



## BUDDHIST ETHICS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

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### Abstract:

*The modern lifestyle of human beings is affecting the environment, causing climate change and global warming. However, in the search for pleasure and happiness, the human being has been exploiting nature without any moral control to such an extent that nature has been rendered almost unable to sustain a pure and healthy life. Can Buddhism contribute to solving the current environmental crisis?*

*The principle of ecology teaches people to protect the natural environment. Buddhist principles teach people to be kind to nature and treat nature as a part of life. Deep ecology asks deeper inquiries and actually observes the way we live and see how it fits with our deeper consciousness and values. Enquiring questions like "How do I live in a way that is moral for me, other people, and our planet with its several forms of life?" may lead us to deep changes in the way we live.*

*Deep Ecology is very well-suited to Buddhist traditions and practices. The restating and interaction of Deep Ecology with Buddhist principles and ethics greatly contribute to one's knowledge. Deep Ecology reflects mindfulness and concern about the intrinsic value of all living beings. Mindfulness, Kindness, compassion, and wisdom are the core concepts of Buddhism. Buddhism teaches us to be aware of the consequences of our actions, including that action that is responsible for destroying our environment.*

*The Buddhist conception of society is not confined to humans only. In a profound ethical sense, it includes all living beings, animals as well as other creatures and plants. Buddha has given equal importance to all living beings.*

*There are a number of verses related to the environment and its related human duty and human relations with the environment. Buddhism maintains that there is a close link between man's morals and the natural resources available to him.*

**Keywords:** *Environment, Ecology, Buddhist Ethics*

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Early Buddhism does not use terms like environmental protection or sustainable development but Buddhist teaching and viewpoints indicate the relationship

between humans and nature and concern for the protection of nature. on the procedure of encouraging disciples, disciples, and all beings in the world to make



a harmonious, natural-friendly lifestyle as one of the paths to attending Nirvana. Overall teaching supports environmental protection and sustainable development. It is reflected in most of the literature of Buddhism like the concept of Karma as seen in Dhammapada.

Environmental problems are caused by greed and the endless desire of people. Therefore, any environmental protection strategies must pay special attention to the psychological dimension of human nature regarding Buddhist principles and beliefs, particularly Selah Samarth, environmental crisis.

In the competitive world science and technology increase pollution in the environment. Unfortunately, science and technology are not capable of dealing with environmental crises. Although science and technology are incapable of convincing and changing the human mind. There is a need for environmental education that can focus on a human spiritual relationship with the environment. Contemporary Buddhism can play an important role in encouraging environment-friendliness approaches, such as selflessness, loving-kindness, social responsibility, and compassion among people.

There is a close relation between Buddhism and nature particularly, forests. Buddha was born, attained enlightenment, and died (Parinirvana) under trees. In Buddhism, the importance of forests is not only as an environment preferred for meditation and for living life. The Buddha lived very close to nature. The first precept is to abstain from taking the life of living forms. This teaching is based on loving-kindness and can be seen as an environmental ethic to conserve animals and plants.

More specifically, the Lord Buddha was supportive of water conservation as seen in the discipline he introduced prohibiting monks from disposing of waste into canals or rivers. It is considered sinful to pollute water because all life forms depend on water to survive. There are plenty of references available in Buddhist scriptures related to Buddhist approaches regarding environmental protection.

Nandivisala Jatak highlights kindness to the animal. According to Macchuddana Jatak the bodhisattva threw food into the river to feed the fish. As seen in Petavatthu breaking the branches of trees is not accepted. Plants are very helpful for human life therefore one should not break branches of plants unnecessarily. There were special rules for monks not to pollute. importance was given to keeping water clean. Buddha as a symbol of peace and silence never allows noisy behavior in the group. As per reference, Buddha gave the order to a group of monks to leave the monastery for their noisy behavior.

In addition, according to Kutadanat sutta, deforestation is unacceptable in Buddhism. Kutadant Sutta teaches how one can respect the environment and animals. It also promotes kindness, compassion, and love for all living beings. It proves that Buddha had a vision for environmental protection and conservation as he taught his followers to love and respect nature

Buddhist monks are subject to strict rules regarding the use of resources. Due to their closeness to forests and the respect they command from local communities, they play a vital role in protecting and conserving these precious natural resources.

According to the Buddhist perspective, no organism in the universe can survive independently of others, and society must work collaboratively to support one another. According to Buddhism fairness in society can only be achieved when humans restore balance with nature.

There are a number of principles that lead to positive outcomes for individuals with the core principles of environmental protection and conservation.

In most of the Buddhist literature, Buddhism guided us not to harm any living being and allow them to live their life, one should practice a non-competitive way of life with a companion for all living beings. emotional beings to practice the life of a non-competitive way, compassionate and to no harm, the surrounding



environment, a lifestyle of good and non-killing is also derived from the philosophy of all things equally as assigned above.

A Buddhist text called the Anguttara Nikaya explains that when human society is corrupted by immoral behaviour, it will affect the natural balance of the world. People who are motivated by desire, attachment, and wrong views, and who break ethical rules, can't prevent the rain from falling. This can be the cause of the degradation of the ecosystem. According to the Buddhist perspective, environmental degradation is caused by greed and the endless desire of people. Therefore, any environmental protection approaches must pay special attention to the rational dimension of ethical nature. In this regard, this paper has shown that a number of Buddhist principles and beliefs, particularly *sila*, *samadhi* and *panya* can contribute to working environmental extremity.

Buddhism teaches that every human being's life from birth to death is "determined" by the law of cause and effect (or karma). This means that nothing happens by chance, but everything is the result of our actions and choices. Our *karma* can be either bad *karma* (*akushal kamma*) (leading to a life full of difficulties and dangers) or good *karma* (*Kushal kamma*) (leading to a life full of blessings and benefits). We are the creators of our own *karma*, but the consequences of *karma* (or karmic retribution) are not always simple or direct. Sometimes they manifest in this life, sometimes in the next life. In other words, "What goes around comes around" - if we do good deeds, we will receive good retribution, and if we do evil deeds, we will receive evil retribution. The law of cause and effect applies to everyone equally, regardless of their status or wealth. Therefore, Buddhism advises us to be mindful and responsible for our thoughts, words and actions. If we ignore the law of cause and effect, we will live recklessly, selfishly and harmful to others. But according to Buddhism, *karma* will catch up with us

sooner or later, depending on the conditions. Since every word or deed can create *karma*, either accidentally or intentionally, we should avoid creating bad *karma* and fear its retribution in this life. Instead, we should do good deeds for the sake of humanity and compassion, and create good *karma* for our future. A good person does not hurt any living being and takes care of all the surroundings to live a healthy life. Buddhist environmental Ethics can help to develop a friendly lifestyle in society. According to Buddhism, all beings in the world not only human beings have the right to exist equally, regardless of high and low, to be mean.

Create good *kamma*, stay away from bad *kamma*. The idea of "creating good *kamma*, stay away from bad" is one of the popular ecological ethical principles of Buddhism to practice a friendly lifestyle of sentient beings on the path of cessation of suffering. There are many ways to "create good *kamma*, stay away from bad", but in Buddhism, the best way is to do "ten good deeds" (sa. *daśakuśalakarmāṇi*) and "five precepts" (*panca veramani*). "Ten good deeds" are 10 good deeds done through actions (body), words (speech) and thoughts (thoughts). There are 3 rules for action.

Next rules for thinking (mind) include no thoughts of desire (no desire), no anger, sadness and no delusion. Five precepts are the five undocumented commandments of the monks at home, and Buddhists pray to receive these five precepts (Precepts: is a barrier that prevents bad things from the body, mouth, and thoughts). Five precepts include No killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no drinking, no ambition (no talking, indiscriminately).

Fourth, realizing life is *anatta*, evanescence. Buddhism believes that earlier we realize that life is *anatta*, evanescence, it also helps us to change our purpose, life, and moral norms in life. relatively of pursuing a tone-centered, selfish thing and life, for each of us we will



easily choose a life of selflessness, and fidelity to the community, for our fellow mortal beings.

In this way of life, all traditional ethical principles and ethics will be condemned and replaced by new ethical principles and rules, the ethics of sustainable community life or ethics in environmental protection and sustainable development.

#### **Conclusion:**

Buddhism can go hand in hand with environmental education in relation of encouraging harmonious living between all living beings and the environment and promoting environmental friendly attitudes such as loving-kindness, compassion, selflessness, thriftiness and social responsibility,

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There is a need for environmental education that can focus on a human spiritual relationship with the environment.

Contemporary Buddhism can play an important role in encouraging environment-friendliness approaches, such as selflessness, loving-kindness, social responsibility, and compassion among people.

To promote an environmentally friendly atmosphere in the world there is a need to provide environmental education from childhood. Not only Buddhism but also other major religions in the world all have one thing in common, which is the promotion of good deeds and the denunciation of bad deeds. I think we should take into account Buddhist teaching for formulating environmental education curricula, with the help of that or through such a strategy we can foster effective and sustainable environmental protection.

According to Buddhist ecologists, being mindful of the universal nature of suffering leads to understanding all

living beings, especially those who can feel pain. Dhammapada's ethical rule of avoiding evil and doing good is a way of promoting non-violence and preventing suffering. That is why many Buddhist rituals include a prayer of universal love and kindness, "May all beings be free from enmity; may all beings be free from injury; may all beings be free from suffering; may all beings be happy." Buddhist environmentalists care for the whole of creation and show love, compassion, and respect not only to people and animals but also to plants and the earth itself.

Due to the Lack of a proper moral framework, human beings are damaging resources every day. The actual cause of the environmental issue is that human beings are separated from nature. The root of the environmental crisis is the moral failure of human beings who have lost their connection with nature and who try to dominate and exploit it for their selfish desires. They believe that happiness comes from having more things, and they use this belief to justify their endless greed. This leads them to destroy nature and create an imbalance in the world.

Buddhism teaches that everything is interconnected, which is also what ecology shows us about natural systems. This principle of interdependence has been a key focus of Buddhist wisdom. To achieve sustainability, we need to both use green technology and reduce our consumption. Our modern way of life depends on a complex process of creating value that balances both spiritual and material needs and respects the future generations of humanity. However, we often treat the resources of the planet as competitive goods that we want to profit from, rather than as common goods that we need to protect. This leads to the tragedy of the environmental commons, which we can see in the effects of climate change and other signs of ecological damage. We are lacking in both material resources like clean air and water, and social values like trust, compassion, and peace. We cannot manage our physical



resources well without also managing our spiritual resources well and creating a society based on values. Buddhism can help us to do that by fostering a moral and ethical society that cares for all living and non-living beings. This will help us to develop the environment in a sustainable way.

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Dhammapada.

Anguttara Nikaya

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