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## ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC IN BUDDHISM

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### ABSTRACT

Nowadays the world has been faced environmental problem in the whole world such as global warming, climate changing, the depletion of ozone layer, deforestation, degreasing of biodiversity, desertification, seawater pollution, having raining, earthquake and so on. Moreover, there are an endocrine disruption chemical, agriculture chemical and food additive for the problems in livelihood zone. These problems become the biggest issue to solve in the world. They can destruct all living beings on the world in the present generation and also for the future. Various counter measures have been taken for the environmental problem in every corner in the world. This paper is focusing on the Buddhist Ethic concerning with the environmental problem.



**KEYWORDS:** Ethic (Sīla), the Nature and Environment (Sabhāva), illicit lust (adhammarāga), unrighteous greed (visamalobhā), wrong Dhamma (micchādhamma).

### INTRODUCTION

The world we live in the present day have to face many natural disasters such as flooding, rainless, earthquake, landslides, eruption and so on. These environmental problems are however basically divided into two sorts: by the development of the technology and by the control of the human activity besides the investigation of the cause. In fact, humanity is a part of the environment, it cannot depart from. But in the present, humanity is constantly spoiling the balance of the environment. Due to the behaviour of humanity, these environmental problems have appeared and the life span of beings which is laying down on the environment, become decreasing day after day and year after year. Concerning with the situation, even though the world leaders are taking appropriate steps for the matter, the environmental problems are increasing year after year. The problems are not significantly reduced in the present world.

The essence of Buddhist teachings is for the welfare and happiness of all living beings. So, the welfare of the whole world is included in the teaching of the Buddha. Actually, Buddhism is very close to the environment. When we look at the history of the Buddha from the birth to passing away, it somehow related to the Nature and Environment. He was born under the tree, he went to the forest to search his destination and he attained his Enlightenment under the tree by the river, finally he passed away between the tree in the forest. He spent most of his life in the forest. Therefore, the history of Buddhism is very close to nature and environment.

## THE FOUNDATION OF BUDDHIST ESSENCE

Regarding this environment, there are many addressment by the Buddha in the Buddhist texts. Buddhism is well known as an Ethical Religion because the essence of Buddhism is depending on the Ethic. The fundamental teaching of the Buddha is only three steps: *Sīla* (morality), *Samādhi* (concentration), and *Paññā*. Among them, *Sīla* is the foundation of Buddhism. Without *Sīla*, no one cannot attain any other stage. The final gold of Buddhism is to be free from suffering (*Dukkha*) and to attain final deathlessness stage (*Nibbāna*). By observing *Sīla*, one can get concentration on the way to freedom from all suffering. Depending on the concentration, the one can get knowledge which is called *Paññā* that is leading to final stage or goal of Buddhism.

## TWO KINDS OF ETHIC

*Sīla* here is described as morality, ethic, precept, virtue. Anyhow, there are many definitions of *Sīla*, according to *Sīlakkharīdhavagga - ĩkā* it has two categories: *Cāritta Sīla* and *Vāritta Sīla*. The real meaning is *Sīla* is the action which should be done or followed in particular or society (*Cāritta Sīla*) and the action which should not be done in particular or society (*Vāritta Sīla*).

As man is social being, he cannot live alone even monk, recluse and ascetic have to communicate with the society. As a social being, there're duties which should be performed by the man in the society for the benefic and welfare of it. These are called *Cāritta Sīla* because these duties are observed by the man. On the other hand, there are something that are forbidden to perform by the community for the benefic and welfare of the society. These are called *Vāritta Sīla* because they are not allowed to perform by the people. The community or society do not give to perform for the benefic and welfare of it.

Concerning with the *Cāritta Sīla*, the Buddha delivered several duties for the several people in society such as for parents and children, teachers and pupil, friends and labors and so on. When the people who live in society follow these duties in several, the society will be in peaceful and harmonic because these duties should be behaved by the people for the benefic of the society. So these ethic are crystal clear in society. The more *Cāritta Sīla* improve, the more harmony increases in the society.

The thing that you are not allowed to do, is called *Vāritta Sīla* because it is forbidden. In Buddhism, *Pañcasīla* (five kinds of precept) is the general precept for all human beings. These five things are not allowed to do by Buddhist people. The forbidden ethics are about to control human behaviour. As humanity are the slave of greed, they become covetous on things. If there is no prohibition in the society, people will commit unrighteously. Due to human behaviour, human action, the environment will be as the way they perform.

For the humanity is a part of the Environment, life depends on the health of Nature. The Buddhist teaching is established on the concept that "Man is a part of the environment". The environment serves a great deal in helping man to achieve various worldly objectives and finally reach "*Nibbāna*", which is the ultimate goal of transcendental life. Environment helps man to gain spiritual purity by having self-control over his mind body and verbal behavior. Man's spirituality is nourished by the balanced existence of all the environmental factors. The functioning of the environment is important for a person who is involved in order to achieve transcendental objectives. Therefore, the Buddhism philosophically defines the environment, its existence, environment pollution and environmental preservation. The quality of the environment is totally depended on the humanity's activities which is called *Sīla*.

## THREE THINGS IN WRONG WAY

In *Tikanipāta* of *Aṅguttara Nikāya* the Buddha preached that when the world has increased with illicit lust (*adhammarāga*), unrighteous greed (*visamalobhā*), wrong Dhamma (*micchādhamma*), the environment becomes its destroying. Actually, the natural environment has already given enough the natural resources for beings but when beings extremely use the unsustainable resources, the natural environment become changing unlike before. People nowadays want to possess their worth so they searching for their own property that over enough their need. Therefore, their passion has become unlimited. The more they want, the more they eager to compete and later on they become adversary

each other. In doing so their defilements such as desire, greed, passion, anger, ignorance etc. are increasing from time to time. When the mind is impurity with these defilements, they cannot see the situation as they really are. So, they do wrong decision on this occasion. The world therefore becomes un-unity, disharmony with the environment.

In learning how a Buddhist perspective could help our current environmental crises, it is often the words of Zen master and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh that offer deeply clear and purposeful insight. Here he calls for Buddhists to listen to the “bells of mindfulness”:

“Buddhism is the strongest form of humanism we have. It can help us learn to live with responsibility, compassion and loving-kindness. Every Buddhist practitioner should be a protector of the environment. We have the power to decide the destiny of the planet. If we awaken to our true situation, there will be a change in our collective consciousness. We have to do something to wake people up. We have to help the Buddha to wake up the people who are living in a dream.”

### THE ROLE OF LEADERS IN SOCIETY

In the *Adhammikasuttaṃ* of *Catukkanipāta*, *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha explained in detail the role of leaders who have huge effect for the environment. Their ethic and their knowledge is really important for the environment. The Buddha said that when the ruler being unrighteous, his ministers will follow as the ruler’s behaviour, then rich men or business men will follow the minister as they play later on citizens, villager will be being unrighteous, because in that society the top ruler lacked off his ethic, his followers will also perform in wrong way. So, the society become unlawful. The ethic of humanity is getting lost.

According the Sutta, when the people lost their ethic, the moon and the sun will go abnormal way. As the consequence of the moon and sun being abnormal way, the day and night will appear its aberrant, then season and year will become unusual such as dropping heavy rain and snow, rainless for long times. When the season become unusual, the nutrient crop which depended on the season, will disappear sooner or later. The life span of people become shorter and shorter because their lives have to depend on the abnormal environment or unhealthy environment.

In *Dhammapadapāli*, the Buddha admonished his followers to give respect to the nature:

*“Yathāpi bhamaro pupphaṃ, vaṇṇagandhamahēṭṭhayaṃ;  
Paleti rasamādāya, evaṃ gāme munī care’ti”.*

It said that as the bee collects nectar and files away without damaging the flower or its colour or its scent, people should care the place where they live without affecting benefit and welfare of the place. The Buddha instructed that to give respect to the place where we live in and to value to the nature. He interned his followers to understand the reliance of living being and the Earth which has interrelationship and how important to maintain for it.

To sum up, humanity is a part of the Environment, we are not able to depart from it. Even though the environment cannot create the humanity but humanity create the environment. In accordance with Buddhist philosophy, humanity’s ethic is very important factor for the health of the environment. When the ethic improves in society, the environment will be healthy but when the ethic decreases, we could not expect a perfect nature and environment.

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