

Gamage, A.K.
PAPER

Is the Animal-cry Supportive to Attain Nibbāna? An Appraisal Mainly Based on the Pali Canon
Department of Pali & Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya, A.K.Gamage

The aims of this paper are to examine and figure out the supportiveness of animal cries in order to acquire one's spiritual progress. A remarkable amount of scholastic issues have already been put forward by modern Buddhist scholarship with regard to environmental awareness, especially of flora and fauna for the spiritual progress of the human beings. Nonetheless, no substantial literary piece has yet been issued that pays adequate attention to the effectiveness of animal cries for one's spiritual attainment as reflected in the Pali canon.

Accordingly, this paper will present the Buddhist standpoint of animal cries especially with regard to their progressive/positive influence on the human psyche. However, due to the extensiveness of its scope, this study is delimited to the accounts of Theragāthā in the Pali canon. Similarly, a selected amount of Buddhist hybrid Sanskrit sources also will be scanned in support of this issue.

The Buddha, as we see in many accounts of the Pali canon, encourages his disciples who attained their ultimate liberation, i.e. *nibbāna*, to perform a tremendous service to society and become ideal social beings. However, as we are told by many substantial discourses of the Buddha, the common society is of a quantity of certain obstructive nature to acquire one's final liberation. Thus, the Buddha insisted that a monk should temporarily shun society and should stay in one of three specific circumstances until he or she acquires the final goal of Buddhism. The first, out of these three specific circumstances refers to the forest while the second also represents a module of the forest, i.e. the tree-foot (*rukka-mūla*). The main reasons for the inappropriateness of the common society in order to reach spiritual progress are irrelevant association complexity. Furthermore, society is corrupted with noise and hustle and bustle whereas the forest, as Buddhism mentions, is of fewer sounds and noises (*appa-sadda* and *appa-nigghosa*) and the breeze in the forest that we breathe is not polluted due to the activities of the people (*vijana-vāta*).

However, very significantly, an adequate amount of Pali canonical evidence categorically speaks of the helpfulness of animal cries for the person's spiritual development. It can be deemed that, the Buddha seeing the utility of this factor, has persuaded his disciples to go to the forest to build up their mental culture, i.e. *bhāvanā*. At the first sight, one may think that the Buddha instructed his disciples to delight in forest life since it is extremely calm and quiet. However, perhaps, the forest maybe more noisy than a township since the former often consists of the variety of sounds such as the rustling sound of the wind that blows through the leaves, falling and twisting sounds of trees, etc. Especially various animal cries such as the lion's roar, elephant's trumpet, tiger's growl, crow's caw, peacock's scream etc. are highly strident in the forest. Yet, the Buddha nowhere mentioned these sounds as disturbances for one's concentration. On the contrary, as the Buddha and his disciples insist, those sounds are extremely instrumental in order to attain the final liberation. Besides, Pali commentaries, as the most trustworthy hermeneutic source material for the Pali canon, provide a mass of elaborations to prove the aforementioned idea.