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## NATURAL PHENOMENA IN BUDDHISM

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### ABSTRACT:

*This paper is primarily aimed at unfolding and showing Buddhist instruction on how applicable it can be in modern society. The purpose of this study is to realize the nature of phenomena from the Buddhist texts.*

*As the world nowadays becomes a global village, people can connect with each other in every corner. The role, therefore, of social ethic and morality applies in modern world as an important section to get a peaceful life. My effort here is to present what the Buddha instructed on this occasion to the reader.*



**KEYWORDS:** *Orderliness of Nature (Sabhāva Niyāma), Dependent Origination (Pañiccasamuppāda).*

### INTRODUCTION

Dhamma or Dharma is one of the important concepts in Buddhism. It has been used in various senses. The Dhamma in brief means the law of all phenomenal thing. The Buddha had discovered the Dhamma which is not new after six years of his renunciation on practicing. For example, it has been used to interpret Buddhist religious moral and social philosophy as well as the nature of world and it has also been used to explain the relation between man and nature. While discussing the relation between man and nature, Buddhism has also pointed out the similarity and dissimilarity between man and nature.

The word 'nature' interpreted in Pāli word as "Sabhāva" is the original or natural form of the Dhamma or things. Its scope aims at the meaning of nature including its process is the law of nature, which is well known as Dependent Origination (Pañiccasamuppāda), orderliness of nature (Sabhāva Niyama).

The 'Nature' is a part of the environment. It influences our life. On the other hand, the term 'environment includes both natural and social environment as defined by S.C. Saxena. The surrounding includes all physical, chemical, biological and social factors So, we can say that Dhamma and the environment are freely and widely applied to all things. Dhamma is both religion and the universal order or "natural law" by which the world or *saṃsāra* functions. this Dhamma however, has no cause or originator. The Buddha did not create or originate Dhamma but discovered and revealed it. So, Buddhism believes that the cosmic order goes on without any beginning, without a maker. In the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, the Buddha says that: "Whether the Tathagata arises or not, this order exists, namely, the fixed nature of phenomena, the regular pattern of phenomena or conditionality. This the Tathagata discovers and comprehends."

In Buddha's explanation of the world, thus there is no place for a first beginning or a personal creator. The word 'Dhamma or Dharma', ordinarily translated as 'religion' or 'virtue' is used in a very different sense in the different schools of religious traditions in all over the world. Dharma is the essential core which distinguishes men from beasts. It is the final governing moral principle of the universe. In Pāli English Dictionary, the word 'Dhamma' is interpreted by the six-fold connection: doctrine - Sāsana, nature - Sabhāva, truth - Sacca, the norm - Mūla, morality - Sila and good conduct - (Kusala kamma).

Dhamma or Dharma in Pāli texts has always meant 'principle' and 'law'. The law that dominates over the universe, bestowing order upon it, and that Buddha taught. Dhamma means the interpreted order of the world.

The Buddha claimed that his search for the nature of things or the truth about the world led him to the discovery of the uniformity of the causal process *dhama<sup>tt</sup>hitatā*, *dhammāniyāmatā*, or simply *dhammā*). It was the knowledge of the causal pattern that enabled him to put an end to all defiling tendencies and thereby attain freedom (*vimutti*). In the "Discourse on Causal Relation" (*Paccaya Sutta*), the Buddha speaks of two aspects of his discovery, (1) Causality (*paccaya*) and (2) causally conditioned phenomena (*paccayasamuppāda*).

These two concepts, according to early Buddhism, explain everything in this world, the individual things and the relations existing among them. In other words, the Buddhist theory of causality is not confined to physical phenomena alone, but it also takes into account the psychic, moral, social and spiritual realms. This idea has been systematized in the theory of the fivefold cosmic order (*pañca niyama*) in the later commentaries. These five laws of universe are derived from the *pāli* terms, *Utu-niyama* (Physical causation), *Bija-niyama* (Biological causation), *Citta-niyama* (Psychological causation), *Kamma-niyama* (Moral causation) and *Dhamma-niyama* (Causation of spiritual phenomena). The first two belong to material and natural realms, while the last three belong to mental realm. In early Buddhism, the morals of humanity influence not only the psychological make-up of a person but his biology and physical environment as well. Thus, the five cosmic laws demonstrate that humanity and nature are bound together in a reciprocal relationship with changes in one necessarily causing changes in the others.

As it is well known that the teachings of early Buddhism look upon philosophy as a way of life based on its account of the nature of reality. Accordingly, the concept of *niyama* in *Pali* word (law of nature) has played a very significant role in Buddhist psychology. 'The word '*niyāma*' expresses the fixity of sequence causality consisted of cause and effect. The Buddha's comprehension of causality consisted of the very essence of his enlightenment experience. All the doubts entertained about the nature of reality are said to have disappeared with the comprehension of the causal principle. In the modern perspective, this fivefold *niyāma* can be translated into the following five realms or five aspects of natural order: caloric law or physical causation, germinal law or biological causation, psychic law or psychological causation, moral law or moral causation and causation of spiritual phenomena or causal law respectively. While the first four laws operate within their respective spheres, the law of causality operates within each of them as well as. The foundation of Buddhist psychology shows that the true nature of life is multi-dimensional. Reality in early Buddhism, therefore, is not a hyper-cosmic entity, but the natural process of the arising and cessation of phenomena without the abiding substance of any "First Cause".

### 1: Utu-niyama - Physical Causation

*Utu*, According to Ven. Ledi Sayadaw's explanation, is that which manifests, brings forth, generates what is un-generate, develops that which is generate. It is the specific quality considered as heat, the bare primary quality of fire. In this connection, *utu-niyama* or the physical causation is explained in the four "great essentials" of matter.

## 2: Bīja-niyama - Biological Causation

According to the genetic analysis, *Bīja-niyama* is explained as the natural biological function of the plants (all trees, creepers, shrubs, etc.) which spring and grow in varying forms. Such as, rice comes from the rice seed, fruit of sweet taste from a seed which has sweetness inherent in it and bitter taste from a seed with bitterness inherent in it. From the Buddhist point of view, *bīja* is just a form of “caloric energy” (*utu*). The generating and growing agency of the flora kingdom, “seed-lings and plants”- a form of “caloric energy”, which tends to manifest itself in plant-life – is called seed or germ.

The *Saṃyutta-nikaya* enumerates five types of *bīja* or germinating agents, namely; *mulabīja*, *khandhabīja*, *phalubīja*, *aggabīja* and *bījabīja*, plants propagated by roots, stems, joints, shoots and grain seeds respectively. For proper germination and growth these *bījas* should be uninjured, fresh, not exposed to the elements and lull of sap. They should be well planted on the ground and watered. When these conditions are fulfilled, the *bīja* germinate and grow.

## 3: Citta-nīyāma - Psychological Causation

*Citta* in its most general sense is the Invisible and incorporeal energizer of the body and as the activator of the personality of man. In early Buddhist texts, although *citta* (thoughts), *mana* (mind) and *viññāna* (consciousness) are considered to be equivalent in meaning by the Buddha himself, actual usage in specific contexts tends to confirm the view that these terms convey three distinct aspects of mentation and are interchangeable. In other words, these three terms, *mana*, *citta*, and *viññāna* are synonyms, yet have their distinct and special uses in certain contexts and with all their different shades of meaning they indicate the psychological aspects of early Buddhism. The term *mano* is said to represent the rational faculty of man, that is the intellectual functioning of his consciousness. The term *viññāna* represents the field of sense and sense-reaction, that is the sphere of sensory and perceptive activity and the term *citta* accordingly represents the subjective aspect of consciousness. In their characteristics, these three terms are synonyms in nature that they function coming and going very quickly.

## 4: Kamma-niyama - Moral Causation

*Kamma* (in Sanskrit. *Karma*) in the Buddhist generic sense, basically means ‘work’ or ‘action’. It is used to refer to actions both ethically qualifiable and otherwise. As with many other terms inherited from the pre-Buddhist tradition, the Buddha reinterpreted the term *karma* in a new sense to denote human action or behaviour in its ethical and psychological aspects. For Buddhism, human action is always accompanied with *cetana* (intention or volition), which is qualified as either good (*kusala*) or bad (*akusala*). The most significant distinction in the Buddhist view of *kamma* is that it has been defined in terms of *cetana* or intention. In this context, actions without intentional force (*cetana*) are not considered to be *kamma*. At this point, the intimate connection between *kamma* and the mental factor is highlighted in the following words of the *Dhammapada*:

“Mind precedes all phenomena.

Mind is in chief; everything is mind-made.”

Thus, what is meant by *kamma* in Buddhism is one’s behaviour and its psychological foundations. A study of this concept will show that it is one of the most fundamental concepts in the teaching of the Buddha.

## 5: Dhamma-nīyāma - Causation of Spiritual Phenomena

The term Dhamma, in spite of its occurrence in the pre-Buddhist literature, was not widely used as a philosophical term until the rise of Buddhism. All things animate or inanimate, all phenomena, those that can be seen or felt and those beyond human empirical perception, all conditioned and unconditioned states, can be included in the term of Dhamma. Of all Buddhist terminology, the word Dhamma commands the widest, most comprehensive meaning. The whole of Buddha’s teachings can be summed up in one word, “*Dhamma*” because it enables one to realize truth.

This conception of *dhamma* developed into a theory which explained not only the content but also the dynamics of the entire universe from the Buddhist point of view. According to this, *dhamma* means (a) the state of nature as it is (*yathābhuta*) and (b) the laws of nature (*dhammaniyāmatā*). The first striking feature to be noted in the conception of *dhamma* is its thoroughly naturalistic explanation insight and its process. It is in the nature of things (*dhammata*) that a person in the state of (meditative) concentration knows and sees the thing as it is (*yathābhuta-ñāna*). The *Pali* Canon itself makes its sense clear when it says that the *yathābhuta-ñāna* consists in knowing “what exists as existing and what does not exist as not existing.”

The second significant feature is its uniformly causal explanation of things. All things and events of the universe are supported to be necessarily conditioned by other phenomena. This conception of causality is that which “the Buddha arrived at after a perusal of the various instances of causal happening, and which came to be known as the golden mean between the two extremes, eternalism and annihilationism.” It is, indeed, the truth about the world which the Buddha claimed he discovered and which became the central doctrine of Buddhism. This definition represents the true and complete picture of *dhamma* and is inclusive of all things which the term refers to.

In this context, the *dhamma-niyāma* or causal law is usually discussed under the term *paṭṭiccasamuppāda*, a concept, or rather a complex of concepts occurring and recurring with persistent frequency in Buddhist discussions on varying problems - philosophical, ethical, logical, psychological and epistemological. Thus, *dhamma* is regarded as ‘causally conditioned *dhamma* and applied to empirical things.

In fact, this causal principle applies to both physical and mental phenomena. The statement, 'to benefit from nature is to live in harmony with nature' is based on the reality of the interdependent nature of both physical and mental phenomena. All phenomena have to be understood in the light of causal laws, since they are causally conditioned. While the theory of dependent origination (*paṭṭiccasamuppāda*) shows that all physical and mental phenomena are causally conditioned and the doctrine of non-ego or egolessness (*anatta*) points towards the fact that neither within nor outside the mental and physical phenomena is there an abiding substance.

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