honey.

Attitude towards flora and fauna:

The Buddhist monk has to abide by an even stricter code of ethics than the layman. He has to abstain from practice which would involve even unethical injury to living creatures. For instance 'Vassavas' the Buddhism promulgated the rule against going on a journey during the rainy season because of possible injury to worms and insects that come to the surface in wet weather. The understanding of Karma and rebirth, prepares the Buddhist to adopt a sympathetic attitude towards animals. The Jataka provides ample testimony to this view. Buddhism expresses its non-violence attitude towards the plant kingdom as well. The more monastic rules prevent the monks from injuring plant life. It is well known that the 'ficus religiosa' is held as an object of great veneration in the Buddhist world today as the tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment.

Buddhism and Ecological Conservation:

The Noble Eight Fold Path:



The Noble Eight Fold Path consists of right vision, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right efforts, right, right mindfulness and right concentration. One right livelihood for example Buddhist teaching requires every person to consider the manner in which the performance of his duties as employee would impact on society and the future. Any employment which causes damage to the environment such as manufacturing of toxic substances, felling of forest and the adverse exploitation of marine resources would also be a violation of right livelihood.

Respect for each other:

Buddhist practice makes one feel one's existence is no more important than anyone else's. If one treats nature as a friend and teacher, one can be in harmony with other creature and appreciate the interconnectedness of all that lives.

All living beings are connected:

Buddhism teaches that the idea of separation is an illusion. The health of the whole is inseparably linked to the health of the parts and health of the part is inseparably linked to the health of the whole. Buddhism strongly emphasizes the interdependence of all entities and events.

Co-existence rather than conquest:

Conquest of the natural environment of the other species or of other groups of the human family is hence the very reverse of the ideals which Buddhism teaches. Co-existence is vital and this requires a recognition and respect of those other species and groups and not an attempt at dominance.

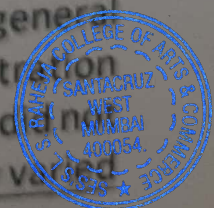
Ashoka and ecological conservation:

King Ashoka, after he embraced the teaching of the Buddha, he transformed his polity from one of military conquest to one of Dhammavijay- victory by righteousness and truth. Asoka's gradual but increasingly closer association with Buddhism and not a radical shift of faith. Mostly deals with social



religious influenced moral doctrines rather than just religious ones or the philosophy of Buddhism. In his 5th pillar edict he talks about wild life conservation and protection of flora and fauna. He mentioned few animals such as parrots, mainas, geese, wild ducks, bats, queen ants, tortoises, porcupines, deers, squirrels, wild asses, wild and domestic pigeons. Also nanny goats, ewes, sows with young ones or young ones on milk as well as young animals less than 6 months old not to be harmed, Cocks not to be caponized, husks hiding living beings are not to be burnt and forests are not to be burnt either without reason or to kill creatures. One animal is not to be fed to another. As he mentioned "On the first full moon days of the three four-monthly seasons, and for three days when the full moon falls on the star Tisya, and the fourteenth and fifteenth of the bright fortnight, and the first of the dark, and regularly on fast days, fish are not to be caught or sold. And on these same days in the Elephant Park and fisheries, other classes of animals likewise must not be killed. On the eighth, fourteenth, and fifteenth days of the fortnight, on the days of the star Tisya and Punarvasu, on the three first full moons of the four-monthly seasons, and on festival days, bulls, goats, rams, boars, and other animals which it is customary to castrate are not to be castrated. On the days of the stars Tisya and Punarvasu, on the first full moon days of the four-monthly seasons and on the fortnights following them, cattle and horses are not to be branded. In the period (from my consecration) to (the anniversary on which) I had been consecrated twenty-six years, twenty-five releases of prisoners have been made."

Also advocated restraint in the number that had to be killed for consumption, protected some of them, and in general condemned violent acts against animals, such as castration, wherein he mentions in his first edict that even the king did not kill any animals, his royal kitchen which boasted of many va-



Ecological Disasters

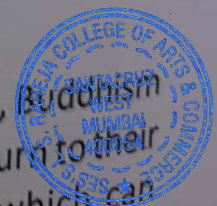
50

meats now only has the meat of two deers and a peacock which will also be decreased and then stopped eventually. According to the edicts, Ashoka took great care of the welfare of his subjects (human and animal), and those beyond his borders, spreading the use of medicinal treatments, improving roadside facilities for more comfortable travel, and establishing "officers of the faith" throughout his territories to survey the welfare of the population and the propagation of the Dharma.

In his second edict he mentions everywhere within Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi's domain, and among the people beyond the borders, the Cholas, the Pandyas, the Satiyaputras, the Keralaputras, as far as Tamraparni and where the Greek king Antiochos rules, and among the kings who are neighbors of Antiochos, everywhere has Beloved-of-the-Gods, King Piyadasi, made provision for two types of medical treatment: medical treatment for humans and medical treatment for animals "Wherever medical herbs suitable for humans or animals are not available, I have had them imported and grown. Wherever medical roots or fruits are not available I have had them imported and grown. Along roads I have had wells dug and trees planted for the benefit of humans and animals. Along roads I have had banyan trees planted so that they can give shade to animals and men, and I have had mango groves planted. At intervals of eight krosas, I have had wells dug, rest-houses built, and in various places, I have had watering-places made for the use of animals and men. But these are but minor achievements. Such things to make the people happy have been done by former kings. I have done these things for this purpose, that the people might practice the Dhamma."

Conclusion:

In the global concern about the environment, Buddhism plays significant role. Throughout the world people turn to their ancient scripture in search of ideas and values which



encourage a protective attitude towards nature. This universe is the creation of the Supreme Power meant for the benefit of all his creation. In today's context, one of the oldest teaching of the Buddha 'dependent co-existing' is finding new form in the ecology movement acting with compassion in response to the rapidly accelerating environmental crisis can be seen a natural fruit of Buddhist practice. Each individual life-form must, therefore, learn to enjoy its benefits by forming a part of the system in close relation with other species. Let not anyone species encroach upon the other's rights.'

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Environment encompasses all living things and the physical surroundings, which we often call nature. Rivers, mountains, climate, forests, wildlife, natural calamities like drought, famines, earthquakes, famines, floods, etc have influenced human history since times immemorial. Increasing interest has been shown in recent decades in matters relating to ecology, especially under the influence of the debate on climate change. Ecological issues has not only affected human life, disturbed lives and property but also disturbed the rules by which societies organized themselves. Disasters pose social and economic problems in addition to humanitarian problems. Water scarcity and drought is one of the greatest disasters that India is facing in recent years, causing immense suffering and hardship to the people. Therefore, conservation of water and rain water harvesting have become imperative, and are the need of the hour.



The History Department of Guru Nanak college of Arts, Science and Commerce had organized a National Interdisciplinary Conference on this new and emerging trend in history to assess the impact of ecological factors on history, society, economics politics etc.



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