

Currently, a wave of natural disasters is wreaking havoc around the world. We hear the incidents of earth quakes, floods, volcano eruptions, storms, earth slips from all parts of the world. Similarly, we can observe the occurrences of abnormal diseases, deadly battles around the world. In this backdrop, a clarification, from the Buddhist point of view, was sought from Venerable Kiribathgoda Gnanananda Thero regarding these phenomena.

**Question: Venerable Sir, We are inundated with the news of natural disasters from all parts of the world. What causes this situation to aggravate? How would you clarify this situation in terms of the Buddhist teachings?**

**Answer:** Even though people hold different views on these phenomena, deterioration of human qualities has a direct relationship with the occurrences of these natural disasters. Deterioration of human qualities causes certain changes in the nature. For instance, you will find in the Buddhist teachings that the "salty flavor" will vanish completely at some point in time in the future. This will coincide with the deterioration of human traits.

Moreover, delicacies will also vanish at some point in time in the future. Mother Nature provides us with food with nutritional values in order to help maintain our energy, contentment and health. Man will be deprived of the nutritional values of food in the future. Man will find natural food stuff to be unsuitable for consumption at that time.

Some time back, for instance, curd was consumed with fat content in it. Nowadays, curd is mostly consumed without the fat content. This is the gradual loss of nutrition for man. This situation is well documented in the Buddhist teaching. Even though we view this as a materialist decline, all this happens in relation to the decline of spiritual values of man. Buddhist teachings indicate that human beings will have access only for coarse food once the nutritional values get lost gradually over a period of time. Man may consume fiber predominant food at this time. Delicacies will be out of his food chain. This will happen in an era where passion (*Raga*), greed (*Lobha*), and wrong view (*Michcha Ditti*) dominate a society.

**Question: Do similar conditions apply for the spread of abnormal diseases in the society?**

**Answer:** Yes, we do not understand this situation right away. But this is a vast spiritual deterioration of man.

The Buddhist teachings indicate, "...there will be a time where rulers become unrighteous, administrators become unrighteous followed by Brahmins and recluses. This resembles a downstream flow. At this stage, untimely torrential rains will occur as a sign of demonstration of anger of deities."

We witnessed the recent inundation of thousand acres of land and paddy fields caused by torrential rains. Presently, we witness not only the outbreak of abnormal diseases, but also outbreak of conflicts as well.

In *Anguttara Nikaya* (Numerical Discourses), it has been mentioned that the deities unleash fierce non-human beings

when human beings become unrighteous.

**Question: Are there any assertions with regard to non-human beings in the *Atanatiya Sutta*?**

**Answer:** Yes. In this *Sutta*, there are instances where deities meted out punishments to non-human beings for harassing righteous human beings. This *Sutta* also mentions how deities protect righteous human beings when they seek protection to get over their personal problems. It is said that all fierce, brutal non-human beings

astrophic situation in 1930's. As there had been speculations about certain disasters, people had become righteous and concerned about meritorious acts. This had resulted in positive environmental changes, including higher levels of harvest. Minerals such as gems had also been found during this period.

**Question: It is said that gem stones had been found at the time the Ruwanweli Dagoba (Golden Sand Stupa in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka) was erected.**

**Answer:** Yes. There are written

*Sutta* provides a valuable account in this regard. The Buddha refers to a few ruined cities in this *Sutta*. A curse by some recluses had led to this ruination. This shows how once charming cities were reduced to miserable, worthless cities by kamma generated by the influential human mind.

In this *Sutta*, the Buddha asks the householder, Upali, "Friend Upali, is it possible for one person to kill all the people living in Maghada Province with his sword in one stroke? No, it is impossible. However, a person, who could

thought that the power of their austerities had vanished. This made them frustrated. Then, the child claimed, "Your mental powers remain unchanged. I came to you to help discard an unwholesome, distracting thought in your minds. It was wrongful to act with hatred in mind".

Spiritual qualities of human beings have a direct impact on the beauty and grandeur of nature. Once, Sakka Deva (Lord of gods) came to the Blessed One and inquired, "O Blessed One, is it a fact that there are appealing monasteries, forests in the world?" The Buddha replied, "Yes. There are. However, the places inhabited by Arahants (Holy Ones) are far superior in magnificence to those places".

Accordingly, we can see how an environment is fostered in beauty and grandeur marvelously in the company of beings with untainted, awakened minds. This process is applicable even today. Deeds and thoughts of man have a direct, invisible impact on the surrounding environment.

On one drought season, the Blessed One arrived in Jetawana City. The Jetawana Pond had run dry at that time. As the Blessed One approached the pond for ablution, the pond started filling with rain water.

On another occasion, some Brahmins had closed down the wells in order to prevent monks from using the water. When Ananda Thero approached one of the wells with a pot in hand to collect water for the Buddha, water started overflowing from that well. Astonished by this incident, Ananda Thero had said, "Even unfeeling earth is sensitive to the wholesomeness of the Blessed One".

Today, man is not blessed by nature; instead man is overwhelmed with natural disasters. This trend seems uncontrollable and becomes severe day by day. Storms and droughts cause damage to crops all over the world.

**Question: What is the concept behind The God of Rain (*Wessavalahaka Deva*)?**

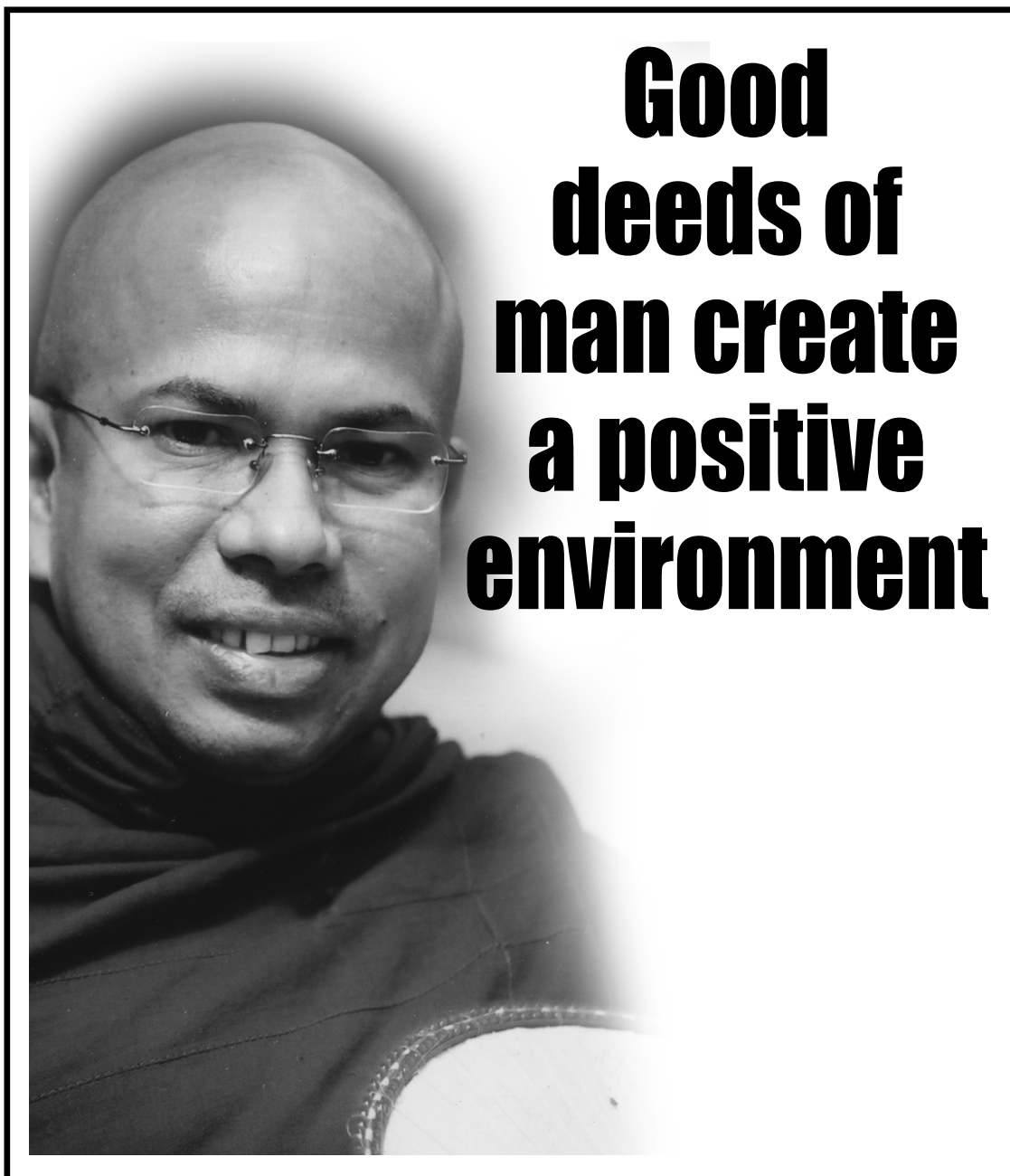
**Answer:** Discourses explain, "Due to reasons unknown to astrologers, rains disappear; Rainy clouds dry up as a result of distortions caused to the Heat Element (*Tejo Dhatu*) in the skies; Rainy clouds move out of the way as result of distortions caused to the Air Element (*Vayo Dhatu*) in the skies; Rains disappear on account of the Gods of Rains being non-zealous and non-mindful; Rains disappear on account of beings becoming unrighteous".

This indicates the direct relationship between human spirituality and nature. We are compelled to get startled at some natural phenomena, as unrighteousness of man is getting heightened endlessly.

**Question: What is the solution to this state of affairs?**

**Answer:** The solution is to go for refuge in Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha (Triple Gems) with a firm belief, explore ways to accumulate merits, and cultivate loving-kindness.

## Good deeds of man create a positive environment



have been confined in one place. This has been done with the blessing of deities in order to protect righteous human beings.

However, during an era where beings grow unrighteous and disparage the concept of merit, the deities do not distinguish between human beings and non-human beings. When this occurs, then, the deities unleash non-human beings that integrate in to the human society and wreak havoc to a great extent; endanger merits; bar all opportunities to become righteous and cultivate merits.

**Question: We notice a wave of disasters, including plane crashes happening around the world today. What causes these disasters?**

**Answer:** These disasters are also caused due to the reasons I have already discussed. Human beings do not understand these phenomena as these can not be perceived through the naked eye. The only approach to perceive these phenomena is through the study of the Buddhist teachings.

I have read about a similar cat-

accounts about this incident in *Mahawamsa* (The Great Chronicle of Sri Lanka). Accordingly, a certain deity had disseminated the news of the construction of this great dagoba (*Stupa*), in the Heaven. So, during the stage of the construction of this stupa, copper (*Thamba* in Sinhala language) had been found in Thambalagamuwa (village in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka), silver (*ridi* in Sinhala language) had been found in Ridiwita (a village in Kurunegala, Sri Lanka). Gem stones and pearls had washed ashore at the same period.

We need to understand that all this had happened due to the blessings of "Merits". Today, human beings do not believe in such miraculous phenomena. They believe only in technology. Human beings become helpless when confronted with natural disasters as they simply resort to technology and completely disregard the concept of "Merit".

**Question: If that is the case, could human beings influence the surrounding environment with spiritual energy?**

**Answer:** Absolutely. *Upali*

wield power over his mind, could turn Maghada Province into ashes with one defiled intention". Similarly, immense mental supremacy of man is well documented in the Buddhist teachings.

I can describe another example from the *Maha Govindha Sutta*. According to this *Sutta*, there lived seven Brahmins who thought only Brahmins were of noble birth and wise, and the rest belonged to inferior classes. On this occasion, the *Maha Brahma*, who disguised himself as a child, visited these Brahmins. The child walked up and down near these Brahmins making a huge noise, while walking with a pair of sandals on. This act infuriated the Brahmins very much. So, the Brahmins started cursing the child. The Brahmins wished that the boy burnt to death, reduced to ashes. This curse did not bear fruit and the child became more and more pleasant in appearance. On seeing this, the Brahmins

Ven. Kiribathgoda Gnanananda Thero, Mahmevnaava Asapuwa (Buddhist Monastery), Toronto  
Translated by Athula Sibera