

The Buddhist Concept of Ecology and Environmental Ethics

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Abstract: *Today Ecology has contributed a lot to the world's social, economic, political, and similar policies. It is widespread to find references to ecology in social and financial articles, journals, and weekly and daily newspapers. The Environment really plays an essential role in human well-being. This is primarily the subject of a discipline, and current ecology focuses on the functioning of the interactions between organisms and their habitats. The Pollution (Environment) Workshop Group of the President's Scientific Advisory Board (USA) defines the word "pollution" in the group's report titled "Restoring the Quality of Our Environment," the organisation said. The organisation in November 1965: "Environmental pollution is an unfavourable change in the surrounding living environment, as a whole or a major part of the consequences of human activities, through the direct effects of human activities. Directly or indirectly through changes in energy patterns, radiation levels, physical or chemical composition and through the abundance of organisms. These changes may affect people directly or affect water availability and the supply of agricultural products and organisms through private properties or physical objects or human occasions. Entertainers, learn about nature". Again, the big powers dumping wastes into the oceans, dumping wastes into rivers or the ground, traffic emitting gases, and forest fires are the leading causes of pollution. The volume of CO₂ (Carbonic) released is increasing, making the atmosphere around the earth gradually warmer, causing climate change which is very harmful to human life. It's dangerous and scary! One can then raise the question: What contribution can Buddhism make to solve the current environmental crisis? What can be done to protect the Environment?*

Keywords: Ecology and Environmental Ethics, Buddhist Concept of Ecology, Environmental Ethics

1. Basics of Environment and the Environmental Crisis

1.1 Concept of Environment

Relativistic ecology is a new science that deals with the many principles governing the relationships between living things and the Environment. There are many definitions of Ecology. Here are just a few. P. D. Sharma (F.N.I.E., Department of Botany, University of Delhi) wrote in his book "Ecology and Environment" that:

"Today Ecology has contributed a lot to the social, economic, political and similar policies of the world. It is very common to find references to ecology in social and economic articles, journals, weekly and daily newspapers. Environment really plays an important role in human well-being. This is primarily the subject of a discipline, and current ecology focuses on the functioning of the interactions between organisms and their habitats".¹

P.D. Sharma continued:

"Not only the Environment affects living things, but organisms also complement the Environment as a result of the growth, dispersion, reproduction, death, dissolution of living things. Thus Environment is caused to change by the activities of living things. The environment and dynamic organisms pave the way for the development of many other types of organisms through a process known as inheritance. That process continues until the current development of the community can adjust itself to balance with the

Environment. This final stage of community is called the pinnacle of development".²

The two quotations above demonstrate that there is a living relationship between man and the environment, which is continuous, indivisible and natural. This very close connection suggests that environmental harassment means disturbance in the lives of individuals as we can see from the contemporary Environmental crisis.

1.2 The Environmental Crisis

The Pollution (Environment) Workshop Group of the President's Scientific Advisory Board (USA) defines the word "pollution" in the group's report titled "Restoring the Quality of Our Environment," the organization said. held in November 1965, that:

"Environmental pollution is an unfavorable change in the surrounding living environment, as a whole or a major consequence of human activities, through direct or indirect effects on the change of energy patterns, radiation levels, through physical or chemical composition and through the abundance of living things. These changes may affect people directly, or affect water availability and the supply of agricultural products, organisms, through private properties or physical objects, or through human occasions. Entertainers, learn about nature".³

Referring to the issue of "nuclear energy – salvation or punishment", E.F. Shumacher, in his book *Small Things Beautiful*, writes:

² Ibid., p.14

³ Edward J. Kormondy, "Concept of Ecology", Prenticehall of India, Private Limited, New Delhi – 110001, 1991, p.246.

¹ P.P. Sharma, "Ecology and Environment", Rastogi Publications, 6th. Ed., 1992, p.2.

“Of all the changes that man has brought into the house of nature, nuclear fission on a large scale is undoubtedly the most profound and dangerous. The consequences of nuclear radiation have become and are becoming the most serious factor for the problem of environmental pollution, and the greatest threat to human existence on earth. Unsurprisingly, the atomic bomb has captured all the attention of the world, although there is at least one chance that it will never be used again. The danger to humanity posed by the peaceful use of atomic energy could be much greater”.⁴

Again, the big powers dumping wastes into the oceans, dumping wastes into rivers or into the ground, traffic emitting gases, forest fires are the main causes of pollution. The volume of CO₂ (Carbonic) released is increasing, making the atmosphere around the earth gradually warmer, causing climate change which is very harmful to human life. It's dangerous and scary!

One can then raise the question: What contribution can Buddhism make to the solution of the current environmental crisis? What can be done to protect the Environment?

2. Buddhist Concept of Ecology

2.1 Teaching Dependent Origination (Paticcasamuppada)

As we know the doctrine of Dependent Origination that the Buddha has realized says: Chain of Dependent Origin. Forward Order

Due to Ignorance, there is Action; Due to Action, there is consciousness; Due to consciousness, there is mind and body arises; Due to mind and body, there are six senses arise; Due to six senses, there is contact arises; Due to contact, there is sensation arise; Due to sensation, there is craving arise; Due to craving, there is clinging arise; Due to clinging, there is Owning or Possessing arises; Due to Owning or Possessing, there is birth arises; Due to the birth, there is aging and death arise together with sorrow, lamentation, physical and mental sufferings and tribulations.⁵

Thus arises this entire mass of suffering. In it, nama and rupa are never separate from each other, and never separate from the remaining 11 factors of causality. The same goes for Owning or Possessing. So Form includes the physical body of man and the physical world. The operation of Rupa is the operation of the activities of mind and vice versa. This clearly states that Environment and human life are interrelated.

2.2 The Five Aggregates (Panaca Khandhas)

Same as above for the operation of the five aggregates:

Buddha taught:

“Monks, I will teach you the five aggregates and the five aggregates of clinging. Listen. What, bhikkhus, are the five aggregates? All forms, monks, belonging to the past, present or future, internal or external, gross or subtle, low or high, far or near, all are called the aggregates of form. All feeling, perception, action, all consciousness belonging to the past, present or future are called aggregates of consciousness”.⁶— here, our so-called rupa aggregates include the individual's physical body and the external physical world. In other words, Environment is an integral part of our physical body. This suggests many useful things to mankind.

3. Environmental Ethics

Now we don't hesitate to say that we protect the Environment from pollution is really protecting our private life and happiness. This is true and natural. This is also the meaning implied in the following Metta teaching:

“All beings: weak or strong, tall, large or medium, short, small or large, without exception, sentient beings are seen or not seen, those who live far or near, have been born or are to be born. , hope that all live happily !

Hope no one deceives anyone, no one despises anyone anywhere. May each one not wish to hurt others out of anger or hatred.

Just as a mother protects her only child all her life, so may each one cultivate immeasurable mind towards all sentient beings.”⁷

Thus, everything in the present and in the future needs to be protected (protected) like an only child protected by a loving mother.

This is the Buddhist concept of Ecology.

From this view of things, it is possible to construct an Environmental ethics system.

Ethics

Dictionary of Education (2nd. Ed. Mc Graw-Hill) defines:

“The study of human conduct is not only to learn the truth as it is, but also to investigate the value of good in human actions; Science of human conduct; concerning judgments of what to do (right and wrong, duty to do) and with judgments of value (good or evil)” (p.208).

In the human sense, ethics means:

"Theory explores standards and goals of conduct in the social, psychological and physiological well-being of individuals, the individuals who make up society". (Ibid., p.208).

Environmental Ethics

⁴ E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, an Abacus book, Printed in England by Clays Ltd. St. Iros plc, 1993, p.112

⁵ https://www.buddhanet.net/bvk_study/bvk212b.htm

⁶ *Kindred Sayings*, Vol. III, PTS, Oxford, London, 1992, pp.41-42

⁷ Metta-suttam, “Sutta-Nipata”, Tr. H. Saddhatissa, Curzon Press, London, 1985, p.16.

We can imagine that people are born to be happy, not to suffer. The right standard of human good deeds must be built on the basis of the social, psychological and physiological well-being of people and the security of the Environment. The opposite is an evil act. People have to choose between these two values. To choose, people need to pay attention to the following main points:

- Almost all values of contemporary culture are built on self-centered thinking (ignorance), these values need to be illuminated in the light of Dependent Origination (no-self, wisdom). In other words, the doctrine of Dependent Origination needs to be widely promoted in the educational world and society in order to form a new direction of environmental protection culture.
- The Teaching of Dependent Origination states that "One" exists in "All", and "All" exists in "One". Pollution or disorder in one place is pollution or disorder in other parts of the world. This truth requires individuals, organizations and every country to have the duty and responsibility to protect the Environment at the same time for the survival of mankind.
- The truth of Dependent Origination needs to be included in Ecology as the basic theory, and should be seen as Environmental philosophy and Environmental ethics.
- In addition, the call to stop atomic and chemical testing should be repeated many times. The same goes for calls to limit the so-called use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes, and to create safeguards for the removal of wastes from factories and industrial workshops.
- Measures to limit the release of toxic vapors in space.
- Measures to protect forests and animals from destruction.
- Measures to build lasting peace in the world.
- The last but most important thing is to help people understand and control desire (thirst) (meaning greed, hatred, delusion) which is the basic cause of all causes of Environmental pollution. Means free from mental pollution. If sensual and sexual desires are increasing day by day, as is happening, there will be no way to protect the Environment like what we learn from the doctrine of Dependent Origination: there is only one thing left: destruction, suffering, and destruction to all living beings in the world.

The future development of humanity should be guided by Right View and Right Thought (that is Wisdom) as the Buddha taught us, and Environmental ethics should be built on the foundation of Right Speech, Right Action, Right Life and Right Mindfulness. This is the only way to live. Man has no other choice, no other path.

4. Conclusion

Buddhism, when it comes to ecological issues, always emphasizes very profound behavioral attitudes related to the entire universe. The most important thing is that Buddhist ethics internally always emphasizes that the outer world is completely separate from humanity. It is part of human life. Humanity depends on the ecological environment. Behavioral attitudes are nurtured internally in each person. This orthodox method can be used as a foundation for building ethics of human behavior towards the natural

environment. So The future development of humanity should be guided by the Right View and Right Thought (that is Wisdom) as the Buddha taught us, and Environmental ethics should be built on the foundation of Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, and Right Mindfulness. This is the only way to live. Man has no other choice, no other path.

References

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