

**ANIMAL-CRIES AND BUDDHIST MEDITATION:  
AN APPRAISAL MAINLY BASED ON THE EARLY BUDDHIST  
TEACHINGS AND THEIR EXEGESES\***

**Dr. Aruna K. Gamage**

Pali and Buddhist Studies, Department  
Faculty of Humanities  
University of Kelaniya

*Kelanya, Gampala, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, 11600*

The aims of this paper are to examine and figure out the contribution of animal cries in order to acquire one's spiritual progress through meditation. In addition, the affinity between animal cries and seven basic musical notes in Hindustani music will also be examined. Special attention will be paid to the canonical accounts where the Buddha emphasized the efficacy of flora and fauna, animal cries and music for one's both secular and spiritual well-being.

**Key words:** Buddhist texts, canonic texts, meditation, flora, fauna, animal cries, structural semblance, affinity.

**Flora and Fauna**

Flora refers to plant life and fauna refers to wildlife. When "flora and fauna" are used in an expression, they are referring to the plant and wildlife of a particular place or time. A remarkable amount of scholastic issues has already been put forward by the modern Buddhist scholarship with regard to the efficacy of the fitting environmental circumstances, 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 scan the Buddhist standpoint of animal cries especially with regard to its progressive influence for the human psyche. However, due to the extensiveness of the scope this study is limited to a few selected accounts of the Theragāthā in the Pali canon. Similarly, some of the pertinent 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 the 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 get rid of 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 directly 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

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\* Рец.: проф. Е.А. Красина (РУДН); проф. Л.Н. Лунькова (МГОСГИ).

of the common society in order to reach a spiritual progress are irrelevant association and complexity. Furthermore, the society is corrupted with a variety of hustle and bustle whereas the forest, as Buddhism mentions, is of less 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 the 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 the forest life since it is extremely calm and quiet. However, perhaps, the forest maybe noisier than a township since the former often consists of a variety of sounds such as the rustling sound of the wind that blows through the leaves, falling and twisting sounds of trees. 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 striking 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.

#### Bhūta-tthera

Bhūta Theragāthā (Th I 54—5) that appears in the chapter of ninth of Theragāthā-pāḷī sheds good light on the supportiveness of elephant's trumpet to build up one's spiritual serenity through concentration. These nine stanzas, in fact explore the specific nature of tranquility that can be acquired by practicing the teaching of the Buddha. At the very beginning, Venerable Bhūta reveals his awareness of basic principles of Buddhism such as unsatisfactoriness, aging and perishable nature of all animate and inanimate phenomena. Subsequent stanzas also speak of his caliber in basic Buddhist teachings such as four noble truths that can be gained through meditation (*jhāyati*). Interestingly, the forth quatrain of every stanza runs as a fix statement as “*tato ratim paramataram na vindati*; no one can find greater zest than this” which insists the supremacy of meditation. The seventh stanza directly connects with our context. It runs as follows: *yadā nisīthe rahitamhi kānane — deve gaḷantamhi nadanti dāṭhino, bhikkhū ca pabbhāragatova jhāyati — tato ratim paramataram na vindati*. Here, we provide a literal translation for this stanza as “when at night in the forest with solitude, while the sky is thundering, elephant cry (i.e. trumpet), and the Bhikkhu who is in a cave in a mountain meditates, he cannot experience greater zest than this. K.R. Norman, however, seems to have followed the commentarial interpretation when he renders *dāṭhino*; fanged animals [23. P. 53].

Even though, the literal meaning of *dāṭhino*, (i.e. plural form of *dāṭhī*) is fanged animal, it stands for the elephant in both Pali and Sanskrit texts. Nonetheless, Venerable Dhammapāla comments on this term with a justificatory explanation as “*dāṭhino* means animals such as lions, leopards; they are called *dāṭhino* because they lift their rival animals with fangs (*dāṭhinoti sīha-vyagghādayo paṭipakkhasattā. te hi dāṭhāvudhāti*

*dāṭhinoti vuccanti* — ThA II 220). Thus, it is appropriate to state that Venerable Bhūta was hearing many animal cries in the forest such as lion's roar, elephant's trumpet, tiger's growl and so on. As venerable Bhūta states here, animal cries mentioned above are not disturbances but are supporting factors to develop his meditation. This stanza further implies that venerable Bhūta experiences an inestimable happiness when he hears aforementioned animal cries.

#### Cittaka-tthera

Venerable Cittaka's statement about the stimulatory sentiment that can be experienced by the meditator from the peacock-scream is manifested in the first chapter of the Theragāthāpāli. It is one of the striking features in this canonical text that when it describes of a peacock's scream its physical beauty also has been eulogized. “*nīlā sugīvā sikhino morā kāraṃviyaṃ abhinadanti, sītavātakadditakalitā suttaṃ jhāyaṃ nibodhenti*” (Th I 04). “The crested Peacocks motivated with cold breeze, with blue gorgeous necks scream in the Kāraṃvi forest and they arouse the meditator and (ward off his sluggishness)”. K.R. Norman translates *abhinadanti* as ‘call.’ [23. P. 3]. Notably, Venerable Dhammapāla considers the significance of peacock scream, thus gives a long exegesis for this term as follows: *abhinadanti* means they (i.e. peacocks), having heard thunder in the rainy season, scream with the tone that has been supported by the seasonable circumstance (*utu-sampadā-siddhena sarena*), excelling the cries of other birds such as swans” (*abhinadantīti pāvussakāle meghagajjitaṃ sutvā kekāsaddaṃ karontā utu-sampadāsiddhena sarena haṃsādike abhibhavatā viya nadanti* — ThA I 82). It is worthwhile to pay our attention to venerable Dhammapāla's remark quoted above, since it reveals the fact that the scream of peacock is supported by the geographical circumstance. As the aforementioned stanza says, the cold breeze blown in the rainy season has motivated peacocks (*sīta-vāta-kaddita-kalitā*). That is to say, the peacock scream becomes more sonorous and melodious due to the influence of weather condition in the rainy season, i.e. winter. The compounded term *sīta-vāta-kaddita-kalitā* is worth exploring. *sīta-vāta* means cold wind; and, both *kaddita* and *kalitā* stand as past participles that give onomatopoeic sense. However, as venerable Dhammapāla mentions, peacock's scream becomes attractively qualitative and prolific with the influence of cold cloudy wind (*sītavātakālitāti sītena meghavātena sañjātakālitā madhuravassitaṃ vassantā* — Ibid I 82). Furthermore, when commenting the term *jhāyaṃ* he states that it stands for ‘the one who practices insight meditation’ (*jhāyanti samathavipassanājhānehi jhāyanasīlaṃ bhāvanānuyuttaṃ* — Ibid I 8). Therefore, it is reasonable to think that peacock-scream contributes to keep the fix concentration of meditator. For the verb *nibodhenti* the commentary provides *pabodhenti*; arouse and it further shows the encouraging influence that emits from the peacock scream. On the other hand, the effectiveness of peacock scream stands, in the Pali Canon, as a psychological therapy to ward off one's sluggishness and sloth and torpor.

#### Cūḷaka-tthera

Venerable Cūḷaka's account also provides another example for the efficacy of peacock scream to develop one's spiritual development. It occurs in the chapter of Pairs,

thus containing two stanzas uttered by venerable Cūḷaka. K.R. Norman translates those two as “The fair-crested peacocks cry out, fair-winged with beautiful blue necks, fair-faced and with beautiful songs and fine cry; this great earth is well-grassed and well-watered; the sky has good clouds. There is the beautiful aspect of a happy man; meditate upon it; a good man finds it easy to go to forth in the teaching of the well-enlightened one. Attain that uttermost unchanging state, most pure, subtle, and very hard to see” [23. P. 26]. As Sanskrit poetics insists, peacock-scream increases voluptuous sensation of the person. On the contrary, venerable Cūḷaka’s remark reveals the fact that the same peacock-cry contributes to decrease his voluptuousness.

The commentary on these two stanzas provides a valuable description about the peacock-scream. Especially, exegesis for the term *sugajjino* of the second stanza is of significance. “Peacocks those who make scream have harmonious sound. Peacocks with nice crest make first musical note *chajja* releasing scream they cry” (*manuññavāditāya sugajjino, morā sikhaṇḍino chajjasamvādī kekāsaddaṃ muñcantā nadanti ravanti* — ThA II 77). The term *chajja* occurs in Sanskrit as *ṣaḍja*. According to the Hindusthānī music system, there are seven notes in it. As aforementioned venerable Dhammapāla’s remark shows, the peacock-scream emits *chajja* note. These seven basic notes in music namely, *sa-ri-ga-ma-pa-da-ni*, as both Pali and Sanskrit sources claim, are taken by reproducing the cries of seven animals including some quadrupeds. Those seven music notes with the pertinent animals as follows:

1. Peacock—Ṣaḍja—Sa;
2. Bull—Ṛṣabha—Ri;
3. Goat—Gandhāra—Ga;
4. Heron—Madhyama—Ma;
5. Cuckoo—Pañcama—Pa;
6. Horse—Dhaivata—Dha;
7. Elephant—Niṣāda—Ni (nadanti usabhaṃ gāvo turagā dhevataṃ tathā, chajjam mayūrā gandhāra-majā koñcā ca majjhimaṃ., pañcamaṃ parapuṭṭhādī, nisādampi ca vāraṇā — Abhidhānappadīpikā, p. 13<sup>Be</sup>).

In Yajur Vedic times, five musical notes and later in Sama Vedic times seven musical notes were used. Thus, Sama Veda became the source of all Indian music and of both Hindustani and Carnatic styles. In both these styles of modern classical music, seven basic notes are used [21. P. 172; see also: 26. P. 99]. As the modern researches explore music can be used to cure the violence and intemperance, and secondly, because *music appeases* surliness by stripping man’s gloominess. It produces good temper and gladness in the human consciousness [30. P. 18]. If we pay our attention to venerable Bhūta’s account (*supra*: §4), the elephant trumpet motivates him in order to experience supreme attachment (*parama-ratiṃ*) and it works as a supportive factor for his meditation. As we identified above (*supra*: §8) elephant-trumpet releases the seventh note in the Hindustani music. Furthermore, according to venerable Dhammapāla’s explanation, since the term *dāṭhino* stands for other animals (*supra*: §5), it is rational to assume that he has been enraptured with manifold musical notes that emanate from those animal cries.

### Saṅkicca-tthera

Venerable Saṅkicca's verses occurs in the eleventh chapter of Theragāthāpāḷi is quite interesting since it affords oblique expression for the crow: "*apaṇḍaro-aṇḍa-sambhavo-sīvathikāya nicketacāriko, uppādayateva me satim-sandehasmim virāganissitaṃ*" (Th 62). K.R. Norman renders this stanza as "The black egg-born (crow), inhabiting a home in a burial ground, causes mindfulness bent on absence of desire for the body arise in me." Except the first quatrain, the meaning of the rest of the three lines of this stanza is easy to comprehend. Even though *apaṇḍaro aṇḍa-sambhavo*, the first quatrain seems incomprehensible at the first sight since it has peculiar phraseology, venerable Dhammapāla's detangling comment plays a vital role to make it clear. In order to ascertain the meaning *apaṇḍaro*, it has to be analyzed as *a+paṇḍaro*.

According to the commentarial exegeses, *paṇḍaro* basically gives two meanings, namely, pure and white (*paṇḍaroti parisuddho* — MAT II 151<sup>Be</sup>, *paṇḍaranti-atidātataṃ* — NidA II 377; *paṇḍaranti odātaṃ* — DAT III 313). Since the particle *a* (*na* in traditional grammar) gives negative meaning, *apaṇḍaro* means 'not pure' or 'non-white', however, the latter is more applicable for this context. The expression nonwhite, i.e. antonym of *paṇḍaro* (white) means 'black'. Venerable Dhammapāla precisely interprets the term as '*kālavaṇṇo*; 'black color.' Next ghost word is *aṇḍa-sambhavo*; egg-born, venerable Dhammapāla simplifies the term as *aṇḍajo* and subsequently, provides the whole meaning of *apaṇḍaro aṇḍasambhavo* using the word *kāko* (*apaṇḍaro kālavaṇṇo, aṇḍasambhavo aṇḍajo kāko* — ThA II 256). That is to say, nonwhite egg-born means 'blackbird' i. e. crow (*kāko*). However, the crow's cry, i.e. caw is instrumental to buildup venerable Saṅkicca's mindfulness. The crow, as he mentions, dwells in the graveyard and caws time to time while venerable Saṅkicca was meditating. Interestingly, rhythmic sound that emits from the crow's caw became a supportive factor for his spiritual attainment. This account is not only an apt example for oblique expressions in the Pali canon, but also an imperative illustration that elucidates the efficacy of rhythmic resonance for one who meditates to acquire his or her spiritual progress.

### Influence of Music

Interestingly, the Buddha, in the Mahāsudassana-sutta of the DN, declares the influence of a sonorous music that causes to soothe one's consciousness and which emanates from five kinds of musical instruments. The Buddha using four terms illustrates the efficacy of a well-formalized music in this sermon, viz. charming (*vaggu*), attractive (*rajanīyo*), irresistible (*kamanīyo*) and mesmerizing (*madanīyo*) (D II 171, "Just as Ānanda, as the five kinds of instruments yeild, when well played upon, to the skillful man, a sound sweet, and pleasant, and charming, and intoxicating" — Dialogues of the Buddha, T.W. Rhys Davids, Part II, p. 201). Commenting on the aforementioned third term, i.e. *kamanīyo* in DA, Venerable Buddhaghosa states, "irresistible means it is indeed appealing even though one listens to it throughout the day, does not cause to arise any repulsiveness" (*kamanīyoti divasampi suyamāno kamateva, na bībhaccheti* — DA II 616). This exegesis reveals the fact that five kinds of musical instruments play a noteworthy role to appease human consciousness.

Accordingly, through the statement made by venerable Kulla and venerable Kasapa, in the Theragāthāpāli implies that the higher enrapturement that can be experienced with the music that emanates from the five kinds of instruments is next to the happiness one can be experienced by attaining the first *jhāna* (Th 43, 95). As we pointed out above seven basic notes used in the music of five kinds of instruments are taken reproducing the cries of some wild animals such as peacock, heron, cuckoo and so forth. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that animal cries are extremely instrumental to concentrate the mind since they provide the original nature of those seven musical notes.

### Sukhāvati-vyūha-sūtra

The supportiveness of animal cries for one's spiritual development is delightfully depicted in many of the sermons that belong to the Mahayana tradition. For instance, as Sukhāvati-vyūha-sūtra describes, swans, herons and peacocks that inhabit the universe of the Amitābha Buddha, make their music-like cries thrice in the daytime and thrice in the night. When they issue their distinctive cries, the resonances of five spiritual faculties (*indriya*), and powers (*bala*), and supportive factors of enlightenment (*bodhyaṅga*) emit from them (*niścari*). As a result of hearing these sounds, the recollection of the Buddha (*buddha-manasikāra*), the recollection of the doctrine (*dharma-manasikāra*) and the recollections of the community (*saṅgha-manasikāra*) occur in minds of the inhabitants in this Sukhāvati (पुनरपरं शारिपुत्र तत्र बुद्धक्षेत्रे सन्ति हंसाः क्रौञ्चा मयूराश्च। ते त्रिष्कृत्वो रात्रौ त्रिष्कृत्वो दिवसस्य संनिपत्य संगीतिं कुर्वन्ति स्म, स्वकस्वकानि च रुतानि प्रव्याहरन्ति। तेषां प्रव्याहरतामिन्द्रियबलबोध्यङ्गशब्दो निश्चरति। तत्र तेषां मनुष्याणां तं शब्दं श्रुत्वा बुद्धमनसिकार उत्पद्यते, धर्ममनसिकार उत्पद्यते, संघमनसिकार उत्पद्यते। — Sukhāvati-vyūha-sūtra, Mahayana Sūtra Saṅgraha). Besides, it should be mentioned here that Mahayana tradition directly uses the rhythmic music as a supportive medium for the meditation.

Theravada confraternity as reflected in Pali commentarial tradition also agrees with the previously mentioned matter. As the commentary of DN states the cries of lion, leopard, peacock et cetera enable a person for the attainment of the highest fruition through recollection (*sīha-vyaggha-morādīnaṃ saddaṃ sunāti... tameva sammāsanto aggaphale patiṭṭhāti* — DA II 527). However, early Buddhism advocates not to attach with any sound, voice or cry but to experience it without detached mind. This fact is further clarified with venerable Mālunkyaputta's statement. As he proclaims if someone does not amuse having heard sounds, whereas ascertains it with detachment (*virattacitto vedeti*) with the mindfulness (*patissato*), the sound does not make any harm to the mind (*na so rajjati saddesu-saddaṃ sutvā patissato; virattacitto vedeti- tañca nājjhossa tiṭṭhati* — S IV 74, See also: Th I 78). As this statement reveals, Buddhism makes no restriction to hear the sound but instructs to experience (*vedeti*) it without being hypnotized (*sati-muṭṭhā*).

To summarize, as the canonical and commentarial accounts suggest, Buddhism insists flora and fauna are necessary factors for the spiritual attainment. Lion's roar, tiger's growl etc. work as supporting factors of one's spiritual development; especially they are extremely instrumental for the meditation albeit one may get a horrible sensation at the first hearing of those cries. In other words, as early Buddhism points out, those terrifying sounds, animal cries can be transferred into supportive factors to de-

velop one's spiritual progress. Similarly, although some animal cries, as Sanskrit poetry shows cause to occur voluptuousness of the consciousness, those types of sounds also such as peacock-scream, can be converted into helpful issues for meditation. Particularly, a crow's caw, is utterly unpleasant according to the ordinary person's point of view. Nonetheless, as we have already seen in venerable Saṅkicca's account, it is a pleasing factor to the mind and it helps not only to appease the human consciousness but also to judge the strength of meditation. These examples explore one of specific features in early Buddhism. That is, early Buddhism teaches to see all the phenomena in a quite opposite outlook. This reminds of an expression that appears in the Rūpārāmasutta of SN (*yaṃ pare sukhato āhu-tad'ariyā āhu dukkhato; yaṃ pare dukkhato āhu-tad'ariyā sukhato vidū* — S IV 127, and see also: Sn 149) as “What others speak of as happiness, this noble ones speak of as misery. What the others speak of as misery, this the noble ones know as happiness” [23. V. II.P. 88].

Seven basic notes in Hindustani music are based on seven wild animal cries. As Buddha mentions the performance of a well-played five kind musical instruments (*pañcaṅgika-turiya*), contributes to soothe human nervous system and human psyche. These seven notes are especially available in the tone of the fifth kind of instrument, i.e. *susira*, flutes. Interestingly, we can identify the aforementioned wild animals as the genuine producers of these seven basic notes. Pali canonical accounts imply the supportiveness of animal cries for the spiritual growth while Mahayana sources categorically declare the efficacy of them.

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## КРИКИ ЖИВОТНЫХ И БУДДИЙСКАЯ МЕДИТАЦИЯ: ОЦЕНКА, ОСНОВАННАЯ НА РАННИХ БУДДИЙСКИХ УЧЕНИЯХ И ИХ ТОЛКОВАНИЯХ

Д-р Аруна К. Гамадж

Кафедра исследований языка пали и буддизма  
Факультет гуманитарных наук  
Университета Келанийя  
г. Келанийя, Гампала, Университет Келанийя,  
Шри Ланка, 116000

Цель данной статьи — проанализировать и определить вклад исследования криков животных, чтобы охарактеризовать роль криков животных в духовном развитии посредством медитации. Кроме того, исследуется структурное сходство криков животных и семи основных музыкальных нот в музыке полуострова Индостан. Особое внимание уделяется каноническим текстам, в которых Будда подчеркивает эффективность имен флоры и фауны, криков животных и музыки для общего светского и духовного существования.

**Ключевые слова:** буддийские тексты, канонические тексты, медитация, флора, фауна, крики животных, структурное сходство.

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