
Extended Abstract

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Buddhist Practical Teachings on Environment: Solutions for Current Environmental Crisis in the World.

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1. Abstract

By 21st century, humankind has tremendously reached at the acme of scientific and technological development by means of various paths. Living conditions of man have been threatened as a result of people-made social, economic and environmental crises at the dawn of the 21st century with the loss of respect for moral attitudes, values and

ideals in society and environment. The environmental crisis is reckoned as one of them.

It is a big challenge not only for tomorrow's survival of man and his generation but also the whole environment. Although natural resources are limited, greedy man destroys everything in nature owing to his unlimited overwhelmingly growth of attitudes. The earth is the only place in which human beings and other beings can survive. The environmental catastrophe manifests itself a variety of ways such as global warming, over-population, deforestation, depletion of food sources, rising sealevel, damage to the Ozone Layer, pollution of the land, atmospheric pollution, melting ice-glaziers, aggravation of the Acid-rain level, rapid disappearance of forests, desertification, alarming rate of extinction of wild life, scarcity of resources, pollution by toxic chemicals, hazardous waste, rubbish cities and all sorts of radiation. Buddhism advocates non-greedy attitudes towards environment. Buddhism realizes the reciprocal causal relationship between man and nature in depth. The Buddha can be named as the peerless environmentalist who protected nature as a sacred treasure. It is expected to use the Buddhist discourses such as *Aggañña*, *Kūṭadanta*, *Cakkavattisīhanāda*,

Adhammika, Vanaropa, Dhammapada, Theragāthāpāli, Senāsanakkhandhaka, Vattakkhandhaka, KhuddhakaVattakkhandhaka, CammakhandhakaPācittiyapāli and the Buddhist *Jātaka* stories. The prime focus of this study is to find the Buddhist practical solutions for current environmental crisis.

Keywords: Buddhism, Crisis, Environment, Morality, Survival

2. Introduction and research problem/issue

3. Research Methodology

This is a library-based research. The data for this study were collected from the primary Buddhist discourses, the relevant monographs and articles written related the field.

4. Results and findings

Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not for every man's greed.¹⁸ The term nature means everything in the world which is not organized and constructed by man. The *Pāli equivalents* which come closest to nature are *loka* and *yathābhūta*. The former one is usually translated as world while the latter literally means thing as they really are. The words *dhammatā* and *niyāma* are also used in the *Pāli Canon* to mean natural law or way.¹⁹ Environment can fundamentally be divided into four parts. There are:

- ❖ Physical Environment
- ❖ Social Environment
- ❖ Biological Environment
- ❖ Spiritual Environment

Schumacher, E. F, *Small is Beautiful*, p. 26

Sandell, Klas (1987). *Buddhist Perspective on the Eco crisis*, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka.

According² to the Buddhist perspective, the Spiritual Environment is the most significant emphasis in the promotion of environmental ethics. The Buddha taught that respect for life and the natural world is essential. By living simply one can be in harmony with other creatures and learn to appreciate the interconnectedness of all lives. The simplicity of life involves developing openness to our environment and relating to the world with awareness and responsive perception. It also enables us to

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enjoy without possessing, and mutually benefit each other without manipulation.” This clearly sounds the original and genuine Buddhist attitudes towards the natural resources. Buddhist meditation is one of the best psychological approaches that one can practically utilize for this purpose. It helps to eliminate the five kinds of negative emotions called hindrances. The *Aggaññasutta* which relates the episode of the world and society emphasizes the fact that moral degeneration of man causes the degradation of his personality as well as his environment. The well-known *Vanaropasutta* emphasizes acts of social welfare such as planting of pleasure groves and forests are said to increase merits (*puñña*) always day and night. Consequently, the person who performs such deeds to rebirth in heavenly sphere.³ In the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha advised to the *Bhikkhus* to cut the forest of defilements, but not the trees. Conspicuously, Buddha's birth, enlightenment and passing away occurred under particular trees and much he spent the time with nature. Further, his disciples were advised to go to a forest (*arañña*), under a tree (*rukhamūla*) or to an empty place (*suññāgāra*) for meditation because they make fewer disturbances. Personal cleanliness and environmental orderliness have been focused on much

² Robert A White (1995). *Spiritual Foundation of Ecologically Sustainable Society*, The Journal of Baha'i Studies 7.2.

³ Samyuttanikaya I, p. 33

emphasis in Buddhism. The Buddha has promulgated specific disciplinary codes for proper use and conduct in toilets, bathing places and steam baths.⁴The *Adhammikasutta* discusses how the corrupt governance brings adverse consequences for nature where the seasonal rain fails crops get badly affected with various kind diseases. The *Kūṭadantasutta* explains not to cut down any tree for sacrifices. The

Chakkavattisīhanādasutta elucidates that when the rulers neglect their responsibilities for the people, crime and evil become widespread in society. As a

5. Conclusions, implications and significance

Buddhism offers mankind forceful concepts for the protection of the long-term environmental future through principles of loving nature. Buddhist practice is to live in harmony with nature. Buddhist positions intensify harmonious interactions between humans and nature. Living beings are co-dependent. Buddhism instructs the way to share love, compassion, kindness, and other virtues to the surroundings not for humans but for other living beings like animals and plants. Finally, all the elements are characterized as the forms of Three Signata, *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, impermanence, suffering and non-substantiality respectively in the Buddhist teachings.

6. References (Selected)

All Pāli references in this research paper are from the Pāli Text Society editions unless otherwise mentioned.

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⁴ Vin IV 205