

ENVIRONMENTAL PERSPECIVES : A BUDDHIST STAND-POINT

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Abstract

When we look at Buddhism in the context of its origin, we encounter a philosophy and a way of life which emerged in India in the sixth century BC, though it was a time when there was no crisis of the environment, as we see today. Is there any advice of Buddha to solve the environmental problems. The ethical teachings and general philosophy of the Buddha are basically related to the quest of young Siddhartha Gautam to find an answer to the tangle of human suffering and the saddles of life and death.

His basic teachings contained four noble truths. The leakage between suffering and impermanence. as well as the doctrine of non-self. The law of dependent Origination, and the Buddhist understanding of the causal order of the universe is the background against which these doctrines are given shape. The psychology and the ethics of Buddhism are presented within the framework of these doctrines. Buddhist perspective on environmentalism has to be emerged in relation to them.

Buddhism is based on meaningful questions and answers to them. The Buddha was silent on questions like the origin of the world or what happens to the enlightened one after death. He said that those questions had no categorical answer. But the question about the origin of suffering and the way of dealing with this predicament had a categorical answer which is given in the form of four noble truths. To the extent that the Buddhist analysis of suffering impinges on the environmental crisis. It would be possible to develop Buddhist perspectives on environmentalism.

The term “environment” does not concern only with natural environment but also with the social environment therefore, we can classify environment into two main groups namely, social environment and natural environment. Human being is not only responsible to his own society, but also to natural or physical environment. Human being himself is a part of nature. A man has to practice himself in harmony with nature and struggle for his survival. According to Darwin’s theory of organic evolution, life is a struggle for existence, only those survive, who prove themselves fittest in this world. Harming the nature is to harm us, because human being and nature are inseparable. We ought to know a way how conserve life and encourages harmony and equilibrium in the society and nature.

Environment according to Buddhism

If a society follows Buddhism it becomes purified and calm. People life and their life peacefully.

They enjoy freedom and equality because there is no difference from man to man in Buddhism. There is no distinction of caste, race, areas, state and country in the Buddhist religion. In Pali text Buddha states by birth no one belong to particular caste, caste dicide on the basis of work.¹

As it is clear from the life history of Buddha that social and natural environment has great role in the development of mankind and in the turn of he has preached his followers for the welfare of nature. Buddha’s words to his disciples “ready to move out for the propagation of his teaching” are note- worthy. The major events like birth, enlightenment and demise of the Buddha took place in the open air under tree² He was born in **Lumbini** forest, he practices meditation in Uruvela near Gaya a very beautiful spot on the bank of river **Neranjana**, attained Bodhi under the Bodhi tree, set the wheel of **Dhamma** in motion

in the deer park at **Sarnath** and attained **mahaparinirbana** in **Kusinara** lying down between twin **Sala trees**.

In **Suttapitaka** we find that lord Buddha immensely prasing natural surrounding such as forests, rivers, hills and mountain etc. Buddha in a discourse in **Anguttara Nikaya** emphasized the importance of preservation of Ecology, when lust, greed wrong values grip the heart of humanity and immorality becomes wide spread in society. Buddha had prescribed rules for the **Sangha** in **Patimokkha sutta**.³ The Second Parajika reference to the factor that any **Bhikkhu** destroying or stealing wood for the sake of the construction of **Kuti** will be committing **Parajika Dosa**. Limited space instruction and far way place from **Jeeva Himsa** was recommended to the Sangha while contracting the **Kuti** in the sixth sanghadisesa.

Buddha's attitude towards natural environment and man's relation to nature as depicted in canonical literature are conducive to create a congenial atmosphere for life on earth. The **Vanaropa Sutta** or **Sayuttanikaya** enumerates the merits of planting garden and forest. The Buddha says that those planting fruit trees, built dams and wells, and those give shelter to homeless, increase merits every day.⁴ The **Pettavatthu** of the **Khuddaka Nikaya** express the kind and friendliness towards vegetable kingdom, which provided us with all necessities of life.⁵ So we should not pluck the branch of a tree who provides us shelter. In this context further, the Buddha suggests to cut down the forest of desires of passions but not the real tree because danger comes out from the forest of desires. When the desires are cut down one can not think to cut down the real trees.⁶ But now the world is engaged in cutting down the trees in order to earn and to accumulate more and more wealth without any consideration. Buddha says in **Sigalovada Sutta**, the most important discourse for house holder, suggest that householder should accumulate wealth at certain

limit as bee collects nectar from a flower.⁷ Buddha made rules against traveling during the rainy season, because of possible injury to worms and insects that come to the surface in wet weather.⁸ The same concern for non violence prevents a monk from digging the ground.⁹

Everything in the world is interrelated and interdependent. The environment is no exception. It is obvious that the natural environment during the Buddha's time was not polluted as it is like today. Yet the Buddha has paid a keen attention to keep the environment unharmed and unpolluted. To abstain from the rampant destruction of plants in a necessary condition of fulfilling one's virtue. Several records of the Buddha and his disciples appreciation of the natural environment are found in the Buddhist literature. The Buddha has enacted certain **Vinaya** rules for his disciples regarding the protection of the environment.¹⁰

Buddhism views man as a part of the natural environment and ecology. Human being and nature are inseparable. If natural environment is destroyed, a man can not live, because things are interdependent and conditioned upon each other as the law of Buddhist dialectic or the law of causality (**Paticca-Samuppada**). It shows that cause and effect, the sequence of events, play a significant role in the environment. Buddha concern and instruction, how to lead a life with ecological ethics as foundation, any one, who has done primary. Reading of the Buddha's life, can not help but being struck by the fact that all the important events of Buddha's life happened in forest surrounding. As the forest had been his natural surroundings for more than half of his life, it must have left indeed the great impact on the thinking and the life style of Buddha.

Buddhist ecological ethics clearly points out that human moral or immoral, has significantly affected by the course of nature. The Buddha explained in detail when the kings, monks and ministers are unrighteous, how they could effect

nature when the moon and the sun would go wrong in their courses and eventually there will be shortage of rainfall, the crops would ripen in the unfavourable season. Man who lives on such crops are short lived, ill favoured became weak and sick. If the whole social structure is proper, then whole realms dwell in happiness.¹¹

Buddhism could be called on ecology of transformation in practice. An ecology in the sense that liberation is dependent on awareness of each of the twelve interlinking causes in the chain of being (paticca samuppada) is inalterable conditioned on the practice of ethics (**sila**), and the purification of mind (**Samadhi**). The mind of the plinim is the mind of each being. This is expanded sense of self or what the Japanese said- "**Jibun no Naka ni aite o ireru,**" or literally "**putting other inside oneself**" is a quality most severed in Buddhism ethics.¹²

This world is not only for human being but for all creatures. According to philosophy of Hindu religion earth, water, fire, air and sky are considered as '**Panch Bhutas**' the same thing has been mentioned in Jan-philosophy- "**Parsparogaro zivanam**". All philosopher and thinkers support this view. In '**Dhamma sangani**', lord Buddha has focused on earth, water, fire and air while describes biosystem.

We want to step up to the good life, by development the countries in every ways. Every country believes that development must be come first. But the fruits of prosperity becomes disastrous for the environment both locally and for the earth as whole. The trouble in that politicians all over the world continues to give greater importance to economy and ecology. The result is that most countries all over the world facing the problems of climate change and ozone depletion. We now consider the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, and other things all critically important they are save for lives or not, because of the pollution problems. We are more serious about the pollution that is caused by chemical waste from factories,

farms, motor vehicles and sewage effluents. The polluted air damage people lungs. Gaseous pollutants fell on the earth as acid rain, acid rain attack trees and other plants and kills the fish and water animals. Amount of CFS in the atmosphere are 10,000 times more trapping heat they also damage the layer of ozone gas in the atmosphere which protect us from the sun's dangerous ultraviolet radiation. A healthy ozone layer blocks a large part of this sun's ultraviolet radiation which is big, enough doses can cause skin cancer and harm plant life crucial to food chain.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that the first responsibility of human is to prevent global ecological calamity. Today we have been forcing to recognize the presence of ecological crisis, at the time of the Buddha the term of pollution was not heard, but the Buddhist attitude towards pollution is cleanliness in the person and environment was highly commended. Several rules prohibit monks from polluting green grass and water with saliva, urine and faces. Monks prohibited from cutting of trees. It was common agents of pollution know during the Buddha's day. Rules about keeping the grass clean were promoted by ethical consideration as well as the fact that it is good for many animals, water whether in river, pond or well, was for public use and each individual hand to use it with proper care so that others who followed could use it with same degree of cleanliness. The use of natural resource and our need would be balance, but not to be so, the human being need is more than natural resource, that is why, recourse of the world are not unlimited whereas human greed known neither limit nor satiations. Because of the craving's boundlessness of human beings therefore, the endness of craving or need is not emerge there is no fullness of craving or end, enough of craving or need has not been arisen in the human beings **Natthi tanha samanadi.**

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