

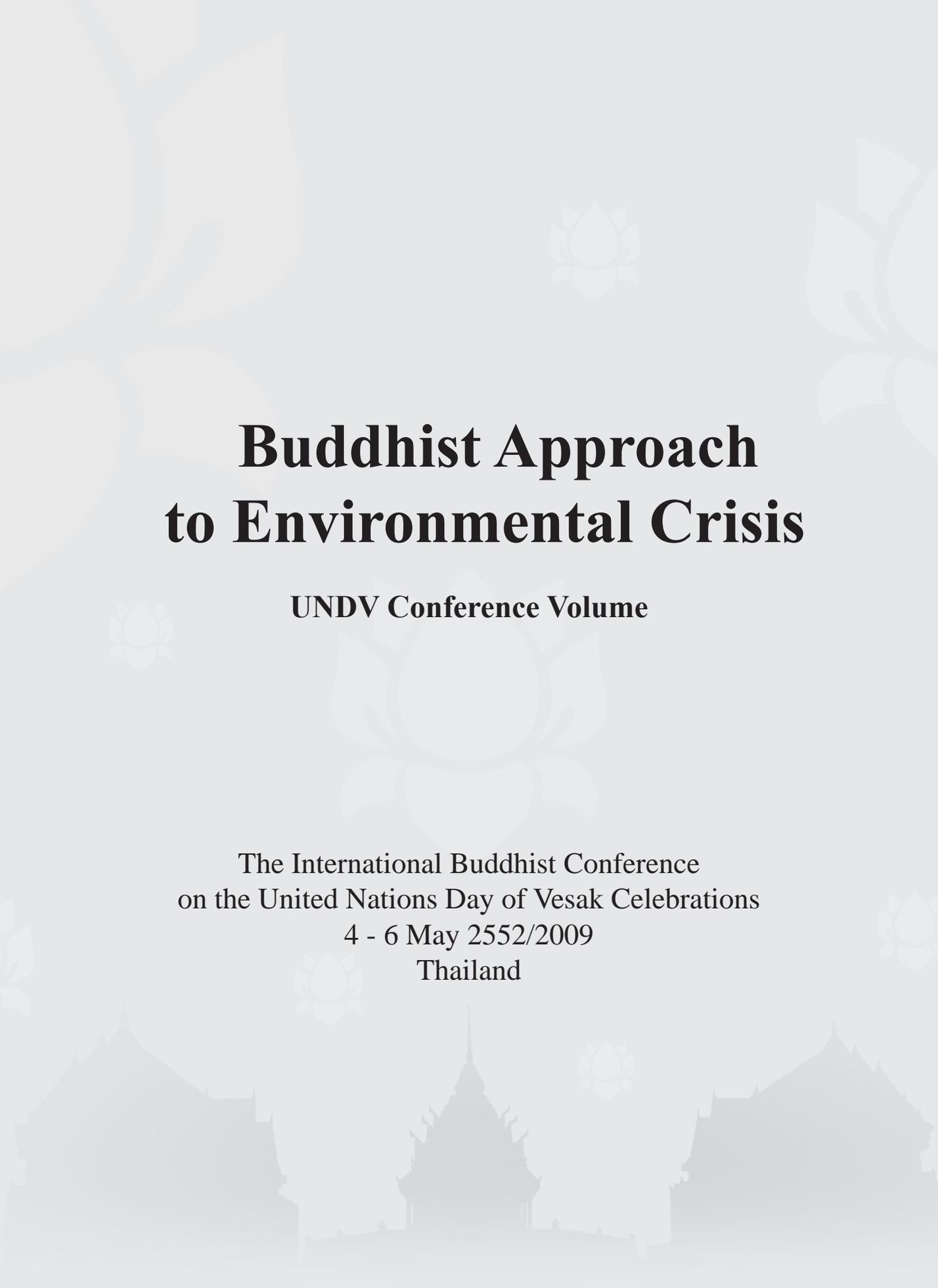
# Buddhist Approach to Environmental Crisis

UNDV Conference Volume



The International Buddhist Conference  
on the United Nations Day of Vesak Celebrations  
4 - 6 May 2552/2009  
Thailand





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## Preface

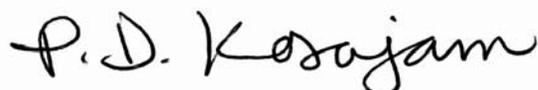
Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU) has been privileged to witness and play a crucial role in developing and hosting successful UNDV celebrations from the beginning in 2004/2547 to 2007/2550. The UNDV celebrations were held in Ha Noi, Vietnam last year; for this year, 2009/2552, the UNDV has returned. As always, we are all very grateful to the Royal Thai Government for its constant support, and thank the Thai Supreme Sangha Council for its blessings, guidance and support. We are indebted, also, to the United Nations for recognizing the thrice-sacred Buddhist holy day.

It has been 2552 years since the death of our Great Teacher, and we have gathered here from across the globe, from many nations, to again pay tribute to his birth, enlightenment, and death – occurring on the same day in different years.

For the celebrations this year, the International Association of Buddhist Universities (IABU), created during the UNDV in 2007/2550 by the participating Buddhist higher institutions, plays an important role. The IABU Secretariat now, plays a major role in our celebrations, particularly in the academic programme of the conference.

As part of the UNDV Conference theme *Buddhist Approach to Global Crisis* I am pleased that three Conference Volumes are published for the convenience of all participants, with the financial grant from my university, in time for the conduct of the panels and workshops. The various sub-themes of the panels are: Buddhist Approach to Economic Crisis; Buddhist Approach to Environmental Crisis; Buddhist Approach to Political Conflict and Peace Development; and additionally included are the invitational workshops pertaining to the IABU Administration; the Buddhist Common Text Project, and Buddhist E-Resources and Network. In this volume are articles on one of *Buddhist Approach to Environmental Crisis*.

This publication could not have been possible without the persistence, hard work, and dedication of MCU's scholars and staff. I wish to thank all members of the International Council for the United Nations Day of Vesak and the Executive Council of the International Association of Buddhist Universities, and the Editorial Committee for their devotion. I am also grateful to our many donors, sponsors and volunteers.



The Most Ven. Prof. Dr. Phra Dharmakosajarn  
Chairman, ICUNDV & IABU  
Rector, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University

## Introduction

First, as a man and the editor, I am humbled to be nominated to assist the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual United Nations Day of Vesak Celebrations as the main editor for the conference publication on Buddhist Approach to Global Crisis. I must thank all of the Venerable and respected professors who have entrusted this endeavor to me. I wish that my enthusiasm and engagement into these articles will be warmly received first from the author, secondly towards the delegates and observers to the conference, and thirdly my aspirations aim to please the many readers of this publication.

I admit that this text may contain several remaining grammatical mistakes, largely this is the responsibility of the author, but since many of our contributors are non-native English speakers, there might be a few problems remaining due to the short amount of time between issuing the call for papers [mid-January 2009], to the article deadline date [27 March 2009] to publication date [17 April 2009] - I had thus approximately three weeks to improve every article before presentation to the international Buddhist world, by 5 May 2009. I've mentioned nothing about other behind-the-scenes efforts and nearly 1500 e-mails that made this text possible.

Some fifteen articles were rejected for being non-thematic, redundant in nature (other articles covered similar material), were problematic or were just too poorly written to be included into our program and panels – this demonstrates that we tried to give the Buddhist world the best possible presentation of viewpoints, subjected to our collective committee's discretion. As the main editor, I was the focal-point of communication between the committee and the scholars – often on the receiving end of several complaints and a few compliments. The UNDV 2009 Editorial Committee would like to remind these scholars of simple tasks, beneficial also for future occasions, that if: scholars could run the automated spelling and grammar check-functions on their computers, select the fonts recommended in the call for papers; have someone at their home-university re-read their work for errors – and basically turn in more professionally-approved products, our work at the office would be a lot easier, and less frustrating. Instead, we worked hours into the next day's morning for several weeks, missing holidays - on editing articles that should have been 'publishable' when submitted.

I have given much of my life to Buddhism, sacrificing my family, and professional aspirations of earning my PhD in Buddhism; and because I have worked on these papers that are truly the responsibility of the individual author, most of which have higher qualifications from my own – I hope at least the Buddhist devas are pleased. Therefore, if there was any misrepresentation in any articles or through organizing these panels, may I be forgiven, for humbly working for you? I have tried my best, in a short amount of time.

Those familiar with our annual United Nations Day of Vesak Conference know that over the past few years, we have had more time to prepare, perhaps a few months, to arrange articles and engage in thorough editing. This was not the case for this year's conference, the fourth that I have been involved in. I must take full responsibility. Ultimately though, what largely matters most, is that the various Buddhist leaders and scholars have pondered diligently to present to the United Nations, their individual visions towards solving global crisis through various manifestations; we therefore hope leaders can consider our proposals. Often in international settings, the ability to communicate matters means more than the grammatical intricacies. If someone said: "Help!" this can be enough, and through our observations we could learn exactly what would be needed or how to assist someone with the appropriate remedy. Some people seem to expect or demand our assistance. Help and advice can cut across many barriers, yet I have strove to present the best possible work, by all of our delegates – across national, sectarian and even gender biases. Buddhism is for all, and all here are certainly for Buddhism. Below is, brief summaries of our accepted and collected voices:

## **Buddhist Approach to Environmental Crisis**

Global warming, deforestation, over-population, depletion of food sources – humans are panicking over the ecological nightmare created by the capitalistic system where people are keen on collecting profits, rather than taking care of the earth. It takes only a minute to cut the largest of trees, and a century for the next tree to be as big as the fallen relative. Humans often neglect this perspective, and are suffering as a result. These papers aim to draw humanity's attention to the need to respect and heal the ecological system.

**Bela Bhattacharya** writes in her, "Buddhist Approach to the Environmental Crisis", that: since plant life preceded animal life, humanity should have more respect for the environment. She emphasizes the historical reverential-perceptions of humanity towards trees and plants. She states the demand of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to reforest or cover lands with trees and plants – as necessary for humanity, not as a capitalistic-luxury.

**Brian White** writes in his, "A Systems View of the Global Crisis: Using the Lesson of Causality to Spread the Buddha's Teachings", that comprehending causality heals global suffering. He highlights the expansion of Buddhism as being beneficial to the *created* global community. He portrays three criteria as challenges: community togetherness, representation of Buddhism, and acceptance of newcomers. One could draw from his conclusions that the influence of a Buddhist community could eventually influence companies manipulating the global destructive forces. In this respect, Buddhist communities are valuable reminders of a more compassionate humanity.

**Chutatip Umavijiani** writes in her, "Mindful Meditation in Buddhism and Wu Wei of Tao to Save Nature in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", that: human minds have been infected by the constant desire to compare oneself with other people, and this leads to materialism rather than being satisfied with oneself. Therefore, the best advice is non-participation or do nothing: 'wu wei'.

**Colin David Butler** writes in his, "The Global Environmental Crisis and the Sustainability of Civilization: Time for the Buddhist World to Awaken", that: complacency in religion and in social life must be avoided by Buddhists. Social scientists seem to avoid scientific-environmental data, and thus each 'science' is weakened. He suggests that Buddhism would recognize that civilizations may collapse due to the reality of impermanence, and involve themselves with science. Because Buddhism stresses compassion and detachment from a personal dilemma, Buddhists can promote equality and acceptance, certainly through the principle of engaging in proper livelihoods and moderate consumption, as additional contribution to our evolving crises.

**David Loy** writes in his 'Healing Ecology': that the individual situation and the present situation of humanity are related, therefore the environmental crisis is a spiritual as well as technological crisis. The principle of 'no-self' and a 'separate self' are his contending important factors towards his demonstration stressing the growing desires to develop economically and technologically. Exploiting the environment is likened to thievery – rather than stealing or damaging from one's mother - humanity should repair the environment, creating a greater bond with the biosphere.

**Dr. Pragati Sahni** writes in her, "Environmental Ethics in the Jatakas: Further Reflections", that: she will take her previously published comments further. By looking deeply into the Jatakas, we can infer the advice towards resolving crisis. For instance, she cites arrogance or misuse of power as dimming humanity's sense of moral responsibility, and this could be a key position in her argument; because, later she states that gratitude towards nature brings rewards.

**Dr. Simon James** inquires in his, "The Foundations of Buddhist Environmental Ethics: A New Approach", if Buddhist teachings are correct to emphasize protection over the natural world. First, there is no real Buddhist theory of nature. The Buddha was more concerned with individual-human condition, and only how to live within the world. Therefore, he continues to explain his position, and concludes by suggesting people just refuse to change, despite knowing the circumstances that create the crisis; and find engaged-Buddhist role models for virtuous ethics as the Buddhist approach.

**Jeff Waistell & Martin Haigh** collaborate to write in their, "Engagement with Environmental Action: Comparing Buddhist and Vaishnava Perspectives": from contrasting but shared meditative experiences, the environment becomes the favorable and preferred location for practice. They state spiritual self-realization is beyond materiality and distraction; and discrimination or detached preferences earn viewers glimpses into true-reality – a reality that must be distinguished from greed, towards an encompassing elimination of suffering and the relief of the burdens humanity imposes upon the earth.

**Kwong-Cheong Wong** writes in his: "Problems with the Holistic Approach to Buddhist Environmental Ethics", that dependent origination is the doctrine in which Buddhist environmental ethics originates from. He suggests that early dependent origination concepts pertained only to the mind, and it wasn't until Mahayana systems were developed that interdependence of all beings came into conception. Therefore, he additionally argues against the concept of 'Green Buddhism' as being unsustainable or implausible.

**Leena Senheweera** writes in her, "Buddhist Approach to the Environmental Crisis: From Kadyan Paintings of Sri Lanka", that: foregone generations never had

environmental crises and various social problems – because living with the environment is the answer for better living, as depicted, and thus preserved to remind us, in temple-paintings.

**Li Hujiang & Wang Hongmei** write in their: “A Study of the Integrated Relief Strategy Adopted by Buddhist Organizations after Wenchuan Earthquake and its social Effects --with a Case Study of Chongqing Huayan Monastery”, that: Buddhist ideas are often thought of as being negative, passive, and lack support for developing social society; but recent endeavors illustrate: initial response efforts, emergency material and medical relief; psychological aid; and long-term constructive assistance – rebuilding homes and buildings. These ‘engaged-Buddhism’ accounts listed here are proof that monks perform selfless activities for the benefit of society – while alleviating suffering from an environmental crisis.

**Narong Kantasilo** writes in his, “Buddhist Approach to Environmental Crisis”, that: environmental problems can better be solved by understanding the four types of elements: water, earth, air and fire – and the associated types of pollution in these categories: water pollution, rubbish pollution, air pollution, and global warming. He then tries to explain each as a four-fold method of understanding pollution as suffering.

**Padmasiri De Silva** writes in, “Buddhism, Environment and the Human Future”, that: there are five natural laws governing the seasons, seeds, mind, morality and phenomena – if humans understand these laws, crisis could be avoided. The Aggañña Sutta is revisited not for its signature for good governance, but for how to regulate the environment. People possessed with greed eventually destroy the earth’s sentient and non-sentient richness. De Silva also covers Deep Ecology, as an environmental philosophy for life; environmental education; training professionals in bioethics; and concludes the lengthy paper with some words on science and technology.

**Pahalawattage D. Premasiri** writes in, “Dealing with Root Causes Rather than Symptoms of “Dis-ease”: A Buddhist Approach to Global Crises”, that understanding the Four Noble Truths are important for treating the root causes, rather than just the symptoms of the crisis. Humans are able to exercise complicated intellectual and practical methods to attain their desires – and this hinders humanity. Buddhism thus, espouses between wholesome and unwholesome categories. Greed, hatred, and delusion are the roots of humanity’s problems. There needs to be ‘proper moral direction’, which ultimately is the responsibility of leadership.

**Paula Green** writes in her ‘Exploring Peace-building in the Birthplace of the Buddha’, that: there are many poor people involved and living around controversial Lumbini – now a UNESCO World Heritage site, where King Asoka once erected a pillar to commemorate Buddhism. New, beautiful ‘foreign’ temples are being built

in this sacred location, despite the extreme native poverty. She drew out competing needs, fears and visions of the foreign stakeholders and determined the need for power-sharing and creating win-win situations to include and improve the livelihoods of Lumbini residents – through interconnections and interdependence.

**Phramaha Bhatsakorn Piyobhaso** states: his essay is divided into four parts. First, depicting global warming; secondly, he deals with an analysis of global warming through the principle of Dependent Origination; thirdly, he debates over Buddhism and fatalism; and finally, he covers some Buddhist stances towards the global-warming crisis.

**Prof. David J. Kalupahana** writes in his ‘Buddhist Approach to the Environmental Problem’: that rapid development has mandated that people become more aware of environmental issues. Through recognizing the physical-body as the environment – he demonstrates four types of environments: the individual body, the external physical, the biological environment, and the social environment – and illustrates that care is needed to maintain the health of these systems.

**Prof. Dr. Mrs. K. Sankarnarayan** writes in her, “Environmental Crisis”, that: humanity must accept ‘karmic’-responsibility for its own future, based on our own previously ignorant actions. Our current actions are under our own control, yet the consequences are as yet unknown – therefore, because of our recklessness. Her support for Deep Ecology is evident, as she tries to harmonize humanity with being part of the Earth – and thus illustrative of interdependence.

**Ronald Y. Nakasone** writes in his, “The Relative Absolute or the Virtues of a Multi-Centered Universe”, that the human mind, as an environment, need not be singular in perceptions due to the multiplicity of experiences: family, religion, art, mathematics – illustrating numerous or other multidisciplinary topics, including a political situation. All of these illustrate the universe of human thought – and through dependent-origination, other perspectives and uncertainty - can become reality in our social environments.

**Suryo W. Prawiroatmodjo** writes in “Integration of Dharma Principles towards Enhancing Environmental Quality and Community Development”, that there are several threats to humanity, from ecological and agricultural problematic-situations, and urban and industrial problematic-situations – all equally conflicting with humanity’s harmony. The paper emerges from the exploits of human history to finally present the answers found in eastern-philosophies as applicable to the various global crises. Dhamma-teachers are inspired to learn the various sciences; learn the various small-scale reduction of waste ‘systems’ – to implement at the community and household levels.

**Ven. Dr. Xianda** outlines from “Buddhist Approach to Environment Crisis”: the various forms of crisis, and suggests the annual Buddhist rains-retreat offers a reminder to be more concerned with environmental degradation and sufferings brought on by pollution, politics, and science, etc. Pertaining to material-consumption: frugality is the necessary recommendation to reduce environmental exploitation. Additionally, people are recommended to live by diminishing their consumption of energy, engage in proper waste-management, respect the lives of animals and plants – certainly during their mating seasons, as humans observe the rainy season.

**Venerable Jinwol Lee** writes in his, “A Buddhist Prescription for the Environmental Crisis: Ecological Understanding and Practice of the Ten Precepts”, that: the ten precepts are important to comprehend towards resolving the Christian-like domination of human over non-human, the First World over the Third World, and other ‘unequal’ relationships. In a ‘post-modern’ era, our interconnectedness is closer than ever before; as such one group of humans can no longer exert dominance over another. After articulating the true causes of global suffering, he reinterprets and represents the ten Buddhist precepts as the remedy for crisis. This is his wonderful hermeneutical offering to our seminar on environmental crisis that should be taken more seriously.

**Zon Vanel** writes in her “Approaching an Environmental Problem with Buddhist Teaching: A Case Study of the Jakarta Coast”, that local government was not interested in revitalizing the coastal area. Interest from businesses triggered the coastal clean-up. Through an exercise of interconnectedness, she demonstrates that Buddhist principles should inspire transformation, since ‘nothing can exist without the support of others’, as she mentioned. She claims global interconnectedness demonstrates the solution for eliminating crisis; her paper could suggest that governments implement the concept of interconnectedness as policy, to eliminate problems.

## **Conclusion**

It is the hopes of our Buddhist traditions that the knowledge gained from previous United Nations Day of Vesak Celebrations is built upon firm foundations.

The 2005 UNDV Celebrations discussed: Buddhist Organization; Buddhist Education; Propagation of Buddhism; Protecting Buddhism; and Buddhism and Social Welfare.

The 2006 UNDV Celebrations discussed: Perspectives on Buddhist Strategy for World Peace and Sustainable Development; World Peace; Buddhist Education; Dissemination of Buddhism; Protection of Buddhist Culture; Sustainable Development; and Buddhist Collaboration.

The 2007 UNDV Celebrations discussed: Buddhism and Good Governance; Dissemination of Buddhism through Modern Technology; Preservation and Promotion of Buddhist Arts; Buddhist Meditation and Human Development, The University Symposium; and Buddhist Electronic Library.

The 2008 UNDV Celebrations discussed: Buddhist Contribution to building a Just, Democratic and Civil Society; War, Conflict and Healing: A Buddhist Perspective; Buddhist Contribution to Social Justice; Engaged Buddhism and Development; Care for Our Environment: Buddhist Response to Climate Change; Family Problems and the Buddhist Response; Symposium on Buddhist Education: Continuity and Progress; and the Symposium on Buddhism in the Digital Age.

This year's 2552/2009 UNDV Celebrations discuss Buddhist Approach to Global Crisis; Buddhist Approach to Economic Crisis, Buddhist Approach to Environmental Crisis; Buddhist Approach to Political Conflict and Peaceful Development; International Association of Buddhist Universities Workshop Seminar on Administrative Collaborations; Workshop on the Common Buddhist Text Project; and the Workshop on Electronic Resources and Networks.

There seems to be many thematic continuities, which could represent the aspirations or directions in which international Buddhists feel important to negotiate. Hopes and aspirations are felt from everyone, and these articles selected by the editorial committee, we felt were the most relevant to our themes, backed by the knowledge of previous celebrations. Certainly, we all have room to grow, under these and other topics which have gathered attention and we also strive to move forward into new realms. Please take the time to read and consider these provocative contributions to global Buddhism.

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## **Buddhist Approach to the Environmental Problem**

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Environmental issues have attracted the attention of people all over the world over the past decade or so. Prior to that, almost every one was watching with amazement the rapid development of science and technology in the Western world. Science was interested in demonstrating the orderliness of phenomena when it ventured out to discover laws after laws. Technology utilized the scientific discoveries to produce things that the human beings craved for. Mass production of consumer goods, followed by a discovery of the means of mass communication and mass transportation, has certainly improved the physical well-being of those who are living in the industrial countries. When physical well-being is made to be synonymous with human welfare, there is nothing in human history to match the present state of affairs, especially in the case of those who are living in the affluent parts of the world.

However, some of the more enlightened thinkers of the Western world, like E. F. Schumacher, have raised questions about the long-term consequences of such scientific and technological developments. Science has nursed a nuclear child that has threatened the very survival of the earth that we inhabit, and technology is consuming incredible amounts of natural resources, and dumping toxic waste into the environment endangering all forms of life on earth.

Science and technology thus provided for the immediate satisfaction of human needs as well as greed, regardless of the eventual destruction of the earth itself. Was it possible for science to have taken a route that could have enabled human beings to be happy in this world while preserving everything else in it.

There is no textual evidence from the time of the Buddha that there were problems relating to the environment in ancient India, that there was a need for solutions to any such problem. But this does not mean that at least the Buddha was not concerned with a human being's relationship to the environment in which it lives. The principle of dependent arising, if faithfully followed by the human beings, especially when they live a moral life, could not lead to a total neglect of the environment.

Contrary to the prevailing view that the Buddha left the household life looking for what is true and real, we emphasize the fact that he went in search of the

good (kusala) and the peaceful (santa). This is based upon the Buddha's own statements about his renunciation recorded in one of the most important discourses, namely, the "Discourse on the Noble Quest" (Ariyapariyesana-sutta),<sup>1</sup> wherein he spoke of the renunciation, his striving, and the attainment of enlightenment and freedom. This difference in the ultimate goal of the pursuit actually creates an enormous difference to the world-view in early Buddhism. After long years of trial and error, the Buddha discovered the best form of the good, namely, the peaceful. It is possible to assume that worry as well as doubt regarding the nature of the world and life in it continued to assail him and he did not have peace of mind. His final enlightenment under the bodhi-tree was thus the result of overcoming doubt about the nature of the world. How he overcame doubts is beautifully summarized in the verses he is said to have uttered after his enlightenment:

*When phenomena appear before a brahman who is ardent and contemplating, his doubts disappear, as he perceives a phenomenon with its cause.*

*When phenomena appear before a brahman who is ardent and contemplating, his doubts disappear, as he perceives the cessation of conditions.*

*When phenomena appear before a brahman who is ardent and contemplating, his doubts disappear as he remains scattering the forces of Mara (death), like the sun that remains illuminating the sky.<sup>2</sup>*

Having attained peace for himself and enjoying the bliss of freedom, the Buddha continued to occupy the seat of enlightenment at the root of the tree of enlightenment for one whole week reflecting on the manner in which he could express his enlightenment and freedom. This was the greatest challenge he encountered after destroying the forces of Māra. This is because he had to explain the nature of human life, of the physical and social environments, of the moral life and its conclusion, namely, freedom (nibbāna), without leaving any room for conflicts to arise among living beings as well as their environment. The Enlightened One was equal to this task.

First he needed to coin some new terms to express his understanding of the ideas relating to impermanence (*anicca*), which was the corner-stone of his philosophy. This is because the prevailing terminology for change and causation were full of substantialist and eternalist (*sassata*) or essentialist and nihilist (*uccheda*) implications. The most important among a dozen such newly coined terms are *paṭīcasamuppanna*, *paṭīcasamuppāda* and *idappaccayatā*.<sup>3</sup> The term *paṭīcasamuppanna* is a combination of two independent terms, *paṭīcca* and

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<sup>1</sup> *Majjhima-nikāya* 1.163, 165-166. [All further references are to Pali Text Society editions, London.]

<sup>2</sup> *Vinaya-Piṭaka* 1.2.

<sup>3</sup> All three of these terms are explained in a very important discourse called "Conditions" (*Paccaya*) at *Samyutta-nikāya* 2.25-26.

*samuppanna*. The former is a gerund meaning “having moved toward,” and the second is a past participle implying “arisen or co-arisen.” Generally the phrase is translated as “dependently arisen” and refers to an event, object or state of affairs that has “arisen, having moved toward [a condition or a set of conditions].” In other words it refers to an experienced effect that is seen to be related to a condition or set of conditions. Thus, cause and effect are not two distinct and separate entities but bound together in a perceived relationship. It is a perception placed in a continued present, not a momentary one. The use of the past participle is significant in that it explains a process which has run its course in the immediate past and reached its conclusion in the present. Stretching this experience into the obvious past and the unknown future, the Buddha formulated a universal principle and called it “dependent arising” (*paticcasamuppāda*) which, unlike the former, is a pure nominal form. To make sure that this principle, based upon human experience, is not made into an absolute law or reality, the Buddha utilized another new term, *idappaccayatā* derived from *ida*, ‘this,’ and *paccayatā*, ‘condition-ness.’ It expresses conditionality as well as mutuality. The Buddha then proceeded to apply these concepts to explain every aspect of human experience, whether it be physical events like earthquakes, biological phenomena like a human body, psychological events like greed, hatred, etc. as well as social, political and moral phenomena. Our present interest is in the Buddha’s application of this principle in relation to the environment.

### **The Physical Body as Environment**

It would be appropriate to begin a discussion of the Buddha’s conception of the environment with a quotation from him which is of enormous significance for epistemology, ontology as well as ethics, and which also represents the smallest unit of the world (*loka*). It reads as follows:

Monks, within this fathom-long body, associated with awareness (*sasaññimhi*) and mind (*samanake*), I declare the world (*loka*), its arising, its ceasing and the path leading to its ceasing.<sup>4</sup>

According to the Buddha, the physical body as the immediate environment needs to be kept in good health. As in other contexts, he recommended the adoption of a middle path. The Buddha realized the damage done to his own physical frame by the extreme forms of asceticism involving excessive fasting that he practiced before his enlightenment. That damage showed up more prominently during old age when he constantly complained of back-pain, etc. Thus mortification of the body is one extreme. The other is the indulgence in excessive eating, and also eating the wrong kind of food. The Buddha recognized the fact that some forms of food pollute

<sup>4</sup>*Samyutta-nikāya* 1.62; *Anguttara-nikāya* 2.48.50.

the body. He refers to the time when human beings suffered from only three diseases. They are desire (*icchā*), a psychological disease, hunger (*anasana*), a physical one, and decay (*jarā*), a natural one. However, as a result of meat eating, humans have developed ninety eight forms of diseases.<sup>5</sup> He recommends the avoidance of these two extreme forms and the adoption of the path of moderation in eating. In an oft recurring passage in the discourses, it is said:

A noble disciple is a knower of moderation in eating (*bhojane mattaññā*). [ . . . ] eats food after reflecting according to genesis (*yoniso masasikāra*), not for fun or pleasure or adornment or beautification, but just enough for this body's maintenance and up keep, for keeping it from harm, for furthering the moral life (*brahmacariya*); . . . .”<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting that the Buddha is here providing a moral reason for maintaining a healthy body. Physical well-being is a foundation for mental health. One of the factors of enlightenment is the development of serenity or calm, and this involves the serenity of the body (*kāya-passaddhi*) as well as serenity of thought (*citta-passaddhi*).<sup>7</sup>

## The Physical Environment

Moving our discussion to the environment surrounding the human person, it would be pertinent to start with the physical. There are several important reasons for this. First is the Buddha's compassion for the environment even before his enlightenment; second is his appreciation of a beautiful surrounding, and third is the respect and gratefulness he expressed toward it. First, during the time he was practicing severe austerities, he is said to have developed compassion (*dayā*) even for a drop of water (*udabindu*) and was determined not to destroy even a minute creature.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, the “Discourse on the Noble Quest” (*Ariyapariyesana-sutta*), wherein the Buddha describes his renunciation, striving and his enlightenment and freedom, refers to his search for a suitable place for his strivings. He saw a delightful piece of land, a soothing forest grove, a river flowing besides with clear water and fords, and a village close by where he could collect alms.<sup>9</sup> The third is even more important, for here the Buddha, immediately after enlightenment, is said to have remained standing before the seat where he sat and the tree that provided him with

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<sup>5</sup>*Sutta-nipāta* 311.

<sup>6</sup>*Majjhima-nikāya* 1.273, 355; 3.2, 134; *Samyutta-nikāya* 4.104, 176; *Anguttara-nikāya* 1.114; 2.40, 145; 5.167.

<sup>7</sup>*Samyutta-nikāya* 5.66, 104.

<sup>8</sup>*Majjhima-nikāya* 1.78.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.167.

shade, gazing at them for one whole week without even blinking his eyes.<sup>10</sup> This is, of course, in stark contrast to some of the Western traditions which looked upon the environment as something primarily for human consumption.

With such a beginning, it is not surprising that the Buddha and his disciples continued to encourage respecting, nurturing, and preserving the natural environment.

The Buddha was aware of the Vedic conception of gods inhabiting natural phenomena such as fire, wind, rain, and even herbs and trees. As if to encourage the people to respect natural vegetation, the Buddha spoke of gods (*devatā*) residing only in pleasancess (*ārāma*), in groves (*vana*), in trees (*rukka*), in medicinal herbs (*osadhi*), grass and large trees, but not in other physical phenomena such as fire or wind.<sup>11</sup> Those who are involved in planting of pleasancess (*āmāropa*) and forest groves (*vanaropa*) are said to acquire merit (*puñña*) and reach heaven (*sagga*).<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, to destroy a tree that has contributed much to the cleansing of the air and providing shade for a traveler suffering the heat of the mid-day sun is considered a betrayal of a friend.<sup>13</sup>

The Buddha discovered from his own experience, mentioned earlier, that a natural surrounding is the best place for a person to undertake contemplation leading to enlightenment and freedom. In a stock passage, it is said: “A person resorts to a remote lodging in a forest, at the root of a tree, on a mountain slope, in a wilderness, in a hill-cave, in a cemetery, in a forest haunt, in the open or on a heap of straw” in order to overcome the five hindrances, namely, desire for pleasures of sense (*kāmacchanda*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), flurry and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) and doubt (*vicikicchā*).<sup>14</sup> At the end of a discourse, the Buddha would often advise his disciples to resort to the root of a tree (*rukhamāla*) or an empty place (*suññāgāra*) in order to contemplate.<sup>15</sup>

Let us see how these natural surroundings turn out to be ideal places for contemplation. First, they do not contain objects that would generally be either attractive, in the sense of generating desire for sense-pleasure, or repulsive. Secondly, a person who has moved into such a surrounding will not find anything else to do other than contemplating. There are not many distractions, and therefore helpful in breaking through the mental obstructions. Thirdly, and more importantly, they provide a natural experiential ground for realizing impermanence and dependent arising, that is, the nature of the world.

<sup>10</sup>*Jātaka* 1.77

<sup>11</sup>*Majjhima-nikāya* 1.306.

<sup>12</sup>*Samyutta-nikāya* 1.33.

<sup>13</sup>*Petavatthu* 259.

<sup>14</sup>*Majjhima-nikāya* 1.269, 346, 440-441; 3.3.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.46, 118; 2.266; 3.302; *Samyutta-nikāya* 4.133; 5.157; *Anguttara-nikāya* 4.139, 392; 5.88, 131.

While these surroundings facilitate the attainment of enlightenment and freedom, they also contribute to the physical well-being because everything therein is fresh and natural and without pollutants. For this reason, the Buddha and his disciples often retired into a forest or to a root of a tree, especially after a meal, for a siesta (*divāvihāra*).<sup>16</sup> When a disciple named Girimānanda was taken ill, the Buddha advised him to be taken to a forest grove or the root of a tree so that he could develop the awareness (*saññā*) of the impermanent (*anicca*), the non-substantial (*anatta*), the inauspicious (*asubha*), the ill effect (*ādīnava*), renunciation, the passionless (*virāga*), cessation (*nirodha*), non-delight (*anabhirati*), the non-delight in all dispositions and the awareness of breathing in and out (*ānāpānāsāti*).<sup>17</sup>

The term *ārāma*, generally used in the sense of ‘monastery,’ as in the case of *Anāthapindikārāma*, *Ghositārāma*, *Nīgrodhārāma* or *Pubbārāma*, and which literally means a ‘place of delight,’ a pleasance. This is because such residences are surrounded by natural vegetation, especially fruit trees. To the ordinary person, the forest may appear to be a hostile surrounding. Yet it is not so for the one who has overcome the dangers arising from the unmitigated pursuit of sense-pleasure. Such persons could enjoy the forest habitat frequented by wild beasts,<sup>18</sup> even elephants in rut (*mattakuñjara*).<sup>19</sup> The reason for their ability to survive in what appears to be a hostile surrounding is the feeling of compassion and non-injury they emanated. A monk named Sankicca testifies:

I do not recollect any such wishes that these  
beings perish, that they be destroyed or that they  
suffer anguish and pain.<sup>20</sup>

When modern Buddhist scholarship assumed that attaining freedom (*nibbāna*) is to have every vestige of emotion or feeling eliminated, the monk, Sankicca, who had attained such freedom had expressed his feelings of aesthetic pleasure in the following way:

Cragas where clear waters like a rocky world,  
Haunted by black-faced apes and timid deer,  
Where cloaked in watery moss the rocks stand,  
Those are the highlands of my heart’s delight.  
I dwelt in forests and in mountain caves,  
In rocky gorges and haunts remote,

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<sup>16</sup>*Vinaya-Piṭaka* 1.28; 3.208; *Dīgha-nikāya* 2.130; *Majjhima-nikāya* 1.147, 447, 501; 2.186; *Samyutta-nikāya* 1.133, 135; 3.91, 235; *Anguttara-nikāya* 3.75; 4.356, 438.

<sup>17</sup>*Anguttara-nikāya* 5.108-109.

<sup>18</sup>*Theragāthā* 602.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 539.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 603; tr. *Psalms of the Early Buddhists*, Mrs. C. A. F. Rhys Davids (London: Pali Text Society, 1903-1913).

And where creatures of the wild roam.<sup>21</sup>

## THE BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT

The next important environment consists of the animal life. The relationship between human and animal life is understood in two different ways in the Western tradition. The classical Western tradition considered animal life as something created for the benefit of the humans, and the modern scientific tradition looks upon the humans as no more than one higher step in the evolution of the animal species. The Buddha conceived of the animals as constituting a whole mass of species, hence referring to them as animal wombs (*yoni*), while humans constitute one species and, therefore, a world (*loka*).<sup>22</sup>

While recognizing the humans as belonging to a distinct species, the Buddha also argued that it is only the humans who can attain enlightenment and freedom, even the gods being denied this capacity. Moral perfection is beyond the reach of the animals. Yet, the fact that humans possess this capacity does not mean that they are therefore superior without qualification.

Humans have developed dispositional tendencies which account for their behavior. The animals may not be able to consciously or deliberately change their way of behavior, unless they are compelled to do so by repeated circumstances. The Buddha is insisting that human can do so, and that is why they are humans. His advice to his disciples is to take an immediate look at their own thoughts and see whether they have been defiled by passion, hatred and confusion. If they have been, they should strive to eliminate such defilements.

In terms of basic needs and feelings of happiness and suffering, humans and animals are considered to be equal (*paṭipuggala*).<sup>23</sup> Therefore, one accrues much benefit by offering food, not only to human beings, but also to animals. Yet, the pragmatic Buddha would place them in a hierarchy with animals at the bottom followed by humans with evil behavior, good behavior and the enlightened ones at the top. It may be noted that this hierarchy is based not on the assumption that a person of evil behavior is always superior to an animal, but on the assertion that even an evil human being can be corrected and made to attain enlightenment and freedom. No such possibility exists in the case of animals.<sup>24</sup> Even though birth as an animal is

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 601- 602.

<sup>22</sup>Dīgha-nikāya 3.234; *Majjhima-nikāya* 1.73, *Anguttara-nikāya* 4.459

<sup>23</sup>*Majjhima-nikāya* 3.255.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

looked upon as a better state of existence than hell (*niraya*),<sup>25</sup> the Buddha states that the amount of suffering that animals undergo cannot even be described.<sup>26</sup>

For the above reasons, the Buddha called for unmitigated friendliness (*mettā*), compassion (*anuddayā*) and sympathy (*anukampā*) toward all living creatures. One who extends compassion for all living creatures even with thoughts of friendliness (*metta-citta*) is supposed to accumulate much merit.<sup>27</sup> A person is said to be good or skillful (*kusala*) by being friendly toward animals and not entertaining a single hateful thought (*paduṭṭha-citta*).<sup>28</sup> The Buddha is praised as one who is sympathetic toward the whole world (*sabbalokānukampaka*).<sup>29</sup> The positive act of extending sympathy for all living creatures and beings is often appended to the precept of refraining from destroying life.<sup>30</sup>

Another pragmatic attitude toward animals is embodied in the Buddha's admonition to the monks to undertake tours for the benefit of the multitude of human beings (*bahujana*) and through sympathy for the world (*lokānukampā*).<sup>31</sup> This means that he was not setting up a "mission impossible" for the monks by assigning them either the responsibility for saving all human beings (*sabbajana*) or of enabling animals to attain freedom (*nibbāna*).

## THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Finally, we come to the most important of the environments, namely, the human society. Just as much as a human being is dependent upon the physical and the biological environments, it is still more dependent upon the species to which it belongs. The immediate social environment is the family unit. While the theistic societies believed that the parents are merely the progenitors or facilitators, and that God is the creator, the Buddha considered the parents to be of paramount importance in the causality of human life. It is true that Buddha spoke of a stream of consciousness (*viññānasota*) associated with a past life getting established in a newly conceived human being,<sup>32</sup> but that is only one third of what constitutes the conditions for its birth. The union of the mother and the father, and the mother being in the proper season to conceive constitute the remaining two-thirds.<sup>33</sup> As such, it is not

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 2.193.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 3.169.

<sup>27</sup>*Theragāthā* 238.

<sup>28</sup>*Anguttara-nikāya* 4.151; *Itivuttaka* 21.

<sup>29</sup>*Theragāthā* 625.

<sup>30</sup>*Dīgha-nikāya* 1.4, 63, 71, 171, 181; 3.4, 9, 149; *Majjhima-nikāya* 1.181, 269, 275, 374; 3.33, 203; *Samyutta-nikāya* 4.314; *Anguttara-nikāya* 2.210; 3.92; 4.249, 251, 255, 437.

<sup>31</sup>*Vinaya-Piṭaka* 1.21; *Samyutta-nikāya* 1.105.

<sup>32</sup>*Dīgha-nikāya* 3.105.

<sup>33</sup>*Majjhima-nikāya* 1.266.

surprising to find the Buddha emphasizing the importance of filial respect toward the parents. This is meant to highlight the responsibilities of the parents.

One may carry over some character traits from a previous life, but the parents provide the appropriate [or inappropriate] surrounding for the growth and development of a person. In addition to the nourishment for the body, the first inheritance a child receives from the parents is the language. It is through this language that it then learns the customs and belief-system of the community to which the parents belong. The social and moral conventions are therefore imparted to a person first by the parents and then by the elders or the teachers. This is reason that the Buddha recommended respecting the elders of the society.<sup>34</sup>

Analyzing the human psychology, the Buddha found that self-interest is an important part of the human personality. Placed in the context of an uncertain and impermanent world, any living being has to struggle for survival. It is in the manner in which a human being follows its self-interest that distinguishes the human species from others. A society consists of individuals with self-interest. If each individual attempts to take care of its own self-interest ignoring those of others, we have a situation which would be worse than the forest virtues (*araññaka-sīla*),<sup>35</sup> for even some of the carnivores are seen to be restrained within their own groups. Human society, if it is to be distinguished from those of the animals, is one in which self-interest has to play its role in the context of mutual self-interest. An individual human being is thus called upon to make a sacrifice for the sake of mutual self-interest. This is what the Buddha considered to be the virtues of the household (*gehasita-sīla*)<sup>36</sup> which are attractive to the humans (*manussakanta*).<sup>37</sup> According to the Buddha, the mutuality of self-interest can be realized in its ultimate value only by the elimination of greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and confusion (*moha*), the three roots of the unwholesome (*akusala*).<sup>38</sup> The elimination of greed does not mean the annihilation of self-interest, for it is tantamount to suicide. The appeasement of dispositions (*sankhārasamatha*) is what the Buddha recognized as the most effective means of building up a healthy social environment wherein the ultimate moral principle of one's own welfare (*attadattha*) and the welfare of others (*parattha*) are harmoniously blended into a genuine welfare (*sadattha*).<sup>39</sup>

According to the Buddha himself, the non-doing of evil, to have had the opportunity to do meritorious deeds in the past, and to be able to establish oneself

<sup>34</sup>Dīgha-nikāya 2.74; *Samyutta-nikāya* 1.228.

<sup>35</sup>*Majjhima-nikāya* 3.132.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.136.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.132.

<sup>38</sup>Dīgha-nikāya 3.214.

<sup>39</sup>*Dhammapada* 166.

properly, are indeed the conditions that make an environment appropriate for living (paṭirāpadesavāsa).<sup>40</sup>

The foregoing discussion should make it abundantly clear that the Buddha's conception of the environment, and solutions it presents to the problems posed by it in the modern world, are far superior to anything that has been found anywhere in the world.

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<sup>40</sup>*Sutta-nipāta* 260.

## Buddhism, Environment and the Human Future

*Padmasiri De Silva*

### **Introduction:**

The environmental problems that the world faces today are unprecedented in the history of our planet: pollution, water depletion, deforestation, land degradation, loss of biodiversity and climatic changes. Though the living and the non-living systems have interacted over the ages to create a congenial human habitat, this balance has been destroyed due to the excessive exploitation of natural resources. But from the overall perspectives of the future of human civilization, what we are facing is not *merely* an environmental crisis, but a multi-dimensional crisis having intellectual, socio-political, economic, moral and spiritual overtones. As the World Future Council in Hamburg sums up in a document entitled, *Safeguarding Our Future*: “There seems to be a growing consensus that the accelerating destruction of our ecological, social, political and economic system is at root a spiritual crisis” (World Future Council). Fritjof Capra, the renowned scientist and environmentalist has expressed a similar sentiment: “It is a crisis of intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions; a crisis of scale and urgency unprecedented in recorded human history” (Capra, 1982, 21).

Institutions like the UNESCO have developed a number of environmental education projects drawing from the world’s religions and especially establishing a dialogue with the cultures of South East Asia, drawing Buddhist insights into environmental education. *The Taplow Declaration* of 1992, clearly asserted that in addition to scientific knowledge, and technological capabilities, spiritual values and the cultural exchange of information are bound to promote sustainable development (Taplow Court, 1992). Against this background, the Buddhist contributions are valuable both in making a diagnosis of the malady, the potential prognosis for the future and a way out of this crisis, presenting pathways for a recovery and healing.

How do spiritual values become important? Clearly we are faced with a multi-dimensional crisis which has moral overtones and three area of ethical concern have emerged, and Buddhism offers resources for dealing with these issues: ethics became global by including fellow human beings, not merely in the society or the region in where one lived; secondly there was a projection into the future which included future generations; thirdly, ethics went beyond humans to include non-human lives, animals, plants and ecosystems. A Buddhist environmental ethics has to be developed to achieve these three important goals. The cause for the moral degradation is in Buddhist terms human greed (*lobha*) and lack of concern for other humans, future generations and other living creatures. Coupled with human greed,

human aggression (*dosa*) or this lack of love, empathy and caring summarized in the Buddhist philosophy of *metta*, are the roots of moral degradation, so well described in the *Aggañña Sutta* (see, below). To add to greed and aggression there is ignorance (*avidya*), which is a lack of understanding of this predicament, as well as a strong anthropocentrism- which in Buddhist terms is an expression of a deep-seated egocentric perspective. If nature becomes the object of man's greed, envy and aggression, a non-violent and gentle attitude to nature is not possible.

### **Lawful Nature of Things:**

In addition to these three roots of human suffering and disaster, one has to understand the impersonal laws that govern all beings and the universe. In future studies, scholars explore predictive patterns as well as techniques of directing our future to better and desirable goals, as well as taking precautions against potential disasters. In Buddhism, there is a great emphasis on the lawful nature of things and it is by an understanding of this order that Buddhists may contribute to future studies.

The *Aggañña Sutta* is presented as a fanciful myth describing the beginning of a world cycle. A very brief summary follows ( D III, 80-98). It was offered to illustrate to the Brahmins that there is no superior caste created by a divine order but it is the actions that make people noble or ignoble--the moral order is supreme. The world passes through alternating cycles of evolution and dissolution that lasts for a long period. Though change and transformation is depicted as a natural state of things, natural processes are affected by the moral dimensions of our lives. This is the primary point of this story. In the beginning, the beings were luminous, weightless, and full of joy until greed entered their lives. This caused the loss of their luster and radiance and moral degradation followed. This turn of events had an impact on the natural environment. There was a savory quality in the earth springing up with color, odor and taste, sweet as honeycomb. But as they fed on this substance, due to their greed, their bodies became gross and the edible substances disappeared. Pride and vanity appear as they compared themselves with others. As vines and rice replaced mushrooms, they began hoarding rice. With the emergence of private property rights disputes and conflicts emerged. People divide and fence the land, set boundaries to ensure their food, but greedy ones takes rice from the neighbor's plot. Thus theft increased and the richness of the earth disappeared. The social dynamics embodied in this story provides a framework to understand the point that *moral degradation affects the natural environment*.

What was attempted through this sutta has an echo in another, the *Cakkavattasihanada Sutta* (DIII, 58-77). The theme of this sermon on "War, Wickedness and Wealth" is to emphasize the lawful nature of the law of dependent

arising, where the moral order reigns supreme. When people follow the immoral paths of life through greed, famine is a natural outcome; when moral degeneration is due to ignorance, epidemics result; and when anger and hatred emerge, the way of violence replaces a lawful way of life. It is also said that as people realize the immoral roots of their predicament, there is the change of heart and people begin to enjoy economic prosperity, good quality of life and a longer life. Thus greed, hatred and ignorance that pollute the mind also pollute the environment. The importance of this sutta lies in the emphasis on the rule of law which has to be respected by a “wheel turning king”.

The later commentaries have systematized this notion as the theory of five natural laws: *utu-niyama* (law of seasons), (*bija-niyama*) laws of the seeds, the laws of the mind (*cittaniyama*), (*kammaniyama*), moral law, (*dhammaniyama*), and the lawful nature of phenomena. These laws cover the physical, biological, psychological and moral laws, and the very nature of laws that govern all phenomena. If humans follow the natural laws understanding these laws, they have the potential to live in harmony with the environment. If we explore the theory of dependent origination, we get a wider cosmic setting to understand human behavior and its impact on the environment.

A very important point about morality and the rule of law is the presence of freewill. The Buddha rejected all theories of determinism and also theories of indeterminism (emphasizing luck and chance) and upheld free will, so that each person has to take charge of his or her life. He/she has the power to have an impact on the laws that guide the psyche, the natural environment, the social world as well as *kammic* inheritance. The law of *dependent co-arising*, and *this that conditionality* are the most revolutionary and the most influential doctrines of the Buddha.

1. When this is, that is.
2. From the arising of this comes the arising of that.
3. When this isn't that isn't
4. From the stopping of this comes that

The important point is that one can learn from the causal patterns in the past and apply one's insight to disentangling the same causal patterns acting in the present.

### **The Sustainability Thesis:**

The essence of a healthy and insightful perspective on the environment that is future-oriented rests on the development of an *ethic of sustainability*. When one understands the lawful nature of things, what strikes the mind is the need for a world-

view orientation or right view that promotes sustainability. One view of environmentalism is “managerialism” that attempts to bring change but not at a radical level; the radical view referred to as “ecologism” makes imperative, a complete critical assessment of the environment and this is more in line with Buddhism. While like ecologism, Buddhism takes the finitude of the physical carrying capacity of the earth seriously, there is an emphasis on the limits to economic growth, especially the limiting of excessive consumption patterns in the universe. This would also imply that there would be a critical use of technology, and not move towards gigantism as exemplified by the Buddhist philosophy of development outlined in Schumacher’s book *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics as People Matter* (Schumacher, 1974). Thus it may be said that Buddhism has an environmental philosophy, a sustainability thesis and an environmental ethics covering nature, humans, animals and the ecosystem as an interconnected system.

The dominant ethic and social paradigm that was responsible for the destruction of the environment has been described as a “thinking disorder” on the lines of the Buddhist analysis composed of number of elements: humans can control nature to their advantage; nature is valuable as it provided resources; these resources are ample for human needs; unlimited economic growth and material progress is possible; technology can solve human problems; social interaction need to be competitive; personal achievement be preferred to group achievement and large-scale organizations are the key to development. Olsen, Dunlop and Lodwick (1992) who make this analysis quotes the *Dhammapada*:

We are what we think  
All that we are arises with our thoughts  
With Our thoughts we make the world.

(See, de Silva, 2002, *Buddhist Perspectives on the Environmental Crisis*).

In this article, we offer an alternative vision for the environment and our future based on five features. There are five features associated with sustainable development and all these facets will be examined in the context of Buddhism and Buddhist scriptural resources in the discussion that follows: (1) maintenance of ecological integrity; (2) the integration of conservation and development; (3) satisfaction of basic human needs; (4) the achievement of equity and social justice, (5) provision for social determination and cultural diversity.

### **Ecological Integrity and the Buddhist Perspectives on Nature:**

Ultimately the behavior of entire societies towards the biosphere must be transformed if the achievement of conservation objectives is to be assured. A new ethic, embracing plants and animals as well as people, is required for human societies

to live in harmony with the natural world on which they depend for survival and well-being. (*The World Conservation Strategy*, 1980).

Rather than dividing our world into ‘human’ and ‘nature’, the classical Buddhist perspective sees a more appropriate kind of division between sentient being (humans and animals) and the non-sentient environment. In this division plants would come under non-sentient area, though of course, there may be examples like the ‘one facultied’ (*ekindriya*) inhabiting plants and even water may have ‘breathers’, (*suppanaka udaka*), where the transition is a bit complicated (Horner, 1967). The stretching of beings that matter beyond the obviously sentient creatures to the minutest is a point that is to be noted. Though trees and plants do not come within the kammic circle, as the natural environment in our context today and the future is greatly linked to human life, a violent and irresponsible attitude to nature may have indirect moral and *kammic* relevance. As the term ‘sentience’ implies the potential to experience and suffer in the light of the Buddhist analysis of suffering, these distinctions are important.

The well-known five precepts provide a basic ethical outlook for Buddhists and the first precept embody the evils related to the destruction of life (*Panatipata*). In a minimalistic sense, the precept refers to the destruction of life, that is human and animal life, but in a deeper sense the Buddha is referring to the rejection of violence and the cultivation of the positive values of love (*karuna*) and compassion (*metta*). This perspective has an implicit reference to the need to develop a non-violent attitude to nature, and acquires more meaning in the context of current environmentalism to cover the “rape of nature” or the irresponsible exploitation of natural resources. Also in the Buddhist context, the Buddha recommends the cultivation of loving kindness to the minutest creature:

Whatever breathing beings there may be,  
No matter whether they are frail or firm,  
With none excepted, be they long or big  
Or middle-sized, or be they short or small  
Or thick, as well as seen or unseen,  
Or whether they are dwelling far or near,  
Existing or yet seeking to exist,  
May beings all be of a blissful heart.

(Sn. V. 143-52)

The monks and nuns are expected to be cautious of even unintentional harm to living creatures. They were expected not to travel during rainy seasons, and be conscious of injury to worms and minute creatures which come up to the surface during rainy times (Vin, I, 137). They are also not expected to dig the ground (Vin iv, 125). I.B. Horner in a very useful study, *Early Buddhism and the Taking of Life*,

(Horner, 1967) observes that the Buddha was concerned with the complex issues of unintentional destruction in digging, cutting down trees and destroying vegetable growth (Vin, IV, 34; I 137, 138; IV 296; IV 32-33; iv 49, 125). While the Buddha ruled out the professions of slaughtering and fishing which are not worthy to be pursued (*samma-ajiva*) for the laymen, only the monks were expected to follow the special rules of discipline like not digging the ground.

Buddhist perspectives on animals went far beyond the precept of non-harming living creatures. Humans and animals belong to the same *samsaric* cycle and thus in this context, there is an important perspectives on animals in Buddhism that enhances the Buddhist perspective on the non-human world and its overall ecological integrity. When a female animal defends her young risking her own life, or a dog stays with the master in a moment of trouble, though we may not use the word “ethical” in this context, such animals display great virtues. A writer describing the numerous references to animals in the Dhammapada and the Jatakas observes: “Animals are devoted to their offspring, sympathetic to their kindred, affectionate to their mates, self-subordinating to their community, courageous beyond praise” (Thompson, in, Story, 1964, 3). The Nandavisala Jataka shows how kindness should be shown to domesticated animals (J I, 191). The *Dhammapada* refers to the elephant Dhanapala who in captivity refused food, as a sign of protest, indicating the longing to be with the mother (Dh.324). A paradigm case of kindness even to aggressive animals is the case where the infuriated elephant Nalagiri was tamed by the Buddha with the power of loving kindness. Many of the great acts of virtue and courage relating to animals are often represented as one of the previous lives of the Buddha as a Bodhisatva.

To close this section on Buddhism and animals, it would be fitting to narrate the story of a grateful parrot that refused to leave a barren fig tree, as the tree fed the parrot when it was it was full of fruits:

Sakka raises a question from the bird why she is yet sticking to a barren tree.

Wherever fruitful trees abound,  
A flock of hungry birds is found:  
But the trees all withered be,  
Away at once the bird will flee

The parrot says:

I wish to leave but have no heart  
From this old tree, though dead to part.

This depicts a powerful image of gratitude to the tree (Mahasukha Jataka).

It is in the same spirit that the Buddhists venerate the Bo-tree as it was under this tree that the Buddha attained enlightenment. Reverence, gratitude and kinship with nature are part of the nature orientation in Buddhism.

The most important insights on the human-nature orientation in Buddhism come from the deep links with spirituality. The Buddha admonished monks to go to the forest, to the roots of forest and empty places. The open, empty and tranquil woods, groves and meadows and the foothills provided the monks in search of spiritual solace. As forest dwellers they also lived close to villages, where they regularly went to beg for their alms. Thus they were developing both a woodland culture and a village culture based on an admirable life style inspiring the villages. The forest monk also had no fear of animals, and as Schmithausen observes: “This is the attitude of the forest monk, the hermit who is no longer afraid of the wild animals because he on his part does not threaten them but offers them safety and friendship” (Schmithausen, 1991, 18). Recent studies by Michael Carrithers who conducted research on the life styles of recent forest monks in Sri Lanka is deeply touched by the monk’s calm courage when confronted with wild animals (Carrithers, 1983, 78). But the finest links between spirituality and nature is seen in the life of Thera Talaputta, where he sees no difference between himself and nature in that both are dependent, subject to change and impermanence, and that they emerge as they are constituted in interconnected, interdependent, relational patterns:

This is Thera Talaputa’s wish, living in the jungle as he did, to see no difference between the composition of his own being and the material things of the world like grass, dry wood and creepers. One gets naturally merged in the world in the world in which one exists. There could be no over-inflation of the ego, which expands and spreads forcibly over every other thing around.

(*Theragatha*, 1001, Translation and Commentary by Dhammavihari Thero, 1990, 8).

Thus in this context, the monks sees nature as embodying deeper insights in its mimicry of the factors of change and decay. Looking at the Tsunami experience today, one may say as Rollston the environment philosopher observes: “Nature is both random, contingent, blind, disastrous, wasteful, clumsy, ugly...but Nature is also orderly, prolific, efficient, fit, exuberant, diverse, renewing in the midst of death” (Rolston, 1992).

Nature as the cradle of the Buddhist culture has also a resonance in the aesthetic experience of monks and nuns as described in the *Poems of the Elders* (Thera and Theri Gatha), there are references to the enjoyment of scenic beauty by those who have achieved spiritual heights:

The upland glades delightful to the soul,  
Where the Kaveri spreads its wildering wreaths  
Where sound the trumpet calls of elephants  
Those rocky heights with hue of dark blue clouds  
Where lies embossed many a shining lake  
Of crystal-cool waters, and whose slopes  
The herds of Indra cover and bedeck  
These are the hills where my soul delights.  
(Th. Tr. XVII, 261, 4).

In general, the Buddhist human-nature orientation brings out the *interconnectedness of all life*, the *interdependence of all beings* and a network of relationships which may be referred to as biotic communities. In the ideal Buddhist communities, humans-society-nature formed an integral matrix.

### **Conservation and Development:**

Conservation of species and habitat is not a subject that is directly discussed in Buddhist scriptures, though the material in the Buddhist scriptures, especially those pertaining to Buddhist life styles and the development of a non-violent and compassionate life orientation are relevant to our concern with conservation and development. One might say as Peter Harvey observes, “the practical implications of the Buddhist perspective need to be articulated by leaders of Buddhist lands currently under the sway of the Western model of development”. From a future oriented perspective about economic development and conservation, the observations of an American scholarly Buddhist monk, now living in USA, but who spent a considerable part of his life in Sri Lanka are very relevant: “a number of assumptions specific to Western industrial society: that happiness and well-being lie in the satisfaction of our material needs and sensual desires; that the basic orientation of man to nature is one of conflict and struggle aimed at subjugation; that nature must be conquered and made subservient to the satisfaction of our desires (Sandel, 1987, vi).

Thus an important question emerges whether Buddhist societies have in recent times offered any model of conservation and development. Helena Norberg-Hodge (1991) who studied the traditional Buddhist life of people in Ladakh in Nepal, consider Ladakh before the impact of modernization as an example of a living Buddhist culture permeated with the ethic of sustainability. An example that illuminates their ethic is the meaning of the term ‘frugality’ in their culture, where it means the very opposite of miserliness: it means ‘fruitfulness’, getting more out of

little. This concept rings a familiar note with Buddha's advice to the monks regarding the use of robes: when the monks receive new robes the old one are not to be discarded, but be used as coverlets; when the coverlets are old, they are to be converted into mattress covers; the old mattress covers are again to be converted to rugs and old rugs into dusters (Vin II, 291).

The householder is expected to collect wealth for his needs in the way that a bee collects honey without injuring the flower (DIII, 189). Thriftiness, generosity, caring, sharing, industriousness and earning by the "sweat of one's brow", they all form a rich tapestry of a simple and contented life (de Silva, 1998, 156). The Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka modeled on Gandhian and Buddhist ideas aims to awaken the lives of villagers to the ideal of appropriate development and the economics of self-sufficiency free from any pollution of materialistic values (Macy, 1991). The Thai-Tibetan, "Buddhist Perception of the Nature" project is also an example of a Buddhist conservation project. As an example of the modern Tibetan Buddhist perspectives of conservation, the Dalai Lama has expressed his aspirations for the future: He hopes that in the future the Tibetan plateau would become a zone of non violence which would be transformed into the world's largest natural park. He also says strict laws should be enforced to protect wild life and plant life and that exploitation of natural resources need to be well regulated without any damage to the different systems and above all he advocates sustainable development for populated areas (Piburn, 1990, 24). In 1990, the UN Environmental Program's 500 Roll of Honor included Ajahn Ponsak of Thailand (Harvey, 2000, 182). The Vietnamese monk Thich Nhat Hanh has also been a well known advocate of Buddhist environmentalism and all these efforts are directed towards the future. He says that we should deal with nature in the way that we deal with ourselves.

We should deal with nature in the way we should deal with ourselves! We should not harm ourselves; we should not harm nature. Harming nature is harming ourselves, and vice versa. If we knew how to deal with our self and fellow human beings, we would know how to deal with nature. Therefore by not caring for any one of these, we harm them all (Hanh, 1988, in Epstein, 1988, 40-46).

Thus we see that the spirit of environmentalism found in the discourse is being well developed, not merely by the monks and laymen in the early Buddhist tradition (Theravada) but also by monks in the Mahayana tradition, like Thich Nhat Hanh and by the Dalai Lama in the Tibetan or the Vajrayana tradition. This common sharing of a heritage makes the Buddhist contribution to environmentalism a global perspective. They emphasize the interdependence and the interconnectedness of all forms of life.

### **Economic Development and the Satisfaction of Basic Human Needs:**

Looking at recent work on the issues of economic development, and the satisfaction of basic human needs, inspired by the Buddhist philosophy, Fritz Schumacher's celebrated work, *Small is Beautiful: A Study of Economics As If People Mattered* (Schumacher, 1974) stands as a preeminent contribution. Schumacher saw that across the world there was a great disparity between the rich and the poor, and he was critical of development concepts that concealed this disparity in the name of economic growth. He was critical of this 'growth fetish' which was also doing immense damage to the environment. Looking for an alternative, he was greatly attracted by Buddhism and Gandhian thought. He raised issues concerning size and scale, questioned the attraction of gigantic and colossal economic and industrial ventures without any ethical restraints. He emphasized the importance of full employment, as work is a vital expression of the quest for meaning: "to give a man a chance to utilize and develop his faculties; to enable him to overcome his egocentredness by joining hands with other people in a common task, and bring forth the goods and services necessary for a becoming existence". He says if we are not driven by gigantism and excessive greed towards the rape of nature, industry and agriculture would be converted into a meaningful habitat.

Buddhism has very rich resources for a healthy work ethic. The Buddha's advice to householders emphasized the importance of an ethical outlook with their modes of livelihood (*sammajiva*). He refers to four types of bliss enjoyed by the householder: the bliss of having wealth; the bliss of the enjoyment of wealth; the bliss of debtlessness; the bliss of blamelessness. The bliss of wealth is that it is acquired by energetic striving, gathered by the strength of the arm, earned by the seat of the brow, it is lawful and acquired righteously (A,II,67). The Buddha's advice on economic activity for the householders had three facets: the production of wealth acquired by skills, hard work and enthusiasm (*utthana sampada*); protection of wealth from wealth, fire and water, refraining from wasting wealth which comes from loose association with women, from drinking, gambling and intimacy with evil doers—all these come under *arakkha sampada*. Thirdly is living within one's means (*samajivikata*) (A, iv 322). Like the ideal of living within one's means the Buddha advocated self-reliance. The ideal of a life based on basic needs is more clearly laid for the monks.

There is good testimony to the value of Buddhist resources in a recent practical project on "Mindfulness and Meaningful Work, Explorations in Right Livelihood" (Whytmyer, 1994), by the members of the Briarpatch Society composed of pioneers researching a new concept in work and business. Right livelihood includes persistence, ability to face facts, effort to minimize risk, the pursuit of

learning, creativity, the skill to generate new energy, being rooted in a community, emotional stability and mindfulness.

### **Basic Needs:**

Gandhi remarked that the world has enough to satisfy human needs but not human greed. Buddhist and green economics uphold the elimination of poverty and the maintenance of an economy of a healthy ecological size. Thus the development of a critical theory of needs is the foundation of green economics (Ekins et al., 1992,33). While they accept the realities of scarcity and competition for resources, they state that economics cannot be value free. Payutto Thero (2002) in Thailand has shown with considerable clarity that there is a Buddhist theory of critical needs. The engine of economic activity according to him is desire and there are two types of desire: *chanda* and *tanha*. *Tanha* (greed) is based on pandering to self-interest, fed by ignorance. The Buddha described this craving as the fuel that nourishes human addictions, temporarily satisfied, and emerging again and again for novel forms of satisfaction. All six senses are excited in the wake of these satisfactions and this is what is exploited by a whole range of clever advertising and the creation of an unending cycle of goods and services—just to satisfy this never ending variety of human greed. *Chanda* represents basic needs that are necessary for survival and are based on intelligence and wisdom, and not a mad rush for current fads and fetishes.

Thus there are two kinds of values and values based on greed do not offer a basis for green and Buddhist economics. Values based on appropriate desires, caring for others and wisdom are the roots of good values. Intelligent consumption, moderation and contentment are the basic features of upholding a theory of critical needs. We need to be inspired by a sound moral code, and Buddhism uses *sila* (moral code) and mindfulness to help us make compassionate responses to consumerism. This message has been supported by a group of thirty five scholars and activists in a work entitled, *Mindfulness in the Market Place: Compassionate Responses to Consumerism* (Bardiner, 2002). The work presents a timely message for the future.

In the final analysis, the monks provide the ideal norm of a sustainable life style. For the householder, the Buddha recommends an even life, a *via media* between miserliness and extravagance. It is said that the layperson should “hold a scale” and balance between his expenses and earnings: “If Tigerfoot, this clansman has but small earnings and lives on a grand scale, it will be rumored of him: This clansman eats his wealth like a fig-tree glutton. And if his earnings be great and he lives meanly, rumor will say of him: This clansman will die like a starveling”. The even life is like a well- balanced scale.

### **Equity and Social Justice:**

The Buddha was one of the earliest thinkers and reformers in history who upheld the equality of humans: human nature is essentially the same whatever individual difference emerges due to heredity, environment and karmic factors. The Buddha requested the kings to govern according to the *Dasa Raja Dharmaya*. This concept of righteousness expected that the king and his officials act out of selflessness, rectitude, mercy and political wisdom. Also there is mention of duties towards birds and beasts. They were also expected to recognize the four bases of service: charitable-mindedness, affability, work for the welfare of society and a sense of equal respect for all (Jayatilleke, 1967, 86). In later times, King Asoka in his 5<sup>th</sup> Pillar Edict states that he placed various species under protection, and it is also said that he prohibited the burning of forests. Though the conservation of species and habitat were not primary concerns of the early Buddhist culture, these references are of great interest. It has also been observed that the Buddhist capitals of Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa acted as wildlife sanctuaries (Kabilsingh (1987). There is also a principle that protection of the weak is a royal duty (Ediriweera, 1990, 60). It is also a royal duty to ensure that the essentials of subsistence should be protected and this means the protection of the countryside and its vegetation, for without it agriculture and dairy farming would not be possible. A well-known saying that we appreciate today is that of Parakramabahu, one of the ancient kings of Sri Lanka: he issued edicts that “no drop of water flow into the sea without first serving the needs of humans”. Thus the ancient irrigation schemes that amaze the modern engineers today, assured a regular water supply for agriculture. In ancient Sri Lanka, there were also royal edicts prohibiting the felling of virgin forests. All of this indicates that governance in ancient Sri Lanka trod the lines of sustainable development.

The *Dagaba & Weva* (tank and temple) was the hub around which Buddhist culture developed in ancient Sri Lanka, and the kind of education that emerged from the temple respected the interconnections between the human and natural environment, and the linkages between life and work.

It is against this background that one has to look at the revitalization movements directed towards sustainable development, equity and social justice: Activist organizations emerging in Thailand under the leadership of activists like Sulak Sivaraksa, the Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka, the Chipko movement and Gandhian admirers in India and the work of Joana Macy in USA. The multiplicity, variety and energy of these revitalization movements offer hope that it may not be too late to develop a non-violent ecology.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu called his forest monastery in south Thailand “the Garden of Liberation”, observing: “The deep sense of calm that nature provides through separation from the stress that plagues us in the day to day world protects our

heart and mind. The lesson nature teaches us lead to a new birth beyond suffering caused by our acquisitive self preoccupation”. Buddhist centers like this Garden of Liberation presents us with a graphic example of a sustainable life style grounded in the values of moderation, simplicity, and non-acquisitiveness.

### **Environment and Culture:**

An important ingredient of the ideology of modern environmentalism is that environmental planning and conservation should pay heed to the cultural context, and as such there has been a great interest in a revival of interest in traditional environmental knowledge. The IUCN Stockholm conference of 1972 recommended that all governments should “take into account, the very large reservoir of environmental knowledge, philosophy and experience within local cultures”, and they upheld the idea that this knowledge may provide a significant basis for future environment management planning and policies. A project on the collection of Buddhist culture stories in Asia and the Grukul culture in India, and other Asian cultures embodying traditional environmental knowledge has presented a model of collecting traditional environmental knowledge (de Silva, 2002, 161-74).

An example of such culture stories would be the way the life, rituals, art and music of the Ladakhi culture portray the notions of self-reliance and frugality. Also the Ladakhi sense of reality is based on a web of interconnections running through the human-nature-society matrix. They tend to be open to the uniqueness of situations, their sense of self is extensive and inclusive and they do not retreat behind walls of self-protection (Norveg-Hodge 1992, 51). In Buddhist discourses, art and culture stories the themes of thriftiness, generosity, sharing, earning by the sweat of one’s brow are depicted, and they form a rich tapestry of a sustainable life style rooted in a culture. Ladakh has undergone change and a complete return to the past is neither possible nor desirable. But they show that there are “alternative paths to development”.

The call for environmental justice makes the crucial point that there may be emerging contradictions in the notion of a sustainable ethic, especially if there are conflicts between the affluent countries and the developing countries. The plea for ecological and cultural pluralism has taken a strong turn today and such issues are connected to the need for environmental justice. But the sustainability ethic need to be respected with sincerity and authenticity, without becoming a cover for exploiting nature and the destruction of traditional support systems. It is at this point that we need to build a cross-cultural environmental ethics for the future. Buddhist environmental ethics has to be located in the larger inter-faith dialogue and dialogue across cultures. The Dialogue of Cultures for Sustainable development held in

Taplow Court, Buckinghamshire has presented important recommendations for cross-cultural environmental ethics (1992, A Report on Pre-UNCED Sustainable Development, Commonwealth Human Ecology Council, London).

### **Part III Environmental Ethics & Buddhist Education**

#### **Western, Environmental Ethics:**

In the context of religious contributions to future environmental programs, a valuable area to concentrate would be ethics of environmental issues. In spite of certain metaphysical differences between the major religions, the ethical codes have great deal of similarity and also mirror the basic legal constraints for a sound society. Ethical concerns for future generations, for people in other parts of the world and for the non-human world form a part of a viable environmental ethics, which need to be integrated into environmental education. Ethics in this context looks at the normative guidelines for human interventions in the physical world, revision of economic life in the interest of global survival and sustainable development, the long-term survival of ecosystems, and equally important that the frenzy of accumulation is not converted into a global culture.

What can ethics do? Buddhism upholds that a good ethics has motivational power, and that people can be inspired through a moral ideal to care for the world around them. Secondly, ethics is able to generate an “ecological conscience” and thus provide a language to express the moral intuitions of people. Training in ethics also helps people to clarify the ethical aspects of issues and also intervene and adjudicate. We also need to respect cultural diversity and how values are embodied in different traditions. Caring for the future generations is itself a whole dimension of values. The *Taplow Court Declaration*, was preceded by such a dialogue across cultural traditions, with a focus on ethics, and the project was organized by a Buddhist environmental group in Japan the Soka Gakkai International and its president Daisaku Ikeda.

#### **Crossing Frontiers From Ethics to Environmental Ethics:**

With the new upsurge of environmental ethics, the concept of a “moral community” or what group has moral worth widened to include nature, animals, trees and ecosystems. There emerged a number of ethical theories in the west with a focus on some aspect of the nature-human spectrum. Due to the unprecedented challenges to the survival of humans and the planet, there emerged a continuing discussion and debate on environmental issues in the west. On the one hand, there were specific issues, more concerned with the increase of population, deforestation, use of

biocides, preservation of the wilderness and extinction of rare animal species, and specific local issues like the debate on the viability of mining in the Kakadu park in Australia. Today, these issues have moved into new controversial concerns like the adjustment of industrialization policies and pollution to health issues. On the other hand, there was another type of issues that were more directly ethical concerns—our moral perspectives on animals, plants, ecosystems and nature. One of the central concerns of this type of concern is whether humans need to be critical of their self-importance when dealing with the natural environment. There were some moral philosophers who took a radical standpoint on this issue and argued for an ecocentric position to replace an anthropocentric outlook. What this means is that they objected to those who used the environment merely as a means to human ends. There were those who considered the beauty of nature and the value of animals as having “intrinsic value”. In the weak sense it is unavoidable to make the environment a matter of human concern but to use the environment merely for utility is a different position. And this distinction may help us to clear some of the ambiguities built into this debate.

Out of the number of challenges offered to anthropocentric ethics, *ethical sentientism* as presented by Peter Singer upholds that *sentience* or awareness is a sufficient criterion for anything to be considered as a subject of moral relevance. It is sentience that creates the capacity to suffer and enjoy. Peter Singer in his celebrated work, *Animal Liberation*, makes a strong protest against the exclusion of animals when considering human responsibility towards the environment (Singer, 1995). Singer calls this attitude “speciesism” and draws parallel to racism and sexism. He says that it is wrong to deny equal moral standing to animals. He upholds that “sentience” is the only defensible boundary concern for the interests of others. But he has a problem, as he admits that it is difficult to say, when a being is not capable of suffering, but that a line has to be drawn between the shrimp (an arthropod) and an oyster (a mollusk). Singer has recently worked on a concept of moral community, where chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans belong to a community of equals (Singer and Cavalieri, 1994).

A second perspective described as life-based ethics or *vitalism* was a theory presented by Paul Taylor. Taylor (1986) extends the issue of moral considerations to trees and vital organisms. His position is different from that of Peter Singer, as according to him, to have moral interests, it is not necessary that the organism be aware of it. Plants and animals that are by nature non-sentient, such as sponges, corals, jellyfish, worms and mollusks, are referred to by Taylor as “teleological canthers of life”, with a good of their own. Thus it is clear that according to Taylor rationality or the capacity to experience pleasure and pain may not be a sufficient condition to “be alive”. Thus respect for nature is similar to respect for persons.

A third view takes the whole ecosystem in a holistic manner as the focus of moral concern. Baird Callicott the well-known environmental philosopher is associated with this third perspective on environmental ethics, though developed his views basing them on the work of Aldo Leopold, whose work did not emerge from any logical and rational analysis but from an intuitive grasp of the world around which he lives, and his work, *Sand Country Almanac* contains his basic framework for an environmental ethics. He observes, “Just as important, however, as the origin of plants, animals and soils is the question of how they operate as a community. The task has fallen to the new science of ecology, which is daily uncovering a web of interdependencies so intricate as to amaze—were he here—even Darwin himself” (Leopold, 1949).

In what way is this perspective different from the earlier views? Callicott observes that his holistic paradigm is different from both the Benthamite model basing moral value on sentiency, and a wide variety of animals would be admitted to the moral community, and if it is pushed further low, as In Albert Schweitzer’s reverence for all life, then all minimally cognitive entities like animals and plants would be included. But he feels both paradigms are “psychocentric” but his theory is a holistic one not based on individuals. Another position important in broad ecological concerns is deep ecology of Arne Naes, which offer interesting parallels to the work of Gandhi and Buddhism.

In the teachings found in the Buddha’s sermons to both monks and householders, there is a basic concern with the evils related to the destruction of life (*panati pata*). This is also the first precepts in the Buddhist scheme of five precepts, and the other precepts embody the values of respecting others’ property and refraining from stealing, which may be extended to damaging other’s property without their knowledge, public property and even exploiting the natural environment in an irresponsible manner; the third precept refers to refraining from adultery in a narrow sense, but may be extended to the lure of the extreme materialistic life styles, lives immersed in mere sensuality and consumption patterns; the fourth precept which emphasizes the refraining from uttering falsehood is the most important, as it may be extended to honesty, truthfulness and authenticity in the true practice of environmentalism; the last precept which is to refrain from the consumption of alcohol and drugs has more relevance to day than during the time of the Buddha. There are many variations of the underlying value of “heedfulness” emphasized in this precept, the best example being the toughness of traffic laws in the context of driving. The drug culture does not respect this value, and a green life style (which is not specifically Buddhist) need to integrate the dangers of alcoholism and drugs into their ideology. We need to be aware of the way in which Buddhist ethical values (Common to other religious faiths) could be integrated into broad environment friendly life style.

In a minimalistic sense, the first precept refers to the destruction of life (both human and animal life). But in a deeper sense, the Buddha is referring to a whole non-violent orientation towards oneself, others and the world, of love (*metta*) and compassion (*karuna*). This perspective has implicit reference to nature, plants, trees and the ecosystem. As there is a kind of linkage that may be described as the human-social-nature matrix, what people display as a human-nature orientation is important. These interconnections are becoming increasingly important today. Schumacher in his writings on Buddhist economics refers to the gentle human-nature orientation found in Buddhism: “ If human vices like greed and envy are systematically cultivated, there is nothing less than a collapse of intelligence. A man driven by greed or envy loses the power of seeing things as they really are” (Schumacher, 1974, 27). As mentioned earlier the Buddha extended his compassion to the minutest breathing creature (Sn,V, 143-52). And the monks are expected to be mindful of even unintentional harm to living creatures. An important point, which hardly comes up in western environmental ethics but found in Buddhist ethics are the “*kammic* consequences” people reap of good and bad actions, which have an impact on future lives. *The kammic* significance is limited to humans and animals only, as plants and trees do not come within the *kammic* cycle. But as mentioned earlier, a non-violent orientation towards the environment may acquire *kammic* significance in the light of the environmental concerns during the last few decades and the future. Rights of future generations also acquire a new significance for Buddhist ethics.

In terms of this analysis of western environmental ethics traditions, the analysis in the Buddhist discourses converges to some extent with that of Peter Singer, as presented in his writings on animal liberation, but does not draw a line for sentient creatures at the point of an oyster or a shrimp. The closeness of work on animal liberation by Singer to the Buddhist view is striking: “The plea for the human treatment of animals, the critique of factory farming, and animal laboratories that this work contains would strike a kindred chord with a Buddhist who is struck by the Buddha's analysis of animal sacrifices, though presented in a different era, beyond the gulf of 25 centuries” (de Silva, 1998, 118 ). The Buddhist analysis of living creatures extends to the minutest creature. The Buddha also does not develop any metaphysics like Taylor's *vitalism* to link plants and animals. The Buddha does not try to develop metaphysical theories and the Buddhist ethics is very contextual and pragmatic. While the Buddha sees a whole network of connections and interconnections in the universe, he does not develop any concept of holism about the universe in the spirit of Callicott. In the discussion of the destruction of life in the suttas, Horner has observed five important issues: blood sacrifices, warfare, agriculture, meat eating and suicide (Horner, 1967).

### **Buddhism and Deep Ecology:**

In addition to the *sentientism* of Peter Singer, *vitalism* of Paul Taylor and the *holistic ecosystem ethics* of Baird Callicott, there is a whole movement inspired by the Norwegian thinker Arne Naess, who introduced environmentalism as a philosophy of life linked with self-realization and as an activist movement. He also had an eight-point manifesto:

1. The flourishing of human and non-human life on earth has intrinsic value. The value of non-human life forms is independent of the usefulness these may have for narrow human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms are values in themselves and contribute to the flourishing of human and non-human life forms on earth.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
4. Present human interferences with the environment are excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
5. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease.
6. Significant change of life conditions for the better requires changes in policies. These affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures.
7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality rather than adhering to a high standard of living.
8. Those who subscribe to these points have an obligation, directly or indirectly to implement necessary changes.

The program is very inspiring and also practical from a Buddhist perspective, and in working out his philosophy, Naess has been influenced by both Gandhi and Buddhism. His metaphysics is more an attempt to blend Buddhism with the Vedantic concept of a larger-self. However, scholars like Deane Curtin (Curtin, 1996) say that it has a great deal of Buddhist elements, and thus it is a good bridge between western and Asian environmental philosophy. He has also derived the activist orientation from Gandhi. Bill Devall's book (Devall, 1990), *Simple in Means and Rich in Ends* gives a kind of economic perspective for Deep Ecology.

**Environmental Education:**

Environmental education is the most useful strategy to implement a healthy and practical environmental ethics. Traditionally, state regulation and legislation have been used to protect the environment, but in the contemporary world, the threats to the environment have been so pervasive, that there is a need for education and public participation. Empowerment of the people through education has today emerged as a valuable contribution, not merely directed to the current crisis but also having implications for the future of the planet and humans. Apart from the emergence of diverse non-governmental organizations with environmental interests and programs, the introduction of both formal and non-formal education has been promoted by global, national and local organizations. The UNESCO-UNEP education program launched in 1975 was an early beginning, and since then universities across the world have introduced integrated courses on environmental issues across most of the faculties, arts, science and even medicine.

One very interesting development relevant to the present article is the introduction of environmental ethics into courses on the world religions, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam in many universities across the world. The Harvard University has a special program on environmental issues and the major religions. One of the very early attempts to develop a Buddhist environmental ethics program for South East Asia was pioneered by the Information and Resource Centre in Singapore during 1992-1994. This education program has been financed by UNESCO, Canada-ASEAN fund and the Hanns-Seidel Foundation (de Silva, 1998, ix-x). This project also expanded to include cultures across South East Asia for developing and disseminating a durable environmental ethic and to generate a dialogue across cultures and religious traditions, respecting their diversity and distinctiveness. These developments present direct linkages to the current attempt to research through the major religions for insights on the environment and future studies—a central concern of the present article. While it is possible to develop a secular modern environmental ethic based on human welfare and human rights, religious traditions offer very viable bases for converting environmentalism into a way of life. Also religions have their cultural roots in stories, myths, poetry, art forms and folk drama. There is a large reservoir of environmental knowledge, philosophy and experience in local cultures often intertwined with religious perspectives. There is an interesting rationale for cross-cultural and inter-religious environmental ethics (Johnson, 1992; Gunn, 1993, de Silva, 2002). The plea for ecological, cultural and religious pluralism is a very important concern for widening environmental education in the context of future studies. Effective environmental discourse would use a multi-faceted pedagogy.

In looking at effective pedagogy for environmental education, a number of important skills are attributed to the Buddha: the ability to keep a balance and harmony of content and form in his discourses; his teaching were grounded in his great compassion; he possessed superior intellectual powers; he had the ability to be sensitive to context and vary his teachings to the needs and psychology of the listener; he demonstrated powers superior to all his prominent pupils (Mahinda, 1995, 33). Following the importance of these skills, the ability to contextualize the relevant messages in the Buddhist discourses for modern environmental issues is a very important need to develop a Buddhist environmental ethics and education. The Buddha was also very pragmatic, focused on the issue before him and very concrete in dealing with situations. He also had the analytic ability to sort out meaningful questions and those that took us on the path of a vicious circle. The gradual instruction method (*anupubbikatha*) and the basic focus on practice and implementation were often used to leave out theoreticians and those immersed in speculation and metaphysics. On certain occasions, he used the Socratic method to expose the inner contradictions in the mind of a person who came to debate with him, and thus expose the confusion in the mind of the person fond of debates. A multi-faceted pedagogy is needed for teaching environmental ethics.

### **Training of Professionals In Environmental Ethics & Bioethics:**

Another facet of education is the training of professions by their participation in workshops and short- term courses. In fact some attempts have been made to impart holistic education units with integrated courses of environmental and bioethics, environment and health issues. Bioethics which is very much related to the environment has been a relatively recent discipline, and there have been inter-religious contributions, including a very comprehensive Buddhist text on the subject (Keown, 1995). Bioethics deal with questions about living things and life in general. Apart from genetic engineering, the basic issues in this discipline are matters of human life and death, and they need to interest people engaged in future studies: contraception, prenatal surgery, sex selection, assisted reproduction practice, abortion research, research on the manipulation of the human genome, the treatment of severely defective newborns, organ transplantation, the resuscitation of hopelessly ill patients and euthanasia. Damien Keown in U.K and a few others like Pinit Ratanakul of Thailand have been working on Buddhism and bioethics, but the field is an expanding area with great complexities (Ratanakul, 1994). THE UNESCO directed “Bioethics and Environmental Education” symposium held in Malaysia was a useful regional workshop with specific recommendations (Rajaretnam, 1994).

## **Some Concluding Thoughts - The Two-Forks of Economic Growth & Technology:**

### **Economic Growth:**

The goal of environmental ethics and education is to develop a reasoned perspective on how we ought to treat the non-human world. An environmental philosophy has a more broad concern, and attempts to develop a holistic perspective integrating very close disciplines in arts and science and sub-fields like bioethics. In this article we have tried to contextualize these concerns within the framework of future studies. Non-western voices have begun to be heard during recent times in relation to these concerns. Scholars have also tried to “mend the broken circle of economics, ecology, culture and ethics”. Studies merely emerging from highly specialized fields need to be integrated into a more holistic framework, and this applies to projects specially oriented towards future studies. A balanced curriculum with a holistic perspective is needed to save us both from the fragmented earth and the fragmented lives. Buddhism has an articulate holistic perspective on matters that concern the people during the early decades of the twenty-first century and beyond. Buddhism adds some thing that goes beyond reason and logic, while accepting their contextual usefulness.. To make environmentalism a way of life means that it is necessary to develop an “ecological sensibility”. Settling environmental ethics at the mere level of “thought” is a useful classroom exercise, but to work towards sustainability, we need a discourse that would evoke sentiment, a multi-dimensional pedagogy, where the practice of mindfulness and the meditative life is greatly valued and a life style simple in means and rich in ends.

While education, culture and religious values are significant pathways for effective environmental discourse, we also need to dismantle the kind of economic and political discourse that pervades the wrong type of social paradigm some humans have embraced. Moral dilemmas emerge as part and parcel of our contemporary lives, but it is due to the lack of flexibility and imagination that we convert ordinary moral conflicts into heroic dilemmas. As Mark Gold says, “Contrary to popular belief, we are not faced with some terrible option to save either our dog or child, or calves rather than the starving children of Africa. More often than not concern for one is completely compatible with sympathy for the other” (Gold, 1995, 4). The Buddha upheld the notion that by cultivating compassion for humans, we also become empowered to develop compassion towards animals; we come back to humans with a great sense of empowerment. By developing compassion towards the animals, we are empowered to develop a gentle human nature orientation. We need a conjunctive environmental logic than a disjunctive logic.

In the final analysis, to discover the pathways towards a sustainable society, we need to find a way out of the destructive obsession with economic growth or the

growth fetish. Economic progress in the form we know today is doomed to threaten the ecosystem. Today, in spite of this rush for economic growth poverty is rampant in the world. The new economics like the green economics inspired by Buddhism need to enable people to develop their own sustainable ways of living, in the context of their own culture. It is necessary to bring back ethical and spiritual values into economic life. In the work, *Wealth Beyond Means*, Paul Ekins has outlined the philosophy, ethics and the economics for a sustainable future. “Humanity is now living through a period of enormous change, turmoil, and challenge in which one of the safe predictions is that the future will not be either like the past or the present. The accelerating changes are simultaneously, environmental, demographic, technological, economic, social and cultural” (Ekins, 1992,8). Ekins feel that to understand the full impact of these changes and find a way out, one has to go beyond the conventional western scientific approach.

### **Technology:**

Technology is a useful tool, and it is the right wing of modern science, as it goes beyond theoretical science and deals with our practical needs. We need a critical integration of technology and if not we become the slave of a technology we cannot control. It has been observed that if we need to make environmentalism a way of life we need three perspectives: “First, the critical stance towards technology; secondly, the critique of economic growth; and thirdly, the attempt to convert ecologism to a deeper quest, a way of life, with a semi-spiritual tone about it” (de Silva, 1998, 19). We have already examined the dangers of falling prey to the fetish of economic growth, and in this concluding section need to make some observations on technology. Suwanna Satha-Anand a Buddhist philosopher from Thailand makes some interesting observations on, “Buddhist Reflections on Technology, Reason and Human Values” ( Satha-Anand, 2006, 59): “The necessary conditions for a critique of the technological regime, especially in its grip on reason and human values indicate the need for an independent system of values”, and Buddhism helps us to develop a system of values and develop a critical perspective on technology and the environment, and our future. Schumacher called for a “Technology with a Human Face”. Philosophers like Heidegger are critical of the ethos of high technology:

The approaching tide of technological revolution in the atomic age could so captivate, bewitch, dazzle, and beguile man that calculative thinking may some day come to be accepted as the only way of thinking. What great danger then might move upon us? Then there might go hand in hand with the greatest ingenuity in calculating planning and inventing, indifference towards ‘meditative thinking’, total thoughtlessness. And then? Then man would have thrown away his own special

nature—that he is a meditative being. Thus the issue is the saving man’s essential being. Therefore the issue is keeping meditative thinking alive (Heidegger, 1996).

The theme that the culture of speed, accuracy, rigor and certainty be supplemented by meditative thinking and contemplative educations, as suggested by Heidegger, has taken a great momentum in USA during recent times, due to the pioneering work of John Kabat-Zinn (See, *Explorers of Inner Space*, de Silva, 2007, pp193-201).

Stephen Toulmin, the philosopher is also critical of the development of science divorced from ethical concerns. He says “it is no longer possible to draw so clear or sharp a line between the intellectual demands of good science and the ethical demands of good life. The increasingly close links between basic science and its practical applications expose working scientists more and more to ethical problems (Toulmin, 1981, 403). We cannot either insulate ethics from science or make science independent of ethics. Many of the concepts of biology and social science reflect value judgments; the line of demarcation between science and technology is not very sharp; the process of research like animal experimentation raises ethical issues. Today the medical sciences are confronted with many ethical issues. While, we respect the scientific ideals of disinterestedness, rationality, tolerance, freedom of thought and the freedom of dissent, nevertheless values found within science are not sufficient as such for a just and humane world order.

Issues we discussed in relation ethics and the environment also have an equal relevance to the interface between values and technology. Both the integration of contemplative education, drawing resources from the contemplative traditions in all the major religions, and a new dimension of education in values with a special focus on the environment and the future are specific recommendations emerging from this study. Of course, environmental education with a fine blend of environmental science and environmental ethics, as well as practical things that people can do for a sustainable future-- need to be a part of the future agenda. It is also suggested that religious education integrate the teachings of an ethic for a sustainable future.

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## The Relative Absolute or the Virtues of a Multi-Centered Universe:

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The Chinese Huayen articulation of *pratīyasamutpāda* or dependent co-arising and its conceptual underpinnings provide the theoretical framework for understanding, investigating, and addressing our global crisis. In addition to making intelligible the reality and experience that Siddhartha Gautama intuited with his Enlightenment, *pratīyasamutpāda* 1) maps (structures) the landscape of this reality, including its subjective makeup and more broadly the responsibilities of an individual in an interdependent world; 2) charts the karmic flows that drive and explain events; 3) outlines the patterns of thinking that guide our engagement with the world. This essay will demonstrate the practical implications of *pratīyasamutpāda* by 1) describing the ideological advantages of positing an evolving multi-center world vis-à-vis a single centered one; and 2) by illustrating its practical applications in multidisciplinary team approach in caring for the elderly.

This essay begins with 1) a review of the Huayen interpretation of *pratīyasamutpāda*, 2) proceeds to argue for the epistemological advantages of a multi-centered universe, and 3) illustrates its virtues by reviewing the team approach in caring for the elderly. It concludes with some brief remarks on the creative use of ambiguity, an intrinsic aspect of a multi-center reality.

### 1. Shifting-Centers: Multi-centered Universe

In contrast to rational traditions that posit a single perspective or center that subsumes all meaning and values,<sup>1</sup> the doctrine of *pratīyasamutpāda*, especially its

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<sup>1</sup> The single centered based reality can also be extended to the scientific method. By appealing to the Abhidharmakośāśāstra's classification of four conditions, Izumi Yoshiharu (1921--), faults the narrowness of observation employed by the scientific method to explain the appearance of an event. The Abhidharmakośāśāstra, which enumerates, in addition to the four conditions, six causes and five results, states in sum that the occurrence of an event is facilitated by dominant causes and contributory conditions. A dominant cause directly contributes to the fruition of a karmic event. In addition, the Abhidharmakośāśāstra cites the necessity of passively efficacious karmic causes and/or conditions that do not prevent or hinder the occurrence of a result. The violets in my garden have no direct relationship to the phases of the moon, but in so far as their blossoms do not prevent its rotation, they are considered causal conditions. Visuddhimagga, which lists twelve kinds of karma into three categories, details a similar understanding. Buddhists also question the validity of objective observation, which presumes an unchanging observer and phenomenon, since reality—things and beings—are in constant flux. Not only does an observer continually change, but different observers will observe the same phenomena differently. Further, Buddhists have determined through their meditative exercises that perception

Chinese Huayen articulation of *dharmadhatu-pratīyasamutpāda* 法界緣起說 (Ch *fajie yuanqishe*; Jpn *hōkkai engisetsu*) imagines a multi-centered and evolving reality that calls for the creative use of ambiguity and uncertainty. The Huayen 華嚴宗 patriarch Fazang 法藏 (643-712) probed the spatial, relational, and temporal interconnections between and among dharmas 法 (Ch *fa*; Jpn *hō*; beings, things, and events). His investigations are crystallized in the *shixuan yuanqi wuai famen* 十玄緣起無礙法門 (Jpn *jūgen engi mugei hōmon*) or the Ten Subtle and Unimpeded Dharma-gateways of *Pratīyasamutpāda* (hereafter Ten Dharma-gateways), an interlocking set of psycho-cosmic maps or “analytical gateways”<sup>2</sup> that makes intelligible the reality and experience of *pratīyasamutpāda* intuited through the *sāgaramudrā-samādhi* (Ch *hai-in sanmei*; Jpn *kai-in sanmai*), a rarified noetic and affective mindfulness that intuits reality immediately, without any intervening categories of understanding. In addition to describing the topography of a multi-centered and evolving world, the Ten Dharma-gateways is also a series of cognitive paradigms that frame and direct Huayen Buddhism thinking-about that reality; it determines the kinds of facts or information and relationships that Huayen deems to be relevant, just as different languages compel their speakers to pay attention to different things and different scientific disciplines require their researchers to seek “facts” that correspond to their respective assumptions of phenomena.<sup>3</sup>

This essay will focus on the tenth dharma-gateway, “the complete accommodation of principal and secondary [dharmas]” or simply “shifting centers, which highlights the spatial and relational structure of dharmic-entities and events. Fazang explains:

[In the event] a single dharma is designated to be the principal [dharma] all [of the remaining dharmas] are relegated to a secondary [status]. ...Consequently, [as the occasion requires] a single dharma can assume either the principal or

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determines the way objects and events seem to exist. Additionally, our moods and temperament, our physical and the environmental conditions influence how we see the world. Perception varies from moment to moment and differs from person to person.

The mutuality between the observer and observed preoccupied the early Buddhist and Yogācāra thinkers who explored in great detail the mutuality of mind and its object of perception. Werner Heisenberg arrived at the same conclusion. The Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle claims that on the subatomic level, we cannot know simultaneously with precision at the same time the velocity and position of an entity. The observer changes the very nature of the “reality” that is being measured.

<sup>2</sup> Dharma-paryāya; here used in the Abhidharmic sense: gateway of analysis.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to outlining and prescribing the thrust and boundaries of Huayen Buddhist thinking, the Ten Dharma-gates articulates the Huayen imaginings of being, and that being’s place in the world. The Ten Dharma-gates is also a moral compass that orients a devotee’s engagement with the world; and suggests those virtues that should be nurtured. Finally, the Ten Dharma-gates is a map constructed on earlier doctrinal developments and made comprehensible by metaphors, examples, and rational argument familiar to Chinese readers.

secondary role. [This dual role] is inexhaustibly repeated (Fazang 1924-34, 45:640bc.).

The above statement assumes an ever-changing *dharmadhātu* or dharma realm in which all dharmas (things, beings, and events) are concomitant, mutually supportive and mutually dependent. In such an organic universe of multiple centers when a dharma is arbitrarily singled out for special consideration that particular dharma becomes the principal dharma, and the remaining dharmas assume secondary roles. Yet at the next instant, when another dharma assumes the central role, the once principal dharma will be relegated to a supporting role. This is true for every other dharma. Every dharma therefore has the potential of alternately assuming the principal or secondary role.

As a cognitive paradigm “shifting centers” characterizes our collective impressions of the world and events; it affirms the validity of varying viewpoints and allows for openness to new discoveries. The most obvious value of varying viewpoints is evident in scientific investigations of physical phenomenon. Just to cite one example, the chemist and the physicist looking at an atom of helium through their respective training and practice are interested in and see different aspects of the same phenomena. To the chemist helium is a molecule because it behaves as a gas; to the physicist, on the other hand, it is not a molecule, because it does not display a molecular spectrum (Kuhn 1996:50-51). The atomic scientist, on the other hand, is interested in the energy that is produced when hydrogen atoms fuse to produce helium. Each specialist, by his or her training and professional methodology understands the same phenomenon from a specific perspective. The chemist’s view does not discount the physicist’s understanding; both contribute to our knowledge of this simple atom; likewise the chemist’s and physicist’s understand does not invalidate the nuclear physicist’s insight into the practical uses of the atom. A specific discipline illuminates one facet of reality, never its totality. It is likely that we will never have a complete understanding of a single phenomenon. While our knowledge may remain incomplete and ambiguous, ambiguity and uncertainty are sources for creativity. I shall say more later.

Shifting-centers also points to the continually changing relational and temporal relationships between and among dharmic-realities. It acknowledges the multiplicity of roles we experience for being-in the world. Within my family structure, I am at simultaneously husband, father, son, brother, cousin, nephew, uncle, grandson, great-grandson. In my dealings with those beyond my family, I am a friend, colleague, a priest, a teacher, an author, a student, a patient, a consumer, a passenger on the train, a pedestrian crossing the street. I am defined in large part by my relationship with others. I can only be a father, because I have a daughter. I am a teacher because there are those who are willing to learn from me. My identity

interweaves into these roles. Roles evolve as the circumstances change. As a father my relationship with my daughter has evolved as she has grown from an infant to a young woman.

## 2. The Relative Absolute or the Virtues of a Multi-centered Universe

“Listen, my darling, if you’re going to be religious, you must be a Hindu, a Christian or a Muslim. ...”

“I don’t see why I can’t be all three. Mamaji has two passports. He’s Indian and French. Why can’t I be a Hindu, a Christian and a Muslim?”

Yann Martel, *Life of Pi*, 93

In this playful banter with his mother, Pi innocently confuses national with religious identity. India and France, secular institutions and not at war with each other, are amenable to accepting divided patriotic loyalties; but should he chose to be religious, Pi will have to settle on one faith over the other two. Pi’s mother’s comments point to a defining characteristic of monotheistic faith traditions, whose ideological posture—a single absolute center that defines all values and truths—demands undivided allegiance. Such absolute claims however raise questions concerning 1) ideological anomalies—heretical ideas and spiritual hybridity;<sup>4</sup> 2) the validity of competing faiths, especially other traditions with equally absolute claims; and 3) spiritual diffusion and syncretism. These questions are not simply abstractions; in a religiously and spiritually plural world, the second question is especially critical. To the extent that religious intolerance often abets violence, the need for dialogue, building relationships, and learning what animates devotees of other faiths is urgent. This task is especially pressing in this era of globalization and its accompanying problems.

Thinking-about the world and being-in a posited by monotheistic faith traditions and other single centered ideologies stand in contrast with the openness required of thinking and being in a continually shifting and multi-centered reality of *pratīyasamutpāda*. Such expressions as Origin, Truth, Ideal Form, Immovable Mover, God, Creator, or First Cause put forward a single “truth” with clear boundaries as to what is real and true; what should or should not be believed, articulated, and done; and what consequences follow “right” or “wrong” actions.<sup>5</sup> Such one-pointed clarity can be likened to mathematical perspective.

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<sup>4</sup> “Hybridity” is a controversial expression in post-colonial discourse. In brief, it refers to the emergence of new transcultural forms that are generated through contact between colonizer and the colonized.

<sup>5</sup> On a less universal scale, nationalism requires a degree of homogeneity. To cite an extreme case, leaders of the post-French Revolution insisted that the citizenry read the same books and identify with

Perspective is one of the first lessons in art; it trains the student to observe and represent objects relative to one another from a single vantage point. The method was developed by Filippo Brunelleschi (1337-1446), Leon Baptista Alberti (1404-1472), Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) and other artists of the Italian Renaissance who rendered three dimensional objects on two-dimensional surfaces. In an attempt to accurately depict what he saw, not what he knew to be true, from a fixed location, Alberti devised a veil that framed and mediated the scene that he painted. To further ensure the accuracy of the fixity of his vision he installed an eye-piece a short distance from the “window” through which he spied the landscape beyond. He also set up evenly spaced vertical and horizontal grids lines to accurately see the relationship among the objects within the frame. And by lightly replicating the grid lines on the canvas, he transferred what he saw from the eye piece and through the window grids, square by square, thereby preserving the visual relationship of the objects in view. A landscape rendered with such mathematical precision preserved for the observer what the painter saw. This form of representation has dominated the visual arts in the West to such a degree that all other methods of representation seem, and still seem “unnatural.”

But the art student quickly learns that mathematical perspective does not transcribe the rich topography of his/her experience; and that there are other ways (systems) of knowing and rendering (mapping) experience. Since the end of the nineteenth century Impressionism, Cubism, Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism and other aesthetic movements demonstrated that there are multiple ways of experiencing, including seeing, and depicting the world. Today it is not unusual for artists to employ and blend a variety of aesthetic visions on to a single canvas or sculpture. Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008), for example obscured the boundaries “between painting and sculpture, painting and photography, photography and printmaking, sculpture and photography, sculpture and dance, sculpture and technology, technology and performance art—not to mention between art and life” (Kimmelman 2008:A1). The ease at which the creative arts can shift between and integrate various perspectives gives credence to a universe of multiple centers, and that no one vision, person or community commands absolute truth or value. Similarly an absolute religious ideology is just one vision of reality among others. One “absolute truth” among other “absolute truths” is a relative-absolute truth.

The visual tyranny of mathematical perspective is replicated in the ideological inflexibility embedded in absolute centers. Perhaps the most famous

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the same history. Similarly the modern Japan’s national building project pressured Okinawans and Ainu, who inhabit the fringes of its cultural and political sphere to assimilate and become “Japanese.” The Japanese codified such sentiments with *Nihonjinron* (Theorizing on the Japanese), to cite one example, which arose in imperial Japan, to justify the subjugation and discrimination of peoples on the periphery of the Japanese homeland.

example of such despotism is Catholic Church's condemnation of Galileo (1564-1642) for willfully disobeying the Church's order not "to hold or defend" the Copernican theory of planetary and astral movements that suggested the earth did indeed orbit the sun. In 1633 the Congregation of the Holy Office that administered the Inquisition concluded that Galileo's confirmation of Copernicus' observations were inconsistent with scripture and Church doctrine. Like Alberti's veil, the Church's single vision did not allow an alternative vision of reality. Galileo was compelled to comply with what church doctrine saw to be true, not what he knew to be true. Notwithstanding after almost 350 years Pope John Paul II declared in 1979 that Galileo may have been mistakenly censured.

One pointed ideological tyranny was also at play when David Benke, Bishop of the Atlantic District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, was accused of heresy by clergy of his own denomination when he shared the podium at Yankee Stadium with representatives of other faith traditions who had gathered to memorialize the victims of 9/11. In an interview that aired on *Frontline: Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero*, a PBS production. Bishop Benke recalled that on 23 September 2001 the day after the service, he began receiving calls reminding him that "the doctrine of the church does not allow a Christian to stand at the same podium with someone of another faith or everybody is going to get the same idea that all religions are equal, and we have made absolute claims, exclusive claims about our faith."<sup>6</sup> I do not know what other faith traditions were represented, but I am certain that representatives from the Islamic would have been present. Refusing to acknowledge one's the validity other faith traditions might appear to be a position of integrity and a stand against theological relativism. But such stubbornness prevents dialogue and encourages deadly competition.

A spiritual tradition can declare itself to be absolute and perfect, but such claims become problematic when the tradition extends those assertions beyond its boundaries and has the means to forcibly impose such claims. Thich Nhat Hanh cautioned against absolute claims in the first of the Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism.

Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, even Buddhist ones. Buddhist systems of thought are guiding means; they are not absolute truth. Even meritorious teachings become a burden if one does not know when to discard them (Hahn 1987:27).

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<sup>6</sup> Bishop Benke's participation in this event was met with extreme opposition by many Lutherans, who claimed that his participation constituted syncretism and unionism. On 6 July 2002 the Bishop was suspended from his responsibilities. However on 10 April 2003 he was reinstated. The charges against Benke were eventually withdrawn because internal investigation determined that the president of the Synod, Gerald B. Kieschnick, his ecclesiastical supervisor sanctioned his participation in the event.

In response to the uncompromising ideological postures of both the American and the Vietnamese, Thich Nhat Hanh re-imagining and distilled the traditional Buddhist Precepts to respond to the reality of a modern war and to caution against taking any doctrine or ideology, even Buddhist ones to be absolute truth. What Americans know as the Vietnam War and the Vietnamese call the American War is a painful clash of two ideologies. The American narrative viewed the War as a conflict against communism and tyranny; while for the Vietnamese the struggle was for national self-determination and expulsion of the colonial aggressors. These opposing ideologies claim to be “right” to provide ideological clarity to rally its people and engage the enemy.

Thich Nhat Hanh’s suspicions even against meritorious teachings can be traced directly to the Buddha, whose skepticism is based on recognition that his own teachings and views are just one among many others in his advice to Kalamas.<sup>7</sup> The Sanghabadra (ca. 5<sup>th</sup> C.) outlines the spirit of the Buddha’s attitude toward any proposition.

If you want to know about a rule of conduct, or its original text, or have difficulty in answering the question on any aspect of it, you must know the fourfold [aspects of the] Vinaya, which the great elders with miraculous powers have understood and have explained to people.

What are the four aspects?

[The four are:] First is the original text [of the *Vinaya*]; second, what is in consonance with the original text; third, the words of teachers; and fourth, one’s opinion (*Samantapāsādikā* 171; with some modifications).

The word of the Buddha as it is articulated in the Vinaya is the final authority. “What is in consonance with the original text” refers to the implicit spirit of the Buddha’s teaching. “The words of the teachers” refer to the learned opinions of others. In response to the question: What is meant by one’s own opinion? The Buddha responded:

Leaving aside the original text, leaving aside what is in consonance with the original text and leaving aside what is the word of Teachers, to infer with one’s own mind, or with the help of other means such as the detailed explanatory

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<sup>7</sup> A doctrine or teaching is valid if it promotes virtue, moral attainment, and happiness. If Buddhist teachings and practices do not lead to spiritual ease, perhaps some other faith tradition may be more suitable to one’s temperament. For those who could not accept his teaching nor wished to follow his method for spiritual liberation, the Buddha recommended other paths. The early documents speak of the *pratyekabuddha*, those who achieved enlightenment without the aid of the Buddha. The value of a spiritual path lies in its capacity to lead to spiritual ease. Those that do not should be avoided (Jayatilleke 1966:22-24).

commentaries . . . , or with what is said by Teachers—this is called one’s opinion (Sanghabhadra 1970:172).

“One’s own opinion” places the ultimate determination of meaning on the individual. The Buddha placed great faith in individuals to make a proper decision and decide on a course of action after a proper investigation. Further by leaving the final determination to the individual, the Buddha understood that the specific Vinaya codes are not applicable to every situation (*Samantapāsādikā*: 171-3). The individual is asked to interpret and give life to his or her understanding of the Buddha’s teaching at any particular moment. This approach is rooted in tradition, but is open to the kind of re-imagining that Thich Nhat Hanh articulated with his Fourteen Precepts. Such re-imagining demonstrated the creative vitality of “shifting-centers.” The venerable monk intuited a need to reorganize an ancient set of guidelines that would be more reflective to war time conditions. In the process he expanded the theoretical and practical parameters of Buddhist thought and practice. While this approach may be open to accusations of relativism, it underscores the Buddha’s practical concern and openness to other approaches to spiritual fulfillment and his liberality toward other faith traditions.

### **3. Practical Uses of Ambiguity: the Multidisciplinary Team**

Multiple centers support the underlying rationale for multidisciplinary studies that illuminate varying facets of a single phenomenon and more practically the team approach in medical care. The geriatric care team—medical professionals, social service providers, and religious professionals, family, volunteers—coordinate their respective expertise in consultation with the elder person to ensure his or her total well-being. Such efforts are never exhaustive and continually evolve with the changing condition of the individual.

I observed the first hand benefits of the team approach to healthcare when my father, felled by a stroke, was in being cared for at the Wahiawa General Hospital in Hawai’i. The team who cared for my father included the facility administrator, the dietician, the physical therapist, the head nurse, the attending physician, the certified nursing assistants, and others directly involved. At the weekly care meeting each specialist would review his changing condition and adjust his therapies. The dietician for example would review my father’s diet, the nursing assistant would report on how well he is eating, his likes and dislikes; and based on their respective observations and my father’s needs, adjustments were made. When the nursing assistant noticed that he had difficulty in swallowing, the dietician was alerted and his food was pureed. During these weekly reviews the members of the multidisciplinary team coordinated and communicated to ensure optimum care. Family members are

welcome to attend the meetings. More recently, clergy, volunteers, and the patient are included in the healthcare team.

The advantages of the multidisciplinary team are obvious. Coordination and teamwork among clinicians results in greater efficiency and improved clinical outcomes. A diverse group of professionals—medical, social, and spiritual—provides comprehensive assessment and consultation. These weekly meetings help team members resolve difficult cases; they are effective in coordinating staff, family, and different agencies (social services, public health, insurance providers); and provide a “checks and balances” to ensure that the interests and rights of everyone are addressed. These meetings also identify service gaps and breakdowns in coordination or communication between agencies or individuals. These meetings also provide a forum for enhancing the professional skills and knowledge of individual team members who can learn about the strategies, resources, and approaches used by various disciplines.

#### 4. Creative Advantages of Ambiguity

In response to the tyranny of absolute centers, I have come across the expression “de-center,” meaning to take the standpoint of the other. Other expressions such as “margins,” “the other,” “the dispossessed” or “suppressed histories” attempt to give voice and validity to minority experiences (Hongo 1995:8). We commonly associate minority experiences and persons who live on the *peripheries* of the mainstream with backwardness and insularity; and the *center* with diversity and openness. In a lecture to the Scandinavian Audience the 1994 Nobel Prize for Literature, Ōe Kenzaburō noted the inherent creativity of peripheral peoples; his observation was based on his experience of the Okinawans, an island people on the very fringe of the Japanese cultural sphere. He writes,

No matter how Japanized (or “Yamotonized”), it may outwardly appear now, Okinawa still maintains its non-Yamato cultural identity; and, unlike the insular, unaccommodating and emperor focused culture of the rest of Japan, it is blessed with a richness and diversity peculiar to peripheral cultures. Its people possess an openness to the world that comes from knowing the meaning of relative values (Ōe 1995:32).

Okinawans, like other peripheral peoples, are cognizant of other cultures, their own and that of their more powerful neighbors. Peripheral peoples are “blessed with an openness to the world that comes from knowing the meaning of relative values.” By “relative values” Ōe is referring to the ability of the Okinawans and other peripheral peoples who must navigate two or more cultures—their own and that of a more powerful neighbor. The Okinawan experience is instructive. As a small island

nation on the edge of East Asia the Okinawans have had to navigate the political whims of Japan to the north, China to the west, and more recently the ubiquitous presence of the U.S. military bases for the past 64 years in order to preserve its national identity. In addition to learning the languages of its more powerful neighbors, the Okinawans have had to adjust to foreign ways of thinking, doing, and being.

The creative potential of persons who inhabit intellectual, cultural and spiritual borderlands emerge “come from knowing relative values” give credence to “shifting-centers” that allow a person to explore and draw from multiple perspectives to create new forms. As it was noted above, the art student quickly learns that mathematical perspective does not transcribe the rich topography of his/her experience; and that there are other ways (systems) of knowing and rendering experience. The limitation of a single system to give form to reality is evident in attempts for artists such as Rauschenberg who employed a variety of aesthetic visions on to a single canvas or sculpture. The ease at which the creative arts can shift between and integrate various perspectives gives affirms the validity of multiple centers, and that no one vision, person or community commands absolute truth or value. Like mathematical perspective, an absolute religious ideology offers only one vision of reality; it is just one ideology even among other absolute ones. Creative exercises within the context of an absolute center cannot stray beyond the parameters of their perspectives; straying beyond ideological boundaries risks censure. The Catholic Church’s condemnation of Galileo reveals the limits of absolute centers.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Real-world problems, including medical care are best dealt with by soliciting the counsel of as many expert opinions as practically possible. Such an exercise avoids the dangers of positing an absolute center that subsumes all meaning and values, which is exemplified by the long running competition between Christianity and Islam. I speculate that it is this competition that prompts Pi’s mother to urge her son to settle on one faith tradition. How does one simultaneously profess to two or three absolute faith traditions? Pi himself could perhaps reconcile and even integrate differing faith traditions into a “hybrid spiritual life;” but will the ideologies, institutions, and functionaries who embody these traditions be open to divided loyalties or such syncretism? Should Pi manage to be a good Hindu, Christian, and Muslim, on his death will his guru, priest, and imam come together on equal footing to conduct an interfaith funeral? To which Promised Land will he go to? Individual clerics may be open, but will the ideologies that guide these absolute centered traditions allow for such participation? Or will each honor the hybridity of Pi’s spiritual constitution and perform his/her respective service at different venues? What

kind of reconciliation can there be between and among faith traditions and ideologies that claim to be absolute; and are unable or unwilling to acknowledge the possibility of alternative visions of reality and spiritual paths? I see no resolution as long as both traditions are unwilling to give up their absolute claims. At the very least, traditions that claim a single absolute center need to acknowledge the validity of other visions of truth and reality.

The vision of an interdependent, multi-centered, and evolving reality proposed by *pratītyasamutpāda* and sketched by the Ten Dharma-gateways provides a powerful framework for understanding, and addressing the many global problems. Gautama's experience of *pratītyasamutpāda* was transformative; being-in and thinking-about an interdependent world instills a sense of humility and requires creative use of ambiguity and uncertainty. *Pratītyasamutpāda* validates the importance of all beings in equal measure; and assures every person and/or viewpoint a voice in shaping our common future. This vision of reality provides the rationale for the team approach to eldercare that puts to good use multiple disciplines in the care of an older person. The team approach is possible because the expertise acknowledge the limitations of their respective disciplines. The advantages of team approach to addressing minor and global problems are obvious; but giving up the centrality of one's perspective is difficult to overcome. While the team provides a more holistic to caregiving, it can never fully ameliorate ambiguity and uncertainty. As it was noted, ambiguity also arises because it is not possible to know every aspect of an object or event or its relationship with the observers. "Ambiguity"<sup>8</sup> is essentially "intellectual uncertainty" that arises from shifting vantage points, which may be one of simple location, or more fully textured as mediated by culture, and from changing standards.<sup>9</sup> In short, it is precisely this uncertainty that should guide our engagement with the global crisis.

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<sup>8</sup> "Ambiguity" is also rooted in perception or understanding as the Chinese "aimeī" 曖昧 confirms. The first character "ai" has the meaning of "the sun obscured by clouds." Clouds "obscure" a clear view of the sun, an image that appropriately describes the relationship between "ignorance" and enlightened-knowing. Ignorance, the mist of error, "obscures" the true understanding of the self, reality, and the Dharma. The second character "mei" also means "obscure," but carries the additional meanings of "dark" and "color-blindness." Low light level "darkens" or "obscures" our ability to see clearly; the onus of clear vision is due to external conditions. Color blindness, a physical condition, prevents the color blind person from seeing the true colors of reality. In combination the characters reinforces the ideas of multiple meanings, obscurity, and uncertainty associated with "ambiguity." When used as an adjective "aimeī" describes an attitude or relationship that can mean "equivocal," that is "being deliberately unclear or misleading."

<sup>9</sup> This class of ambiguity is articulated by "shifting-centers," which includes conflicting 1) socio-cultural and socio-historical discourses (content), 2) ethical and legal opinions, 3) multiple roles; and 4) interaction (relational interplay) between the interpreter and the object/event.

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## **A Buddhist Prescription for the Environmental Crisis: Ecological Understanding and Practice of the Ten Precepts**

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### **1. Introduction:**

It is very appropriate that activities to celebrate the UN Day of Vesak are held so that all people around world can experience a renewal and meaningful time. Though this conference is for academic and intellectual commemoration, we all take time to remember and thank Sakyamuni Buddha as fundamental, most universal teacher of all sentient beings – those in need of enlightened wisdom and compassion, to be saved from various crisis of their lives. It was really remarkable that in 1999, the General Assembly of the United Nations recognized and resolved the Day of Vesak to be celebrated around the world together for the new millennium – and thus this day becomes a guiding light for the world at the local, national and international levels (Agenda Item 174). Nowadays, we have to pay more attention to his teachings to gain more wisdom for solving the problems of the contemporary world and the future. To make a better world, we should refresh and renew our studies and practices of the Buddha's teachings to be more relevant to the situations of our global community where multicultural and multi-religious people should live in peace and harmony.

We have already been living together in the so-called Global Village or Global Community beyond national boundaries, as well as in the age of information and culture in this knowledge-based-society. We have also been looking forward to facing the third industrial revolution which might be driven through new technologies and energy, as well as new thoughts and life patterns. It means that the second industrial revolution, based on the fossil fuels and electric and chemical technologies has shown shortcomings and the limitation of them. The new paradigm would initiate to change our social system of the past in terms of development and growth. The direction of the new revolution should be oriented to the green or ecologically sustainable community and the world. However, we have been often heard through the mass media that our planet has already met the environmental crisis. In the recent decades much of the air, water, and earth have been polluted; various species of life form have been driven to disappear; and the quality of human life has been declined.

Among many serious problematic phenomena of the earth, it has been known that the climate change is the major, overriding environmental issues of our time, and

the single greatest challenge facing environmental regulators. It has been a growing crisis with economic, health and safety, food production, security, and so on; for instances, the fast melting of the glaciers and ice sheets and so rising sea levels contaminate coastal freshwater reserves and increase the risk of catastrophic flooding, and warming atmosphere aids pole-ward spread of pests and diseases once limited to the tropics. Changes in major ecosystems and the planetary climate system already have alarmed and its feedback system with environmental cumulative effects has been building across earth systems demonstrating impacts we can not anticipate. The potential for runaway greenhouse warming has never been more present. However, it seems that the most dangerous climate changes may still be avoided if we transform our hydrocarbon based energy system and if we initiate rational and cultural renovation programs of new life paradigm to forestall disasters and migrations at unprecedented scales. We should try to change our mind and behavior to deal with the crisis seriously and immediately for wellbeing of all lives and Earth as ourselves.

Having sought a Buddhist way to contribute to solve the environmental problems I have provided for a prescription of the Ten Precepts which should share with and apply to peoples around world. It is with conviction that if the people personally and communally understood and practiced them relevantly then the present situation of the world could be changed to overcome the crisis and to bring the ecologically healthy future. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to point out as how the Ten Precepts, which are fundamental principles and guidelines of Buddhist ways of life and caring the others including all sentient beings and the environment, provide an ethical foundation and a prescription to be offered to humanity to meet the environmental and ecological crisis. I will first describe a diagnosis of the environmental and ecological crisis, and then prescribe the Ten Precepts to heal them.

## **2. A Buddhist Diagnoses of Environmental Crisis**

It is known and I agree that the modern problem of environmental destruction is to a great extent the creation of the unbridled development led by an economic thoughts and system of profit-oriented capitalism, which have been mostly the product of Western civilization and its attitudes and values. Dominated by such a system, most of people have been pursuing the path of unrestricted economic growth and focusing on material possession and safety followed by greed for wealth and comfort, which have tended to disregard religious and spiritual inhibitions. When such an economy has expanded, it crosses a threshold point beyond which the delicate fabric of the ecosystem would be damaged so badly that it could no longer be capable of sustaining normal quality of life. Present economy is trouble with the

poor and too big enough to control as well as technologies too powerful. We need streamlining and downsizing such as cutting down on production for the rich and the military, wasteful luxuries and conspicuous consuming materials. The current social system always promotes competition which has been bound to generate conflict and resentment.<sup>1</sup>

It is noticeable that the massive waste of resources and contamination of ecosystem in grave severity are the outcomes of modern industrial and capitalism oriented society. The capitalist society has produced a transformation in human's relation to nature. The relation of capitalists to nature has been marked by exploitation, pollution, and ruination. Under capitalism the original unity of human and nature has been breached; erosion and exhaustion of the soil, deforestation, disruption of nature's cycle of matter, and greedy policy toward nature have been ruinous to both nature and human.<sup>2</sup> In the human's world, political economists looked at the relationships between First-World capitalism and the Third-World colonialism in terms of core and peripheral economies. The First-World stimulated economic production, raised living standards and reduced death rates, they did so at the expense of the Third-World peoples and resources. It is said that "domination" is one of the last century's most fruitful concepts for understanding human-human and human-nature relationships. When the domination of nonhuman nature is integrated with the domination of human-beings and the call for environmental and ecological justice, the Critical Theory instills the environmental movement with ethical fervor. Reversing the domination of nature and powerless peoples requires the environmental justice which entails the fulfillment of basic needs through the equitable distribution of natural and social resources and freedom from the effects of environmental misuse, scarcity, and pollution.<sup>3</sup>

As Lynn White argued that the domination of nature stemmed from the Judeo-Christian mandate expressed in Genesis 1:28 (to increase, multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it), Christianity seems the most anthropocentric religion in the world exploiting nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.<sup>4</sup> In contrast, Buddhist spirituality has inspired human connections to the natural world in order to engender appreciation, care, and environmentally compassionate action on behalf of Earth. As Joanna Macy pointed out, we should see reality structured in such a way that all life forms affect and sustain each other in a web of radical

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<sup>1</sup> K.T.S. Saro, "Ecological Significance of Buddhist Social Philosophy" *Bulgyosaengtaehak yeongeonmunjip* (Collection of Buddhist Ecological Articles in English) (Seoul: Doseochulpan Yeorae, 2006), 358-359.

<sup>2</sup> Howard L. Parsons, "Marx and Engels on Ecology" in Carolyn Merchant ed. *Ecology* (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 37.

<sup>3</sup> Merchant, *Ecology*, op.cit. 1, 6, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Lynn White, Jr., "The historic Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155 (10 Mar. 1967), 1203-7; reprinted in Ian G. Barbour ed., *Western Man and Environmental Ethics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1973), 18-30.

interdependence. She explained it as Deep Ecology to contrast with ‘shallow environmentalism’ as a Band-Aid approach applying piecemeal technological fixes for short-term goals. The Deep Ecology means that human beings are neither the ruler nor the center of universe, but are embedded in a vast living matrix and subject to its laws of reciprocity, representing a basic shift in a ways of seeing and valuing, a new paradigm to overcome anthropocentrism.<sup>5</sup>

In the field of science, it can be said that the domination of nature fostered by mechanistic science’s reduction of the world to dead atoms moved by external forces has been replacing by postmodern, ecological world view based on interconnectedness, process, and open systems. The transformation in physics mirrors a much larger social and cultural transformation resulting from dislocations such as the nuclear, poverty and environmental crisis. Nowadays science also reflects the inadequacy of structures of modernism, such as mechanistic physics, industrialization, and inequalities of class, race, and gender, with an emphasis on the whole over the parts, on process over structure, on the relative knowledge of the external world, the idea of networks of information, and the recognition of the relativity. It is remarkable that the works of postmodern scientists on unpredictability implies that human beings have to give up the possibility of totally controlling and dominating nature.<sup>6</sup>

However, I confirm that for better or worse we live in an interconnected world on Earth. We have a responsibility to protect its environmental integrity as well as to promote better and sustainable lives for ourselves. We have to recognize that we are all members of the same global community. If we fail to act promptly together, our civilization would be at risk and our next generations could not be continued.<sup>7</sup> It is a Buddhists view that mind of human being was originally pure but the mind contaminated by desires and ignorance. Since then human beings have made unwholesome karma and lived in the state of unwholesome conditions and environmental situations of the world. In other words, our difficult life situations and environmental crisis imply that the bad results have been driven by our impure state of mind and bad karma. Therefore, it is obvious that if we purify our mind and recover our original state through meditation practice then our karma to be wholesome and eventually our world also change to be healthy and peaceful. It is known that the goal of Buddhism is to attain enlightenment realizing our original perfect state, in which all defilements are purified and disappeared. We have learned and practiced precepts and meditation as good ways to attain enlightenment for oneself and for others.

<sup>5</sup> Joanna Macy, “Toward a Healing of Self and World” in *Ecology*, op. cit. 292.

<sup>6</sup> Merchant, *Ecology*, op. cit., 20.

<sup>7</sup> Michael B McElroy, “Human as a Force for Global Environmental Change” in *Bulgyosaengtaehak Yeongeonmunjip*, op. cit., 1031.

As I briefly reviewed the situation of the world above, as a diagnosis focusing on the environmental crisis, it can be summarized that we should point out the basic and major causes of the diseases: greedy industrial capitalism, anthropocentric domination to the nature, and ignorance of reality regarding interdependent and interconnectedness of ourselves and the nature. If we do not recognize and treat them seriously and immediately, the crisis would be getting worse and out of control.

### **3. Ten Precepts: a Buddhist Prescription for Environmental Crisis:**

From the brief diagnosis above, I would like to suggest a prescription of the Precepts to overcome and heal the crisis. The Precepts here means an ethical guideline of spontaneous action rendering in terms of Buddhist tradition for *Sikkāpada* or *Śīla*, as a practical way to achieve the ideal of life, such as attaining Enlightenment and Perfections free from defilements and sufferings.<sup>8</sup> As John Daido Looi pointed out, the Buddhist Precepts are teaching on how to live our lives in harmony with the facts all existences are interdependent and interconnected each other in every aspect. However, when we read the Precepts, we normally think of them in terms of people. Generally, most of the moral and ethical teachings of the great religions address relationships among people. Nevertheless, these Precepts do not exclusively pertain to the human realm. They are concerning about the whole world, and we need to see them from that perspective if we are to benefit from what they have to offer, and if we are to begin healing the rift between ourselves and the world.<sup>9</sup>

The Buddhist ethical characteristic of Precepts is that the moral character of human action is closely associated with the intention that constitutes it; good intentions will lead to good results for the individual and for society; adherences to Precepts and responsibilities with an emphasis on the rooting out of vices and cultivation of virtues. In Buddhist tradition there are various Precepts in terms of number and strictness to be applied and accepted by different groups of peoples with different stages of soteriological achievement, depend on the monastic and the lay, man and woman, and Theravada and Mahayana. In fact, the core Precepts of different groups are identical or similar and overlapped, such as “not to kill” and “not to steal.” However, I think that the Ten Precepts are universal and relevant to cover most people of society. Therefore in this paper, I would like to introduce the Ten Precepts and bring peoples’ attention to practice together for common good focusing

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<sup>8</sup> T. W. Rhys Davids, “Precepts(Buddhist),” James Hastings ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* vol. X (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981), 224.

<sup>9</sup> John Daido Looi, “The Precepts and the Environment,” Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryuken Williams ed., *Buddhism and Ecology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 177.

on Environmental aspects. We see that Buddhism today confronts many ethical and ecological challenges in its role as one of the great world religions. If we spontaneously meet the challenges well enough, the results of our efforts will have a crucial impact on the lives of individuals, on the structure of the societies we live, and on the entire world community.<sup>10</sup>

Understanding the Ten Precepts in terms of how we relate to our environment is a starting step in the direction of practice and appreciating the continuous and vital role we play in the well-being of all sentient beings and Earth. We should consider and care the environment as ourselves in terms of non-duality and compassion. It is the beginning of taking responsibility for all human and environmental catastrophes.

The First Precept is “do not kill” but save and respect life. To kill the environment seems the worst. We have heard that many species have been decimated. If any endangered specie disappeared, there is no way that this life-form can ever return to the earth. No matter how small or big the life is, the vacuum of its absence creates could not be filled in any other way, and such a vacuum effects everything else in the ecosystem. It is noticeable that we have been losing various species by the thousands every year from Earth. We should feel that we are responsible, as if we are the ones burning a part of forest or contaminating a river, when someone else is really doing it. As Loori pointed, “it is as if we were squeezing the life out of ourselves; killing the lakes with acid rain; dumping chemicals into the rivers so that they cannot support any life; polluting our skies so our children choke on the air they breath.”<sup>11</sup>

The Second Precept is “do not steal” but share and give anything. To steal from the environmental system is to rape the ecological system as well as the earth. Stealing is to take away from the insentient. The mountain suffers when someone clear cut it. Clear cutting is stealing the habitat of the animals that live on the mountain. If we over-cut, streams become congested with the sediments that wash off the mountain slopes. Consequently, this would be stealing the life of the fish that live in the river, of birds that come to feed on the fish, of the mammals that come to feed on the birds.

The Third Precept is “do not misuse sexuality,” but here interpreted as ‘honor the body’. We should honor the environmental body of nature. If we begin to interfere with the natural order of things or ecological system; begin to engineer the genetics of viruses and bacteria, plants and animals, it is that we throw off the whole

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<sup>10</sup> Frank E. Reynolds and Robert Company, “Buddhist Ethics”, Mirces Eliade ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion* vol. 2 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1907), 499-504.

<sup>11</sup> Loori, op. cit., 179.

ecological balance. Human's technological meddling affects the totality of the universe and there would be karmic consequences to that impact.

The Fourth Precept is "do not lie," but manifest truth. It seems that one of very common kinds of lying that is currently popular is called green-washing that is not really but like white-washing and pretends to be ecologically sound and politically correct. Another example is the plastic manufacturers tell people that plastic cups and plates are not bio-degradables but filling up the dumps continue to be made.

The Fifth Precept is "do not have a double tongue," but reconcile with the others. If there is any tension or misuse between human and environment, human should pay attention to the environment and recover the natural normality harmoniously. We should not speak of nature's errors and faults.

The Sixth Precept is "do not have a hateful mouth," but have a compassionate mouth. This is an expression that is poisonous and injurious, coarse and rude, hurtful to others; an acting that makes others angry and hateful like a fire burning the forest where various lives live in.

The Seventh Precept is "do not have dissembling speech that is silken and flowery," but have simple speech that is plain and unadorned. This is always honest and appropriate to the occasion, truthful, reasonable, carefully considered and well measured.

The Eight Precept is "without greedy desire for the wealth or belongings of others," but giving generously something as much possible to share with others. It suggests the simple and appropriate life style which may not take unnecessary things from the environment. It is greed that is one of the major underlying causes of pollution. If we need something from nature, we should vow to return something to nature.

The Ninth Precept is "free from anger and hatred," but being compassionate and considerate. For all beings one should always be friendly and offer empathy, joy, benefit, and acceptance. It is recognizing the deep ecology and adjusting to the environmental nature, instead of breaking the natural rhythm and process.

The Tenth Precept is "free of false view," but abides in the true path of Enlightenment. Human beings are not separated from the nature but a part of it. Interdependent Origination (*pratīyasamutpada*), the central doctrine of Buddhism, shows us right view and appropriate direction to solve the environmental crisis. It is obvious that if the nature would be destroyed, then human beings would also be destroyed; if the nature would be going well, then human beings would also be going well.

It can be said that to practice the Precepts is to be in harmony with one's life and the universe; to practice the Precepts means to be conscious of what they are about. Taking responsibility plays a key role in the practice. In other words, if anyone does not practice taking responsibility, one is not practicing; to take responsibility means to acknowledge oneself as master of oneself. Having reviewed above, Ten Precepts are relevant and could solve and to heal the environmental crisis, if we take it seriously and practice it sincerely.

#### **4. Conclusion:**

In recent years, we have heard and felt that environmental situations of our global community have been getting worse and we call it "environmental crisis." For instance, we know that one of the most critical issues is the "climate change," which has been the most urgent agenda throughout the world. Buddhism has been known as the friendly religion to environmental issues in terms of deep ecology which initiates a new paradigm. Considering Buddhism as one of major world religions, Buddhists should take responsibilities and roles to play to solve the global problems like the environmental crisis as well as the social economic difficulties. As a Buddhist practitioner, I have been seeking a Buddhist way to contribute to deal with the environmental crisis. I have described my diagnosis on the crisis and provided a prescription by Ten Precepts in terms of environmental aspects.

It is obvious that if we do not take any prescription sincerely then our diseases and wounds would not be cured and healed. It has been said that correct knowing is difficult but actual practicing is more difficult than the knowing. We could imagine that someone thinks Ten Precepts seem simple and easy to practice but doubt it could make change to overcome the global crisis. I am sure that if we all practice the Ten Precepts well, not only the Environmental crisis but also the other all crises of the world would be solved well. Let us vow practice and live with the Precepts in our daily lives beyond argumentative talking to achieve a pure land – a bountiful, peaceful and beautiful world.

## The Foundations of Buddhist Environmental Ethics: A New Approach

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The teachings of Buddhism are often considered to be ‘green’ or ‘eco-friendly’, which is to say that they are often thought to be in accord with efforts to protect the natural world. My aim in this paper is not to ask whether this assessment is correct (with several qualifications, I believe it is), but rather to ask *why* it is correct. In short, I will argue that the Buddhist teachings are ‘green’ or ‘eco-friendly’, not because of what they say about the natural world, but because of what they say about human life.

First, however, some clarifications are in order. By ‘nature’ or ‘the natural world’ I mean the living world or the biosphere, that part of the world that a ‘nature lover’ loves or an environmentalist is concerned to protect. By the Buddhist teachings, moreover, I mean the teachings encapsulated in the Pali canon, and so by Buddhism I mean what is sometimes called Early Buddhism, the tradition nowadays preserved as Theravāda. Unless otherwise stated, non-English words will therefore be transliterations of the Pali. Let me begin by outlining the argument I mean to challenge, that of the ‘ecological thinker’:

Why, according to the teachings of Buddhism, should we care for the natural world? To answer this question, one must begin by identifying what the Buddhist teachings have to say about nature, for only once one has identified what Buddhists think nature *is* will one be in a position to see why Buddhists think we *ought* to protect it.

So what is the Buddhist theory of nature? In short, Buddhists hold that nothing in nature is entirely independent of anything else, but that all things are intimately related. This is the central lesson of the teachings of the teachings of not-self (*anatta*) and dependent origination (*paṭicca-samutpāda*). Indeed, with these teachings, the Buddha anticipated the findings of modern ecological science; his was an ecological (or at least proto-ecological) worldview.

Moreover, the ecological worldview of Buddhism has important ethical implications. For to realise that that all things are interrelated is to realise that human beings and their works are intimately related to the nonhuman world, to nature. It is to realise that human beings are not souls temporarily housed in material bodies, but that we are rather ‘one’ with all things, ‘one’ with nature. To awaken to the ecological relatedness of all things is to be moved to care for

nature, for it is to realise that the fate of nature is our fate, the fate of we humans, too.

This line of reasoning is implicit in many discussions of Buddhism and environmental thought, and it is sometimes expressly stated (e.g., Badiner 1990: xvi-xviii); but it is flawed in several respects: For one thing, the ecological thinker supposes that there is such a thing as a Buddhist theory of nature, one that encompasses all the components of nature, from pebbles to pelicans, and the various casual relations between them. But that is not the case at all. In fact, the texts collected in the Pali canon have very little to say about the ‘nature’ that environmentalists seek to protect. True, the *suttas* include various remarks on nonhuman life. One learns, for instance, that animals are subject to rebirth, that it is uncertain whether plants are sentient and that, while animals are divided into different kinds, human beings are not (Sn 607-11). One also comes across some mythological accounts of the origins of the living world: the view, for example, that it emerges as the result of some heavenly beings eating ‘the savoury earth’ (D 27). What one certainly does not find is a theory of nature in anything like the modern sense – a theory on a par with the modern Neo-Darwinian synthesis or Aristotelian teleology.

This lack of concern is, one suspects, a result of the Buddha’s unwaveringly pragmatic emphasis on human suffering and its overcoming. One suspects that he would have dismissed questions about nature, questions of the sort that a modern day ecological scientist might ask, as unprofitable to address, not because they are unanswerable, but because they do not bear upon the more pressing practical issue of facing up to and overcoming *dukkha* (see, e.g., M 63). Questions about the composition of the natural world and the laws by which it runs would, one imagines, be greeted with a noble silence.

But this assessment might seem unfair. To be sure, the Buddha has little to say about the natural world, in particular. So far as I am aware, he has nothing of substance to say about what we would nowadays call biology. However, he certainly does have a great deal to say about the world in general, the natural world included. He maintains that all things, natural or human-made, are void of self, and that they are the things they are because of the coincidence of certain conditions. And he adds that this is not merely of intellectual interest: realising that all things are not-self and dependently originated is essential to attaining *Nibbāna*.

All this must be granted, of course. But the ecological thinker is, I think, wrong to suppose that the Buddhist teachings of *anatta* and *paṭicca-samutpāda* amount to anything like an ecological view of nature, a view of the sort one might find in a contemporary textbook on ecological science. For one thing, except in their application to human life, both of these teachings remain highly abstract and general.

It is true that all things are said to be ‘not self’, but this general claim is typically discussed with reference to *human* selves. The focus in the scriptures is on the selflessness of beings like you or I, not on the selflessness of trees or environmental communities or species. Moreover, although all things are said to be subject to dependent origination, the most detailed account of the process – the twelve-fold chain of dependent origination - refers to the genesis of *dukkha*, and so cannot apply to non-sentient nature (see, for instance, the second book of the *Samyutta Nikāya*).

So there are reasons to doubt the ecological thinker’s claim that the Buddhist teachings of ‘not-self’ and dependent origination amount to an ecological view of nature.<sup>1</sup> And they certainly do not imply that humans and nature are ‘one’. For one thing, talk of the unity of humans and nature tends to encourage the notion that humans are parts of an all-engulfing metaphysical whole - Nature with a capital ‘N’. Now this picture chimes with some metaphysical systems (Spinozan metaphysics, for instance), but it is entirely at odds with Buddhist metaphysics. For to speak of a grand metaphysical absolute, Nature, is to speak of something that exists (or at least could exist) in complete isolation from anything else. But if the Buddhist accounts of not-self and dependent origination are correct, no such entity exists.

In fact, even if the Buddhist teachings *did* suggest that the world resembled the one portrayed by modern ecological science, and even if, moreover, they *did* suggest that humans were in some sense ‘one’ with nature, that would not suffice to prove that Buddhism is an eco-friendly religion. For one can endorse an ecological view of nature, one can even insist on the unity or ‘oneness’ of humans and nature, and yet at the same time, and with perfect consistency, one can regard nature as being devoid of value. Consider a proponent of materialism, for example, someone who subscribes to the notion that everything, we humans included, is made of matter. Such an individual clearly believes that we are one with nature (one, that is, with the material universe), but there is no good reason to think that she must be moved by a positive moral regard for the natural world. She *might* be. But she might be a terrible strip-mining, fur-wearing, cyanide-fishing scourge of the natural world. Or consider the case of Baruch Spinoza, the seventeenth century rationalist philosopher. Despite his conviction that we humans are ‘one’ with an all-encompassing metaphysical whole, ‘God or Nature’, he nonetheless maintained that we are morally justified in using nonhuman animals ‘at our pleasure’ and in treating them ‘as is most convenient for us’ (1996: 135).

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<sup>1</sup> The same may be said of the teaching of ‘emptiness’ (Sanskrit: *śūnyatā*). It is sometimes supposed that to realise the emptiness of all things is to realise that all things are causally interconnected. Although I do not have the space to argue the point here, this strikes me as a serious misreading of the teaching, at least as it was developed in the Madhyamaka school. Whatever Nāgārjuna was up to, he certainly was not espousing the metaphysical view that all things are causally interconnected (see further, Cooper 2003: 48-9; Ganeri 2001: 67).

I have argued that the worldview of Early Buddhism is not ‘ecological’, which is to say that it does not resemble the worldview suggested by the results of modern ecological science. And I have suggested further that even if it *was* ecological, that would not suffice to prove that Buddhism is an eco-friendly religion, for there is no inconsistency in maintaining an ecological worldview and yet seeing nature as devoid of value.

For these reasons, I am sceptical of attempts to base a Buddhist environmental ethic on what Early Buddhists, at least, have to say about nature.<sup>2</sup> But as I said in my opening paragraph, I *do* believe that the Buddhist teachings are, in certain respects, in line with what are nowadays called environmental concerns. Indeed, I believe that those teachings could be used as the basis for a distinctively Buddhist environmental ethic.

With this in mind, let us reconsider the Buddhist teachings. Where in that corpus should we look to find the foundations of a Buddhist environmental ethic? We have already come across one clue. I suggested above that the Buddha had no interest in developing a theory of nature because developing such a theory would not seem to bear upon the urgent matter of facing up to and overcoming *dukkha*. The Buddha’s primary concern, I suggested, was not to develop a theory of nature. His primary concern was with *human* life, and more precisely with how one ought to live.

In this respect, Early Buddhism can be thought of as offering what moral philosophers call a virtue ethic – an account, that is, of what it means to live a good life, one that best expresses what it means to be human. And the Buddha’s conclusion is, of course, well known. To live well, to live an awakened or ‘nirvanic’ life, one does not need great wealth and one does not need to be born into a certain class of society. Instead, one needs to develop oneself. Like Aristotle, the Stoics or Epicurus, the Buddha maintains that to live a good life one must develop a certain sort of *character*. Or, to be more precise, he maintains that one must develop certain virtues of character - compassion, loving-kindness, wisdom, equanimity, mindfulness, and so on.

If I am right about this and Buddhism is, at root, a kind of virtue ethic, then perhaps, in trying to develop a Buddhist environmental ethic, one should begin by considering what Buddhists have to say about the virtues an awakened life is thought to exemplify. Perhaps one ought to consider the possibility that a Buddhist virtue ethic is what is sometimes referred to as an ‘environmental virtue ethic’ (see further, Sandler and Cafaro 2005).

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<sup>2</sup> Other forms of Buddhism might prove more amenable to ecological interpretations. Here I have in mind the metaphysically interesting conceptions of nature developed in some forms of Eastern Buddhism (notably, the Hua-yen and T’ien-t’ai schools). I do not have the space to discuss these matters here, but for a more detailed discussion, see James 2004, Chapter 4.

Yet at first glance this might seem an unpromising suggestion. For, even on the basis of this brief sketch, it might seem that any attempt to base an environmental ethic on a Buddhist virtue ethic will fail. First, it might appear that all this focus on improving one's character and leading a good life is at odds with the Buddhist teaching of not-self. If all things are void of self how can a virtuous individual aim to improve *herself*? Doesn't self-improvement presuppose the existence of a self to be improved? Second, this talk of one's character and the good life and so on may seem disturbingly human-centred or anthropocentric. After all, to speak of character is to refer to the character of *human* beings; to speak of the good life is to speak of how we *humans* ought to live. Yet if we are looking for a Buddhist environmental ethic, then surely we should be thinking, not of what is good for us humans, but what is good for nature, the nonhuman world?

But these objections are groundless, for they presuppose a false conception of the relation between virtue ethics and moral motivation. To say that Buddhism takes the form of a virtue ethic is to say that according to Buddhism acting virtuously is good for you in the sense that it improves one's life (helps one to realise the true nature of reality, overcome *dukkha*, etc.). But it is not to say that the virtuous individual will be motivated by a desire to improve her life. So, for instance, it might be good for an individual to be compassionate, since feeling compassion and acting compassionately is part of what it means to lead a good life. But that does not mean that the compassionate individual is motivated by a desire to alleviate her own suffering. Nor, in Buddhist contexts, does it mean that she is motivated to alleviate the suffering of *others*. For if she has thoroughly realised the truth of *anatta*, then just as she will not see her own suffering as opposed to that of someone else, so she will not see the suffering of others, as opposed to her own. Instead, she will simply see suffering to be alleviated.

Moreover, there is no anthropocentrism here. To be sure, to say that compassion is a virtue is to say that it is an integral part of the good life, as Buddhists envision it. And it is true that, so far as we know, all Buddhists are human. But this is not to say that the compassionate individual will be motivated by a desire to alleviate the suffering of humans *rather than* nonhumans. On the contrary, she will simply see suffering to be alleviated. The question of whether it is the suffering of a dog or a monkey or a man will, all things being equal, be of no account.

I have suggested that the Buddha was primarily concerned with the question of what it means to lead a good life, one that best expresses what it means to be human. And I have added that he was particularly concerned to identify the virtues of character that such a life would exemplify. Thus according to the Buddha, the best kind of life is marked by compassion, mindfulness, wisdom, equanimity, and so forth.

I have contended that this virtue ethical way interpreting Buddhism is neither self-centred nor anthropocentric. Hence it is neither at odds with the Buddhist teaching of *anatta* nor with environmental concern. On the contrary, a Buddhist virtue ethic has a number of important implications for how we ought to treat nature. In other words, a Buddhist virtue ethic is an *environmental* virtue ethic.

Recall the virtue of compassion. If the Buddha is right, then compassion is an integral part of the good life, which is to say that someone lacking this virtue could not be living a life that truly expressed their potential as a human being. Yet as we have seen, compassion must be extended to all instances of suffering, whether human or nonhuman. The man who feels for the suffering of his brother, but not for that of his dog or his horse is, on the Buddhist account, not genuinely compassionate at all. In this sense, compassion is an environmental virtue, one, in other words, that bears upon how we treat the natural world.

Something similar may be said of other Buddhist virtues. Loving-kindness (*mettā*) is the aspiration that beings, ideally, all sentient beings without exception, be happy. Likewise, empathetic joy (*muditā*) is described as happiness in the happiness of others - again, other humans or other nonhumans. Ideally, one is supposed to exercise mindfulness (*sati*), not only in one's relations with one's fellow humans, but in one's dealings with one's fellow nonhumans, and indeed in one's relations with the environment as a whole. So while the virtuous individual is mindful of the effects of her words on others, she is also mindful to turn off electric lights when they are not needed, to walk when she doesn't need to drive, to recycle when she can, and so forth. Finally, consider what might be referred to as humility – the virtue that, in the *suttas*, is said to correspond to the 'destruction' of pride (*māna*) (e.g. D 31.34). To be released from this kind of pride is to be freed from the inveterate tendency to regard the world through the lens of self-interest. But it is also to be released from the tendency to see all things through the prism of human interests. Thus, in the *Sutta-nipāta*, we are enjoined to regard cows, not only as producers of milk and 'medicinal drugs', but as 'our great friends' and as beings endowed with their own 'beauty and health'. A few verses later, those who kill and sacrifice cows are criticised for regarding them only as an 'appendage' to our lives (Sn 296, 307ff). It is morally wrong to kill them because using them for sacrificial and other purposes reflects an unduly human-centred perception of them. Like compassion, loving-kindness, empathetic joy and mindfulness, what we have here is a key Buddhist virtue which is, at the same time, a key *environmental* virtue (for a detailed defence of this virtue ethical reading of Buddhism, see Cooper and James 2005).

## **Conclusion:**

I have suggested that environmental ethicists should leave the issue of Buddhist conceptions of ‘nature’, and turn instead to consider Buddhist views of human life. But I am aware that the express aim of this panel is to consider what a Buddhist approach to the environmental crisis might be, and I suspect that what is being called for here is some sort of practical recommendation. So, with this in mind, let me end by saying a few words about the practical implications of the view I have set out here.

In one sense, my view of the foundations of Buddhist environmental ethics is theoretical rather than practical. I have not outlined a distinctively Buddhist answer to any practical environmental questions. And I have not developed a distinctively Buddhist by means of which such questions might be answered. For instance, I have not developed a Buddhism-inspired decision procedure that might be used to generate answers to real-world moral problems concerning the natural world.

But for all this, my account is not, I think, entirely detached from real world concerns. Many of the world’s environmental problems are the result of the wasteful lifestyles of people in the world’s richer countries. So why don’t people change? The answer, I suspect, is not that people are ignorant of environmental problems and their causes. Most people know that global climate change, for instance, is a bad thing; and even if they don’t know the chemistry, they know that it is exacerbated by air travel. Yet still they (or rather, we – I include myself here) refuse to change. I suspect that part of the problem here is a kind of sullen, apathetic resistance to being told what to do. After all, environmentalists tend to come across as green killjoys, relaying long lists of dos and don’ts: don’t throw this away, don’t turn the air con so high, don’t travel by air, and so forth. To counter this, what is needed is an incentive to change one’s lifestyle – a carrot, not a stick. And some of the best incentives are provided by people – or rather, by exemplary people, people we can look up to, role models. And this recommendation coheres nicely with the argument I have set out above. For if that argument is correct, then the connections between Buddhist teachings and environmental concern are most evident, not in abstract speculations on dependent origination and the like, but in the lives of environmentally-engaged Buddhists – individuals such as his Holiness the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh and Buddhadasa. If I am right that Buddhism takes the form of an environmental virtue ethics, then a distinctively Buddhist response to the environmental crisis – or at least part of one - can be found by looking to the lives of role models such as these.

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## **A Systems View of the Global Crisis:**

### **Using the Lesson of Causality to Spread the Buddha's Teachings**

*Brian White, President  
Buddhist Council of New South Wales, Australia*

This paper is all about causality and how we can collectively use an understanding of causality to heal the world and relieve suffering. An understanding of causality and the resulting skilful behavior can be brought about in a variety of ways. Many take a direct approach by promoting and practicing what is called *Engaged Buddhism*. Whilst supporting direct action of engaged Buddhists, the paper also suggests an additional approach, which is to *use the lesson of causality to spread the Buddha's teachings*. In essence, we should bring about a *global Buddhist community* which is less parochial and more open, making it easier for newcomers to take refuge in the Triple Gem and to follow the Noble Path.

#### **Complexity hides causes:**

The world around us is becoming more complex, not only in developed countries but also developing countries. This complexity is the result of many factors. For example, increasing complexity of technology, job specialization, and the modern industrial economy all underpin the economic progress we enjoy. But this complexity hides countless causes beyond our observation. Have you ever wondered how many people make it possible for you to buy a packet of biscuits at the supermarket? I am not suggesting that there is anything wrong with complexity because it has increased our economic wealth and given us more choices at a reduced cost. But there is a problem. For most of us, it has become just too hard to see causality.

The problem with not seeing causality is that we can be oblivious to the consequences of our own actions. Let me give a few examples. In my own country, Australia, the shortage of water is getting worse because so much of the available water is wasted by people and industries that do not see the results of their actions. In the global financial crisis, even experts in the field of finance find it hard to understand the chain of cause and effect which is now resulting in economic hardship around the globe. And there are still many in my own country who would deny any link between the growing use of fossil fuels and the increase in flood, drought and turbulent weather patterns. Therefore, as a society, we continue to harm ourselves

and other life on Earth because we don't really understand, or see, the causal link between what we do and the consequences of what we do.

### The Buddha's teachings on causality

One of the most important teachings of the Buddha is on *causality*. Many are familiar with the Four Noble Truths which diagnose and prescribe a better way to live. At a deeper level, the Four Noble Truths are about causality, the link between suffering and its cause, as well as the link between the extinction of suffering and its cause.

A more general teaching by the Buddha on causality is known as *paticca samuppada*.<sup>1</sup> It is translated variously as Dependent Origination, Dependent Co-arising or Interdependent Co-arising. Most explanations of Interdependent Co-arising refer to the cycle of 12 *nidanas* or links<sup>2</sup> to illustrate our endless sequence of lives (*samsara*). It can also illustrate how the causal links can be broken. *This is profound because it illustrates how we can overcome the causes of suffering.*

What is not as well known is that this teaching on causality can be found throughout the Pali Cannon explaining causality more generally<sup>3</sup>. In the *Samyutta Nikaya* alone it is used no less than 56 times to explain the causal relation between *all phenomena*<sup>4</sup>. This profound teaching explains that *everything* is the result of multiple causes and conditions and that causes and effects *co-arise*<sup>5</sup>, that is, causality is non-linear. The general formula is shown below:

*Herein, brethren, the well taught Ariyan disciple gives his mind thoroughly and systematically to the causal law:-*

*This being, that comes to be; from the arising of this, that arises.*

*This not being, that does not come to be; from the cessation of this, that ceases.*<sup>6</sup>

If you have not seen this before, it might seem obscure, but when we penetrate this teaching of the *Causal Law*, Interdependent Co-arising, we can say:

<sup>1</sup> or *pratitya samutpada* in Sanskrit

<sup>2</sup> *avijja* (ignorance), *sankhara* (karmic formations), *vinnana* (consciousness), *namarupa* (name and form), *salayatana* (six sense bases), *phassa* (sense contact), *vedana* (feeling), *tanha* (craving), *upadana* (clinging), *bhava* (becoming), *jati* (birth), *jaramarana* (decay and death).

<sup>3</sup> Joanna Macy, *Mutual Causality in Buddhism and General Systems Theory*, SUNY Press, 1991

<sup>4</sup> T.W.Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha (Digha Nikaya)*, pp 42-43 Pali Text Society London, 1973.

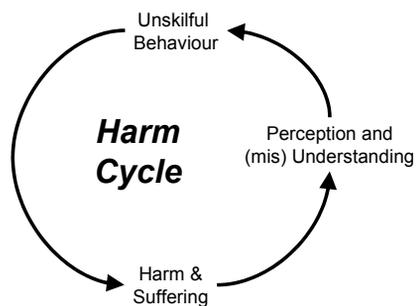
<sup>5</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha's Teachings*, p221, Broadway Books, New York, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> *Samyutta Nikaya XII*, 61.

- Everything that we experience is not random, but instead the result of multiple causes and conditions
- Ultimately *all phenomena* are related through infinite chains of causality
- The causes are present in the effects and the effects are present in the causes
- Many of these causes are the result of our choices
- If we embrace the *Causal Law* we can think and behave more skillfully
- Thinking and behaving more skillfully can result in less suffering and more happiness

### Western thinking discovers the nature of causality

During the twentieth century Western thinking finally started to realize the complex nature of causality (or *systems thinking*) through the work of Ludwig von Bertalanffy<sup>7</sup> in biology, Jay Forrester<sup>8</sup> in System Dynamics, Donella Meadows<sup>9</sup> in social and environmental issues and Peter Senge<sup>10</sup> in management training. The emergence of systems thinking as a Western academic discipline therefore represents a “rediscovery” of one of the most profound teachings of the Buddha. Whereas the Buddha spoke his teachings (rather than writing them down), systems thinking provides a simplified way of representing and understanding complex systems. We can illustrate simplistically any of the current crises (e.g. financial, climate, etc) in a diagrammatic form, which, at the same time, is also consistent with Buddhist teachings.



**Figure 1- The Harm Cycle**

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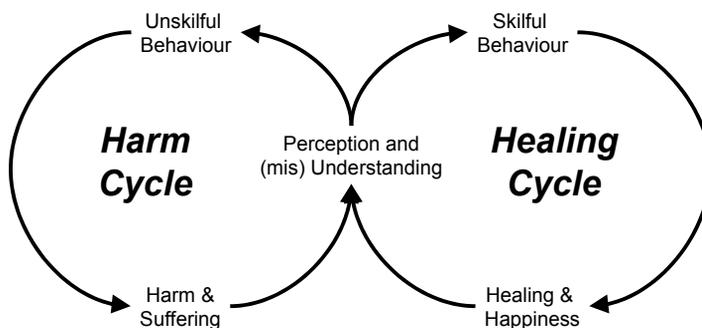
<sup>7</sup> von Bertalanffy, Ludwig, *General Systems Theory*, George Braziller, New York, 1968

<sup>8</sup> Forrester, Jay, *Urban Dynamics*, MIT Press, Mass., 1969

<sup>9</sup> Meadows, Donella H, *The Global Citizen*

<sup>10</sup> Senge Peter, *The Fifth Discipline*, Random House, Sydney, 1990

Although we need to remember that this is *only conceptual*, it makes the point that harm and suffering is the result of unskillful behavior, which in turn is the result of faulty perceptions and misunderstanding (ignorance). If ignorance can be replaced by an understanding of causality we can illustrate an alternative cycle of healing. Figure 2 shows that the perceiving mind can either misunderstand (leading to harm and suffering), or understand (leading to healing and happiness).



*Figure 2 – The Two Cycles*

### **Buddhism itself is subject to change and the Causal Law:**

Let us distinguish between Buddhism as a *vehicle* for the Dharma, and the Dharma itself. Siddhārtha Gautama realized or rediscovered the same Buddha-Dharma that previous Buddhas taught, yet the word Buddhism, means many things to different people. Buddhism evolves. In its various traditions and practices, it has taken many forms in different places over the past 25 centuries. This is because there is an ongoing interaction between Buddhism and society.

When Buddhism enters a society, history indicates that profound and beneficial change occurs in that society. Buddhism also evolves in response to the culture and context of the society it enters. Is it possible for Buddhism to remain static, to stand still, when the practitioners who bring Buddhism into a society are confronted by that society's very different cultural norms and social pressures? Thich Nhat Hanh provides an answer.

*“Like all traditions, Buddhism needs to renew itself regularly in order to stay alive and grow. The Buddha always found ways to express his awakening. Since the Buddha’s lifetime, Buddhists have continued to open new Dharma doors to express and share the teachings begun in the Deer Park in Sarnath.”<sup>11</sup>*

<sup>11</sup> Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh, p17, *The Heart of Buddha’s Teaching*, Random House, New York, 1999

In other words, Buddhism, as a vehicle for the Dharma, follows the Causal Law, in that it continually changes and interacts with society. Over the past hundred years or so, Buddhism has emerged from traditional Buddhist countries and has taken hold in the West. This mixing of Buddhist cultures and Buddhist traditions in the West, is significant in historical terms. As Joseph Goldstein notes, “this abundance and variety of teachings in one place has not happened since the great Indian Buddhist University at Nalanda”<sup>12</sup>. How do we understand the significance of what is happening in Western Buddhism?

*“Is the melting pot approach simply creating a big mess in which essential teachings of a tradition are lost? Or is something new emerging that will revitalize Dharma practice for us all?”<sup>13</sup>*

While the past hundred years has seen Buddhism grow in the West, what social and cultural forces have acted to diminish Buddhism in countries where it once flourished? The last century has seen Buddhist societies in many countries suffer from political intrusions, social discrimination, war and violence, excessive rituals, aggressive capitalism and communism, proselytizing from other religions, and the softening of moral and intellectual standards<sup>14</sup>. If we are realistic about how Buddhism has been impacted in traditionally Buddhist countries, we may see Buddhism flourish again.

### **Responding to global crises**

Numerous teachers and writers have shown how the Buddha’s teachings can be applied directly to solve social problems, economic problems and environmental problems. E.F. Schumacher<sup>15</sup> pointed out that *Economics* sees consumption as something to be maximized, whereas *Buddhist Economics* aims to obtain maximum well-being with the minimum of consumption. Ven P.A. Payutto<sup>16</sup> explains that the economic process begins with want, continues with choice, and ends with satisfaction, all of which are functions of the mind. Thich Nhat Hanh<sup>17</sup>, a pioneer of engaged Buddhism has taught extensively about using mindfulness to avoid indirectly harming other beings and instead cultivating well-being. These and many others have shown how we can apply the Buddha’s teachings to relieve suffering and to heal oneself, the community, and the environment. Engaged Buddhism

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<sup>12</sup> J. Goldstein, p2, *One Dharma: The Emerging Western Buddhism*, Harper Collins, San Francisco, 2002

<sup>13</sup> J. Goldstein, p3, *One Dharma: The Emerging Western Buddhism*, Harper Collins, San Francisco, 2002

<sup>14</sup> Sasaki, Ricardo, *Buddhist Education at Crossroads*, from UNDV Conference, Hanoi, May 2008

<sup>15</sup> Schumacher, E.F., *Small is Beautiful*, p52, Blond & Briggs, London, 1973.

<sup>16</sup> Payutto, Ven. P.A., *Buddhist Economics*, p27, Buddhadhamma Foundation, Bangkok, 1992

<sup>17</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of the Buddha’s Teachings*, pp 94-98, Broadway Books, NY, 1999.

demonstrates and encourages skilful behavior - a *direct approach* to addressing the devastating crises confronting humanity.

Let's recap. We started with the observation that our complex world hides causality, but an understanding of causality, or systems thinking, can be used to solve problems. We observed that Buddhism itself has changed over time and Engaged Buddhism directly applies the Buddha's teachings to respond to the world's problems.

The proposition of this paper is that Buddhists around the world should work together to remove the obstacles to greater understanding and practice of the Buddha's teachings. If we work together as a *global Buddhist community*, which is less parochial and more open, the understanding and practice of the Buddha's teachings would spread, which in turn would help to heal the world's crises and reduce suffering. But it is not easy to work together as a *global Buddhist community*. To understand why, we need to look at a case study of how Buddhism has grown in the West.

### **Australia as a case study for the growth of Buddhism:**

As a case study in the growth of the Buddha's teachings, I would like to look at the growth of Buddhism in my own country Australia. The number of Buddhists in Australia has more than doubled over the decade between 1996 and 2006<sup>18</sup>. At nearly half a million, Buddhism is the largest non-Christian religious group in Australia. Broadly, at least three quarters of Australia's Buddhists are what can be called *Eastern Buddhists*, from Buddhist families originating from Asian countries, which have migrated to Australia. The remaining quarter, *Western Buddhists*, are often Australian-born Caucasians leaving behind a Christian upbringing. Australia's Buddhists reflect Australia's policy and tradition of multiculturalism, as shown in Figure 3 below.

In my experience, people come to Buddhism for a variety of reasons, for example, seeking a different spirituality, health crisis, loss of a loved one; the attraction of Buddhist philosophy, values and lifestyles; Buddhist meditation; Buddhism's openness and lack of dogmatism; and the influence of a peer group. So Australian Buddhism is a picture of ethnic and cultural diversity, as well as diversity of practice.

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<sup>18</sup> 199,812 (1996), 357,813 (2001), 418,756 (2006)

<b>Birthplace</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Australia</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Cambodia, Laos</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Malaysia, Indonesia</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>China, Taiwan</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Thailand</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Sri Lanka</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Japan, Korea</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>9</b>

Source: *The Development of Buddhism in Australia and New Zealand*, Michelle Spuler, in *Westward Dharma*, University of California Press, 2002

**Figure 3 – Multicultural Buddhism in Australia.**

Let us now discuss some of the challenges to the further growth of Buddhism in Australia, and indeed the West generally.

Being a Buddhist can mean, for example, daily chanting and prayers, visiting temples to offer food to sangha, meditation retreats, or participating in social or community activities with other Buddhists. This diversity makes the study of Buddhist practice quite complex. Even Buddhists with years of experience may not be aware of teachings and practices of different traditions.

While rituals and cultural practices may be appropriate and reasonable when and where they originated, some cultural practices may present an obstacle for new Buddhists. As Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh says,

*How much of our spiritual practice and discipline is embedded in cultural overlays from the East that are neither relevant nor helpful in our Western society?*<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> J. Goldstein, p3, *One Dharma: The Emerging Western Buddhism*, Harper Collins, San Francisco, 2002

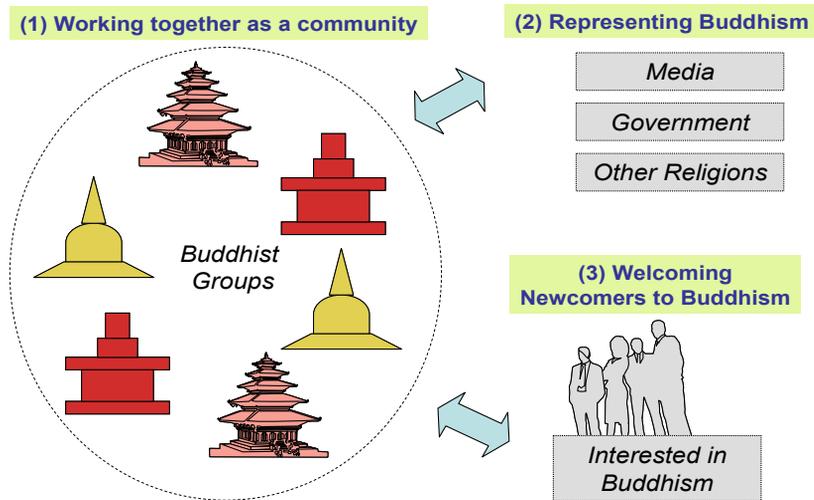
Many temples in Australia serve a non-English speaking culture by conducting devotional services in languages other than English. This makes it difficult for English speaking Westerners, as well as younger people from Buddhist families. Those in their teens and twenties are unlikely to follow their parents to these services if an alternative is available, such as evangelical Christianity, which is easier to understand, and more welcoming.

Because of the differences in language and culture some Buddhist groups in Australia, which have originated from other countries, establish themselves in Australia without understanding Australian culture, or the rules and regulations of the government. This makes it difficult for a new temple to settle into Australian culture and it lead to obstacles when complying with government regulations. This diversity of practice, tradition, language and culture lead to three main challenges.

**1. Working together as a community.** Immigration from many Asian countries has led to a proliferation of Buddhist groups and many are struggling to survive with a relatively small support base. This leads to an internal focus which discourages interaction with other Buddhist groups. This situation is exacerbated by the differences in culture, language and tradition. The challenge for the Buddhist community is that parochialism and fragmentation discourage collaboration and sharing.

**2. Representing Buddhism.** The second challenge is clear representation of Buddhism to the rest of the society, which means responding positively to interest from the media, meeting and discussing issues with government agencies, and developing understanding and positive relationships with other religious traditions outside Buddhism.

**3. Welcoming Newcomers to Buddhism.** The third challenge is the difficulty for newcomers interested in Buddhism. Buddhist practice looks so diverse to newcomers and when combined with cultural diversity and the emphasis placed on personal responsibility, means that newcomers are often left to *work it out for themselves*. Some can become confused and discouraged and give up with frustration because of activities or practices that are not explained and therefore do not make sense.



**Figure 4 – Addressing the challenges to further growth of Buddhism in Australia**

### Addressing the challenges in Australia

In Australia we are actively building a Buddhist community despite the diversity of traditions, languages and cultures. There are five *Buddhist councils* covering different geographical areas of Australia. Together they have formed the Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils.

The Buddhist Council of New South Wales is a lay volunteer-run, service organization which supports its member organizations. These include more than 90 temples, Buddhist centers and societies. The Buddhist Council of New South Wales has used systems thinking to identify *three objectives* which respond to the *three challenges*.

The Buddhist Council’s first objective is to support member organizations who in turn serve the Buddhist community. Member organizations enjoy these benefits: free access to advice on legal issues, finance, governance, etc; free Dharma books; free access to premises large enough for 100 people for meditation, Dharma talks or workshops; and discount insurance which saves hundreds of dollars for each temple. The result is that Buddhist groups find it easier to function and grow.

The Buddhist Council’s second objective is to represent the Buddhist community to inter-faith groups, media, government and the public. There is an ongoing dialogue between volunteers in the Buddhist Council with different

government agencies, for example, health, education, immigration and citizenship, and local government. The result is that media organizations, government departments and other religions find it easier to understand the Buddhist community.

The Buddhist Council's third objective is to promote the understanding and practice of the Dharma. The Buddhist Council of New South Wales runs a chaplaincy program with over 20 volunteers who visit hospitals and prisons. There is a content rich website and a telephone information line which responds to enquiries about Buddhism and meditation from the public. There is also an education program with 90 volunteers who visit schools each week to teach Buddhism. The growing interest in Buddhism means that there are currently 30 schools on the waiting list. The Council also supports youth Buddhism through the Mitra Youth Buddhist Network, a non-sectarian group of young Buddhists who organize conferences and support youth Buddhism generally. The result is that Buddhism becomes more accessible to newcomers.

### **Can we create a Global Buddhist Community**

Let us come back to the key proposition of this paper. As a response to all the global crises, Buddhists around the world should work together to remove the obstacles to greater understanding and practice of the Buddha's teachings. We have seen how an understanding of causality can help us change the world. If our goal is to make the precious Dharma available to those who are seeking a better approach to life, then we should take collective action to make this possible.

We applied systems thinking to the Buddhist community itself to identify three factors critical for the growth of Buddhism in the West: working together as a community, representing Buddhism, and welcoming newcomers to Buddhism. Should these three factors be applied only to the West, where Buddhism has the greatest growth potential? Could they be applied also to traditional Buddhist societies also? Wherever Buddhist groups exist, East or West, can we work together more effectively to generously and compassionately make the Dharma more available to others?

To do so we need to see how Buddhism can grow in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in any part of the world. For Buddhism to flourish, there first needs to be a sangha able to teach in a contemporary context, and second, a lay organization able to support the sangha. Together the sangha and lay organization need to respond to the three challenges.

As the example of the Buddhist Council of New South Wales shows, Buddhist groups can come together and benefit from the skills and spiritual energy

within the Buddhist community. Couldn't we create a network of Buddhist councils in Western countries where Buddhism is growing? Couldn't we also extend this global network of Buddhist councils to Asian countries where Buddhism has had a proud history benefiting those societies? This *Global Buddhist Network* would facilitate collaboration and working together *within and between* countries, *within and between* Buddhist traditions and cultures, without diluting or compromising individual traditions and their practices. The Fourth World Buddhist Summit noted the "lacking of a global Buddhist network in a true practical sense".<sup>20</sup>

## Conclusions

The need for the Buddha's teachings will be greater in the years ahead as we confront any number of society wide challenges, such as climate change, the global financial crisis and the shortage of energy, etc. In other words, the understanding and practice of the Dharma will help humanity through the next period of human history, a period many expect to be very turbulent and disruptive. What we take for granted today may not be there in years to come. Our lives could very well be turned upside down. In my experience, a Dharma perspective helps to navigate and grow from life's upheavals.

If our starting point is that the Dharma is the most effective medicine that we can take and that the Triple Gem is the most powerful protection, then with compassionate hearts, we might look at how this Dharma can be more accessible and available to those who are ready to explore its teachings. Making the Dharma more accessible is an act of generosity and compassion for those who can benefit from Dharma.

We can indeed share the Dharma more widely and make it more accessible, but we need to be more aware of the obstacles to wider Dharma understanding and practice. Can we use the lesson of causality to spread the Buddha's teachings?

The understanding and practice of the Dharma can increase if we behave more like a *global Buddhist community*. This means being less parochial and more open, making it easier for newcomers to take refuge in the Triple Gem and follow the Noble Path.

This vision of a *global Buddhist community* can be enabled by a ***Global Buddhist Network*** through which Buddhist organizations throughout the world can collaborate, share and assist each other.

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<sup>20</sup> Most Venerable Phra Rajmedhaphorn, Fourth World Buddhist Summit, 1-5 November 2005, Bangkok.

## **Mindful Meditation in Buddhism and Wu Wei of Tao to Save Nature in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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We all know that capitalistic society in this 21<sup>st</sup> century only leads to natural disaster. We use natural resources to satisfy our needs with no limit, as more production means more profit. At the moment we are starting to be concerned about the world we are living in, how to save our environment etc. We all have to face ecology problems and solve these, together, to go deep into the essence of our being to learn to exist in a different light. The purpose of this paper is to bring the ideas of Wu Wei of Tao and the practice of Mindful Meditation to help humanity see the reality in life, to see things as they are. This should enable one to be satisfied with life from within; no need for more material gains and an increased ability to save our environment.

With modern propaganda and the habit of comparison, minds have become more materialistic. Most people in this century think that the more they have the better they become. In fact happiness is not always depends on the income or any material gains. Richard Layard, *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* investigated and made researches about happiness, his book showed the comparison between the Western industrial countries and the underdeveloped ones, the richer ones are no happier than the poorer.<sup>1</sup> The increases of income do not make people feel better. People want more because of media and the habit of comparison.<sup>2</sup> The more one wants the more consumed from nature. There is no ending to this wanting. Until people understand their own existence, able to realize and satisfy with themselves and understand the concept of here and now.

Most humans in this century cannot understand and realize the meaning of here and now. We always search for what we do not have and are never satisfied with what we have. We tend to look for something in the future, not really appreciating the present, the longest moment of our life. The concept of Wu Wei means doing nothing, or non action. This is one of Tao's important ideas. As the following from Tao Te Ching:

*The Tao in its regular course does nothing (for the sake of doing it),*

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<sup>1</sup> Layard, R. *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*, (Penguin Books, 2006), p.32

<sup>2</sup>This problems led to the American economic crisis from the end 2008-9.

*And so there is nothing which it does not do. (Legge, chap.37)*

It is the basic way to conform with nature, which does not mean laziness or lack of thought, but means not indulging in useless effort and not doing anything contradictory to nature. According to Alan Watts, non-doing is:

*“... what we mean by going with the grain, rolling with the punch, swimming with the current, trimming sails to the wind, taking the tide at its flood, and stooping to conquer.....the life-style of one who follows the Tao, and must be understood primarily as a form of intelligence.” -- Tao: The Watercourse Way, Pantheon Books, 1973.)*

Intelligence understands true happiness as not connected to the past or the future, *true happiness is here and now. It is something from within, the oneness with all right in this moment.* - Osho wrote in *Tao: The Pathless Path*, that can be applied well to the present situation. Osho described in this book how a student came across an old man collecting rice in the rice field and singing at the same time. The student could not understand why the old man was happy, so he asked the old man, why are you so happy and able to sing and collect rice at the same time? The old man said, *“All of us are entitled to be happy like me, if they do not cling to their past, their belonging, their honor or fame or the future. I welcome death and I am happy for that.”*

Tao lead us to see that all is connected or related to one another, nothing can be separated. There is no division in Tao. It is important for us to see thing as the whole. Tao is life, love, happiness, emptiness, peace and death. These are facts about life. When one realizes it one can become one with nature. Tao leads man to understand the essence of one’s life, or knowing how to exit.

One has to learn how to live for oneself first, and then be able to live for others. This is the way of nature. If one finds happiness from within, one is able to bring happiness to others as well. Finding happiness from others can bring one more happiness as well. Jeremy Bentham also wrote:

*“Create all the happiness you are able to create: remove all the misery you are able to remove. Every day will allow you to add something to the pleasure of others, or do diminish something of their pains. And for every grain of enjoyment you sow in the bosom of another, you shall find a harvest in your own bosom; while every sorrow which you pluck out from the thoughts and feelings of a fellow creature shall be replaced by beautiful peace and joy in the sanctuary of your soul.”<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> Layard R. *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science*, (Penguin Books,2006), p.236

Man cannot separate himself from others and nature. The more one gives the more one takes. Loving is giving. If one only takes, there will be disaster. So far man exploited nature, and hardly give back or concern about nature around us. Benjamin Hoff wrote:

“According to Lao-tse, the more man interfered with the natural balance produced and governed by the universal laws, the further away the harmony retreated into the distance. The more forcing, the more trouble man can be. Whether heavy or light, wet or dry, fast or slow, everything had its own nature already within it, which could not be violated without causing difficulties.”<sup>4</sup>

We can see all the difficulties around the world at the moment, natural disasters that happened in American and around the world, and global warming these events came from man exploitation of nature. Had we do not stop this action we will be the victim of our own action. We cannot really survive and be happy. Happiness can also be reflected from the surroundings, the natural world around us. Such simplicities in Tao are powerful forces in life.

Through the understanding of Wu Wei, we can exist along with nature, sailing as the wind, swimming with the current. In this sense we can do nothing against nature. We have to start to learn to listen and live with nature once more, not to conquer but to be with.<sup>5</sup> It is our intelligence to be able to understand nature, which means to exist in every moment of the present, which is *now*. It means we are truly free from the past and able to enjoy the present moment and never let the future interfere with the present. This idea of *now*, being with the present is very much like Mindful Meditation in Buddhism and even like being an observer in Quantum Physics.<sup>6</sup>

Mindful meditation in Buddhism means one has to observe oneself at all time, not to clinging to the past or thinking about the future. One becomes one with the present moment. The awareness of oneself in all directions of one's being means the complete existence in every moment of one's life. (This concept is very much like Tao, absorbing nature or things around us.) In Mindful Meditation, one who practices is the one who is watching oneself at all times both physically and mentally. One can observe one's body, such as sitting, walking, reclining etc., and also observe one's mind, as in thoughts, emotions, feelings, and perceptions. Metaphorically, it is like looking at oneself in a mirror. This oneness leads one to be able to absorb the

<sup>4</sup> Hoff, Benjamin. *The Tao of Pooh*, (Penguin Books, 1982), p.4

<sup>5</sup> Some made studies about the *Amish* communities who live in America, (around Pennsylvania) they have their own way of life, no electricity, no television, use only natural power. Their ways of life do not destroy nature.

<sup>6</sup> Umavijani, C., *Quantum Physics and Buddhist Characteristics of Reality for Peace in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Sanskrit Studies Centre Journal, (Bangkok, 2008), volume IV, p.146-153.

natural flow of nature around us as well. Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw of Burma expressed Mindful Meditation in the following:

*The meditator who is ever watchful of the rising and of the abdomen and the phenomena that arise at the of sensory impingement finds that the perception of sound disappears at once when noted as "hearing, hearing;" the perception of sight vanishes when notes as "seeing, seeing;" so also the perceptions of thoughts and ideas disappear as soon as they are noted as thoughts or ideas. Observation and realization thus come through personal knowledge that perception is not everlasting; it does not last even one second and has the nature of incessantly ceasing. Let alone perceptions perceived in previous existences, even in the present life, perceptions experienced in past moment s are no longer existent, they have all ceased and vanished. -- (The Great Discourse on Not Self. Translated by U.K.Lay)*

Many people do not understand how to stay with the present. Venerable Ajahn Brahm<sup>7</sup> wrote a very interesting comment upon teaching the meditation of here and now:

“When I teach meditation, I like to begin at the simple stage of giving up the baggage of past and future. You may think that this is an easy thing to do, but it is not. Abandoning the past means not thinking about your work, your family, your work, your family, your commitments, your responsibilities, your good or bad times in childhood, and so on. You abandon all past experiences by showing no interest in them at all. During meditation you become someone who has no history. You do not think about where you live, where you were born, who your parents were, or what your upbringing was like. All of that history you renounce. In this way, if you are meditating with others, everyone becomes equal- just a meditator.”<sup>8</sup>

When one is fully aware of the present moment continuously, the sense of satisfaction of oneself will appear from within naturally. Ajahn Brahm expressed in the following, that when one is fully centered within the present moment, one can feel the sense of timelessness, time is without edges, empty and immeasurable. If one can gain wisdom or deep insight one is able to see things as they are. Ajahn Brahm wrote:

“If you follow the path of mediation, your inner happiness rises like a tide that never ebbs. Mindfulness becomes energized as you struggle less with your inner world. Insights appear in abundance like luscious fruits on a heavily laden tree,

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<sup>7</sup> Ajan Brahm studied Theoretical Physics at Cambridge University after finished his degree and teaching for a year, traveled to Thailand to become a monk, and studied under Phra Ajhan Chah, forest monastery. At present he sets up monasteries in Australia.

<sup>8</sup> Ajahn Brahm, *Happiness Through Meditation*. (Wisdom Publications, 2006), p.7

too many to pluck and eat all at once. You realize so clearly that the path to peace is this letting go that you learned in meditation. Or you can call it the path of unconditional loving-kindness. Such metta (loving-kindness) softens your judgments of yourself and others.”<sup>9</sup>

Before one can attain this stage, there are sixteen stages of the Insight Knowledge according to Theravada Buddhism.<sup>10</sup> This realization about oneself enables one to live a full life by having the sense of self-satisfaction, one is contented with oneself not wanting anything more. The contentment within one is beyond explanation into words. One can become self sufficient within oneself by understanding the wonder of the mechanism nature of the self, the body self. This machine functions by itself. When one truly observes from moment to moment, one comes to the realization that the body and the mind are in the process of change at all times.

And through this realization the observer can also truly understand what one observes. Understanding that all things are interrelated and inseparable from one and another, the reality of the self can be realized by the observing mind.<sup>11</sup> One can realize that one has no control over the body such as in aging, sickness or death. But without Mindful Meditation, one may live in the world of illusion, and cannot distinguish between what is real and what is not. One cannot see things as they are.

Through Mindful Meditation one can come to the realization of reality in nature having three characteristics, impermanence, suffering (as things are changing, decaying at the same time, some things changing new to old, or young to old age) and the concept of no-self, that one is merely the mechanism of the body-self. Through these realizations one is able to maintain equilibrium within one’s mind and body, no more sense of greed and wanting – being satisfied with oneself.

Hence, ecology and natural resource problems can be solved by realizing the truth in nature. This truth can be achieved through understanding and being one with nature in Tao. The process of realization leads one to be able to be satisfied in life and know the necessity from within. If we know what is really enough, then we need not produce unnecessary things in the world, which will use up natural resources more. The Buddha set examples for his followers: the monk needs a bowl of food, and a piece of rope to cover himself, and no other belongings. But at present we need not only shelter, food, medicine, and cloth, but also televisions, computers, mobile phones, MP3-4, etc.; or wanting to have second home, or more belongings

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 272

<sup>10</sup> Mahasi Sayadaw, *The Great Discours on Not Self*, (Buddhadhamma Foundation, 1996), p.186

<sup>11</sup> As mentioned about Quantum Physics, for example the scientist, Heisenberg observed the movement of each atom and realize that each atom changed and uncertain in their movement, he sum up to The Principle of Uncertainty.

from advertisements. There is no limit to our wanting. *We only look for what we do not have rather than appreciate what we have.* Then we try to get more and more and do not realize the meaning of enough.<sup>12</sup>

It is also interesting to find out about technology and humanity, that the more we have the more we become more miserable. Richard Layard who investigated Bhutan, the small idyllic kingdom up high in the Himalayas, whose king announced his nation's objective would be the Gross National Happiness (GNH). After one year of his decision on allowing television into his country in 1999, the Bhutanese faced all kinds of changes in their society, such as violence, sexual betrayal, all kinds of social problems. These are evidence that having more or technology change can affect attitudes and behavior of the people.<sup>13</sup> More means less, at times.

An interesting study was made by Gregg Easterbrook, who wrote *The Progress Paradox: How life gets better while people feel worse*, (2002). He stresses that Americans in this century have better health care, housing, a better standard of living and more free time, but people feel worse. This book mentioned that about 50% of present Americans feel that their lives are worse than their parents. They feel that in their generation there is more violence and bad news, and no hope for the future. Partly this is from the media always posting bad news and violence, as bad news and violence can sell. Americans are also the victim of all kinds of propaganda. They feel the need to get any new product in the market. They have the urge to have more than others and end up in dept and with no savings. And the irony of the story that Easterbrook mentioned is that the more they are in debt, the more they want to spend, which only leads to more stress, discontent and misery. (This great debt of the American Society is partly the cause for the collapse of the American economy in this year 2008.) This story may not only be true in the States, but also elsewhere when people overspend with credit cards and do not realize what they really need in life.

Modern technology and propaganda lead us to be confused between what we want and what are the necessities in our life, and we associate success with material things rather than what we can appreciate from within. It is interesting to see Easterbrook suggest at the end of his book that the era of materialism is coming to an end. Since buying and having do not solve problems, now Americans are going through an era of finding the meaning of life, free from materialism and moving away from the edge of individualism. We all need to find out who we are and what we really want from life or the meaning of life. Americans may be the pioneers to really discover this knowledge.

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<sup>12</sup> This sense of dissatisfactions lead to the economic crisis in American, they spend more than they have. Because the sense of wanting without limit and the sense of dissatisfaction from within made them cling to material things out side themselves.

<sup>13</sup> Layard, R., *Happiness: Lesson from A New Science*, (Penguin Books, 2006), p.77

Tao and Mindful Meditation give directions for man in this century to be able to direct oneself towards what one wants from this life. Simplicity in life, understanding oneself through one's observations and the ability to be one with nature are clues of how to live this life. If one is able to practice Wu Wei in everyday life, to be with the present at all times, one will not suffer from wanting more and be able to live life fully. Life can be meaningful in every moment. Ajan Brahm gave very interesting remarks, that silence is delightful:

“It would be marvelous for each one of us if we could abandon all inner speech and abide in silent awareness of the present moment long enough to realize how delightful it is. Silence is so much more productive of wisdom and clarity than thinking. When one realizes that, silence becomes more attractive and important.”<sup>14</sup> Now there are evidences of many hospitals and schools brought meditation into practice, condition of the patients and students learning had improved.

Mindful Meditation also enables us to realize the reality of things, especially the knowledge of ourselves. Realizing both the mind and body of one are under the three characteristics of realities. First, the process of change, nothing stays the same (anicca), second realizing the suffering of one (or Dukka), that we are under the state of changes there are old age, sickness, the decline of the body. And third, there is no such thing as a self (anatta). Realizing that we are part of the natural process that we are the observer and being observed at the same time. Through this realization we become one with nature or reality. Wisdom through this realization enables us to rise above the material object. We will not be concerned with what we have or do not have any more. We can have a sufficient life, able to be satisfied with ourselves, living life fully.

If many people practice these ideas, it is as if they have a vaccine to save them from a virus, enabling them to stop wanting more, and live this life free from desire. They will act naturally and spontaneously according to the situation. They will be able to be satisfied with themselves, and there will be not much demand to produce more goods. Natural resources can be protected. Right now we have plenty of commodities such as housing, clothing, etc. that can be contributed to all. But at present some have more than enough, and some do not have any. The problem that we are having now is not the problem of having no goods, but the problem of contribution. If we realize that we do not need that much we can contribute more to those who do not have. Meditation led one to have more loving and kindness towards others, one is able to contribute more to fellow human beings. Many thinkers in this century feel that what is important to the world now is to give and distribute more, for example Bill Gates, Buffet and many others.

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<sup>14</sup> Ajan Brahm, *Happiness Through Meditation*, (Wisdom Publications, 2006), p.13

Finally, we hope through the practice of Wu Wei and Mindful Meditation man can be led to live to the fullest, being self sufficient and feeling for nature around us more. The best way to attain this state has to come from the inner self, realization from within through Wu Wei and Mindful Meditation. Then natural resources can be saved.

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## **Engagement with Environmental Action: Comparing Buddhist and Vaishnava Perspectives**

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### **Introduction**

On the Day of Vesak 2003, the Secretary-General's UN Message called on the world to heed the Buddha's message of mindfulness for humankind: "*Unless we are more mindful of succeeding generations, our relentless degradation of the environment will compromise their ability to meet their needs*" (Annan, 2003, p.1). The UN Message argued that "*if we want to have a chance of overcoming the many challenges that face us today - in the fields of peace and security, development, and the protection of our global environment - we must think beyond our narrow, short-term self interests, and raise ourselves to a universal perspective from which the well-being of the broader human community appears as important as our own well-being*" (Annan, 2006, p.1). Again, in 2008, Ban Ki-Moon's message to the United Nations Day of Vesak proposed that the teachings of Buddhism should "*inspire our efforts to address the broader challenges confronting our world...in the protection of our environment...we have to rise above [our] perceived narrow self-interests, and think and act as a member of one global community. This is the path to enlightenment, and it is the foundation of a better world for all*" (Ki-Moon, 2008, p.1).

The Fifth International Buddhist Conference in Hanoi, 2008, on the United Nations Day of Vesak made a pledge to stress pursuing active measures to halt the misuse of our world's resources, a modern-life trend that has caused ecological imbalances that endanger all life on the planet. The Hanoi Declaration also urged the promotion of dialogue amongst different religions (c.f. Pigem, 2008). Here we attempt such a dialogue. This paper tries to compare the engaged Buddhist perspective on environmental action with that of Caitanyaite Vaishnavism, a prominent theme in World Hinduism; at least, it tries to compare the tendrils of those traditions that are grounded in the UK (ISKCON Educational Services, 2004). It deals with their different prescriptions for Dharma, in Hinduism - 'right action', and the need for such action to deal with the environmental crisis. Beyond this, the paper explores the role of meditation and the experience of nature, of interbeing, the importance of detachment, service, mindfulness and personal karma in informing environmental action.

Caitanyite Vaishnavism is a branch of devotional (Bhaktivedanta) Hinduism that emerges from the teaching of the Fifteenth Century Bengali Saint - Shri Krishna Caitanya Mahaprabhu (Clooney and Stewart, 2004). Shri Caitanya taught that devotion to Lord Krishna, especially as He is portrayed in the Bhagavata Purana's Vrindavan sections and in the Bhagavadgita, was the most important treasure that can be obtained in life and that receiving the blessing of true devotion was more important than birth-right. Sri Caitanya emerged from the Brahma Sampradaya, one of four orthodox Vaishnava lineages and one that includes the famous dualist (Dvaita Vedanta) philosopher Madhva. However, Sri Caitanya's philosophical position is 'Bhedabheda', meaning simultaneous, inconceivable, oneness with and difference from the Supreme, often using a metaphor for the individual spiritual self as a droplet in an infinite ocean (Tapasyananda, 1990). After initial contacts in the late Nineteenth Century, the tradition was brought to the West from 1965 by Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabupadha and established as a, very unusual in Hindu terms, multi-ethnic community. In recent years, the movement has spread widely through Eastern Europe and, in the West, gained great support from, especially the young people of India's diaspora. In India, it has become firmly re-rooted in modern cities, such as Bangalore, Mumbai and Delhi, where its openness and inclusivity have won many adherents.

### **Mindfulness and Meditation:**

In environmentalism, as in spiritual practice, the greatest enemy is the unruly, self-serving and uncaring human mind. Orr (1994) tasks us with the challenge of making human minds that are fit for the biosphere. Lord Krishna states: "*For one who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends; but for one who has failed to do so, the mind will remain the greatest enemy*" (Bhagavadgita, 6.6). Meditation is one of the Bhagavadgita's three paths to gaining the mental self-control needed to realize the true self.

In Buddhism, mental control is manifested as silence and stillness and these are a prerequisite to action. Here, energy springs from and leads to silence - and this is important because "*every struggle springs from a profound restfulness, ... every action springs from stillness, every development springs from detachment...*"; the dialectical and mutual relationship between silence as the word unspoken and the word as silence heard reflects and supports the harmony between silence and our concern for humanity, which makes the silence heard (Pieris, 1988, p.85). Of course, silence is much less the Vaishnava way. Here, as in Tibetan Buddhist practice, there is a more boisterous approach; its daily practice involving bells, drums, iconic images, dancing and chanting (japa meditation), the repetition of mantras. This is not because Vaishnavas consider that God may be hard of hearing, as some have wisely

quipped. Rather, through repeated symbolic action, mental control, and sound, characteristically, the chanting of the Maha Mantra, they follow a well-trodden path. As in Buddhism, the practice aims to create detachment by breaking the connection of the mind with the noise of daily existence but here, the aim is to replace it with *Sabda Brahman*, the sound of God. Of course, this kind of meditation is a form of yoga, whose purpose, as charted by Patanjali, is to suppress the fluctuations of the mind, so that it becomes possible to witness one's true identity, which otherwise is submerged by the babble of the brain and the self-vaunting personal ego (Patanjali Yoga Sutra, 1.2-1.4 in: Prabhavananda and Isherwood, 1953). In Buddhism, that true identity is a stillness but in Vaishnavism, it is a complex and variegated experience, which may be characterised as *satcitananda*, literally: *sat*, being – the sense of stillness here associated with the radiance of the Supreme, *cit* – consciousness, here associated with the experience of the numinous, which some texts translate rather ineffectively as horripilation, and Tantrikas link with the awakening of the Goddess Kundalini, and, finally, *ananda*, which is the bliss of transcendental association with the Lord's pastimes, most particularly, the whirling Rasa Lila, the dance of divine love (Schweig, 2005).

Vaishnavas recognize a path of inaction (*akarma*), a hard and difficult road toward knowledge through austerity, renunciation and knowledge, whose patron is the Sage Dattatreya (Srimad Bhagavatam, 7.13.34-36). Acharya Vinoba Bhave writes: “*One aspect of this state of akarma is that, although the person acts, they do not act. The other aspect is that, though they do not act at all, they move the world to action. There is in them an immeasurable power to impel to action*” (Bhave, 1981). However, the rocky path of knowledge is too steep for all but the most saintly. In Vaishnavism, easier is the path of action, or *karma yoga*, a path toward spiritual liberation that involves dutiful agency in the world and detachment. However, it is difficult to conduct ‘fruitive’, i.e. self-promoting, actions in the material world without becoming attached to materiality. Hence, a third ingredient is required, which is devotion - *bhakti*. Bhakti yoga, as commended to the heroic Arjuna by Lord Krishna in the culminating verses of the Bhagavadgita Canto 18, is the path of dutiful action in devotion and it achieves detachment through the surrendering of all fruits of that action to God. The most difficult question that then arises for each embodied spirit is what should be the character of that dutiful action. For some, this is assumed by birth, inclination and community tradition. For others, the path is less clear. In Vaishnavism, guidance from a spiritual leader, a Guru, supported by meditation, is the way towards the realization of the spiritual self, the spark that is at once part of and apart from the ocean of the Supreme and, through this, realization of one's personal dharma and duty to the world. All Vaishnavas conceive themselves as the eternal servants of God and so, for them, the only truly important question is what service is it that they are meant to offer (Caitanya Caritamrta, Madhya-lila: 20.108-

109). For some, this may be service in the Temple, for others - service in the community, for still others - service to Bhumi Mata, Mother Earth, and for many more, some of each.

In Buddhism, nature provides places that are conducive to meditation because there is more scope to directly experience the natural world, free of thoughts. Nature provides calm through separation from troubles and anxieties (Buddhadāsa, pp.5-6) - and teaches serenity, even amidst unfavourable circumstances. Through meditation *“the spring flowers look prettier, and the mountain stream runs cooler and more transparent”* (Suzuki, 1969, pp.97-98).

Nature enables one to *“understand what it means to cool down from the heat of our confusion, despair, anxiety, and suffering”* (Buddhadāsa, pp.6-7). It provides a source of hope and strength, so that we know all is well, while acting because all is not well. All beings are suffering and we should help those we can; the Buddha encouraged loving-kindness and compassion (Bhikkhu Rewata Dhamma, 1999).

### **Learning through Nature:**

The Buddha taught through nature: *“Suppose there is a pool of water, turbid, stirred up and muddied. Just so a turbid mind. Suppose there is a pool of water, pure, tranquil and unstirred, where a man can see oysters and shells, pebbles and gravel, and schools of fish. Just so an untroubled mind”* (in Kabilsingh, 1996, p.149). Wild nature should be preserved because it is conducive for meditation. For example, Dōgen (in Tanahashi 1985, p.105) said that mountains are the abode of sages, and Dhammapitaka argued for preserving the forests because the Buddha taught his disciples that they provide an environment that is conducive for meditation (Swearer, 1999). Being in the natural world allows us *“...to experience peace and quiet. It is only by being in nature that the trees, rocks, earth, sand, animals, birds, and insects can teach us the lesson of self-forgetting”* (Buddhadāsa, p.7); because as Dōgen (1939, p.98) adds *“...mind is no other than mountains and rivers and the great earth.”*

In Vaishnavism too, Lord Krishna teaches through nature. In the Uddhava Gita, he personally narrates the story of Sri Dattatreya and His 24 Gurus (Srimad Bhagavatam, 11.7-9). Here Sri Dattatreya appears as an avadhut and jivan-mukhti, one who is enlightened yet remains in the material world. *“Knowledge ... the true cause of final liberation is the most precious possession of the Avadhutas”* (Mahanirvana Tantra, 14.140). Based loosely on Samkhya cosmology, Sri Dattatreya’s teachers were: the earth, wind, sky, water, fire, the moon, the sun, some pigeons, a python, the ocean, a honey-bee, a bee-keeper, an elephant, a deer, a fish, a reformed prostitute, a small squirrel, a child, a hawk, a young housewife, an archer, a

snake, a spider, and a wasp (Radhakrishnan and Moore, 1957; Haigh, 2007). From the earth, He learns forbearance and steadfastness, and from the wind the freedom of truth. The sun, moon, and ocean taught Him the unchanging nature of truth and that everything is a manifestation of one eternal truth. Watching the boundless sky and the deep unperturbed ocean, He determines that the spiritual Self is beyond materiality, while the spider that first spins then consumes its web reminds that everything in the material world is transient. Lessons from the flame-lured moth, the elephant snared by lust, the deer frightened into the hunter's net, and the greedy fish caught by the fisherman's line warn against the distractions of desire. The lovebird pigeons are destroyed by their attachment to their family, the honeybee's wealth is stolen by the beekeeper, and the hawk, left in peace when it gives up its prey, all warn against building worldly attachments. A child's happiness teaches the happiness of freedom from material care and the tales of the python and the bumble bee emphasise the benefits of living simply without burdening the world. The parable of the prostitute, Pingala, proclaims that anyone can change their course, while both fire and water attest to the power of the teacher to purify the world. For the new student, the stories of the maiden and the snake teach avoidance of distraction, while that of the arrow-smith who fails to notice the king's parade that passes his workshop demonstrates the need for focus. At last, the tale of the caterpillar who transforms into a wasp teaches that by concentrating on God, one can reach the ultimate goal (Ambikananda, 2000). Of course, similar images abound in the Dhammapada.

Likewise, Buddhism believes that everything conveys the Dharma. Hence, there is a close relationship between enlightenment and the world in which we are situated because *"when your consciousness has become ripe by true zazen – pure like clear water, like a serene mountain lake, not moved by any wind – then anything may serve as a medium for enlightenment"* (Yamada Kōun Rōshi, quoted in Aitken, 1978, p.26). For Dōgen *"mountains and waters right now are the actualization of the ancient Buddha way"* and *"the reality of nature is synonymous with the nature of reality"* (Kaza and Kraft, 2000, p.13).

Thus, the planet teaches us both through its eloquent beauty and its reactions to our harmful environmental impacts. The Buddha-nature is manifest in all things (Suzuki, 1953); *"...mountains, trees, flowing water, flowers, and plants – everything as it is – is the way Buddha is"* (Suzuki, 2002, p.131). Dharma, in the Buddhist tradition, means truth, teachings and nature because they are the same, nature being the manifestation of truth and the teachings, so that *"when we destroy nature we destroy truth and the teachings"* (Ajahn Pongsak, quoted in Batchelor and Brown, 1992, p.99). Similarly, in Vaishnavism, at the conclusion of the parable of Gokarna in the Varaha Purana (172.1-61), the people restore temple gardens that have been damaged by a kingly encampment and in so doing restore the beauty of the spirits of the earth.

Elsewhere, it is taught that the whole world is God's temple. The material universe is a portion of God. There is nothing that is not part of God and equally, nothing finite that can express the infinity of God, no salvation apart from God's grace, which is bestowed upon those devoted to His service. Here Buddhism differs; salvation is "*sought in the finite itself; there is nothing infinite apart from finite things*" (Suzuki, 1949, p.25) and "*the finite is the infinite, and vice versa*" (Suzuki, 1949, p.26). Nevertheless, all aspects of nature manifest Buddha-nature and possess an intrinsic value, independent from our own attachments and designs upon it (Harvey, 2000). Our nature is one with nature. It lives in us and we in it, and so we should allow the natural world to live its own life (Suzuki, 1959).

Vaishnavas remember the teaching of another incarnation, the Emperor Prithu, who settled a dispute between the earth and its people by organising the milking of the earth. The key to the teaching is that each species upon the earth took its best as the calf and milked only according to its needs (Srimad Bhagavatam, 4.18.9-29). At the conclusion of the story, Lord Prithu takes the earth as His daughter and gives her the name Prithvi.

### **Interbeing – Being One with Nature:**

Bhikkhu Rewata Dhamma (1999, p.490) notes that the wheel of life explains how we are repeatedly reborn and argues that "*all beings are related at some time or another as mother, father, sister, brother and so forth. We should therefore regard all living beings as our relatives...*" We have been animals - and animals may have been humans in the past. In Buddhism, Thich Nhat Hanh emphasises the importance of the concepts of mindfulness, meditation and interbeing (Asher, 2003). The concept of interbeing is especially important because it breaks the divide between 'self' and 'other'. 'Interbeing' itself is a core issue across all the Dharmic religions that generally share the notion of metempsychosis, the transmigration of souls from body to body, and from species to species, which means that the same spirit is shared across all life (Jain Sadak, 2005). Hindus that follow the system of Advaita Vedanta believe that, ultimately, all is one but Vaishnavas conceive each individual spiritual spark as an infinitesimal drop in the infinite ocean of the Supreme. In the Bhagavadgita 2.12-13, Lord Krishna comments: "*(12) Never was there a time when I did not exist, nor you, nor all these kings; nor in the future shall any of us cease to be. (13): As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death. A sober person is not bewildered by such a change*". The Puranas include many instances where a soul passes through the body of a completely different species (e.g. deer: Srimad Bhagavatam 5.8.2-31, jackal and vulture: Varaha Purana 137.69-87, even trees: Srimad Bhagavatam 10.9.22-23). In other words, the scriptures demonstrate that the

spiritual spark within is not merely human but is something that inhabits all forms of life. In other words, all forms of life contain a potentially human soul and every human soul has existed in some other form of life in the past. This animistic sensibility has been commended by Harding (2006) and resonates closely with the ideas of western environmentalists such as Leopold (1949) and Seed et al. (1988), who urge us to *'think like a mountain'*. Equally, Thich Nhat Hanh (2001, p.67) advocates: *"If we want to change the situation, we must begin by being our true selves,.. we have to be the forest, the river and the ozone layer."*

Being the animals and other living beings, in Vaishnavism, and even more strongly in the Jain religion, manifests itself as a strict commitment to *ahimsa* (non-harming) and vegetarianism. This is evoked by respect for the Golden Rule of Ethics, namely treating others as you would expect to be treated yourself. *"We should not harm ourselves; we should not harm nature"* (Nhat Hanh, 1988, p.41). *"This body, after all, is produced by the unmanifested nature and again annihilated and merged in the natural elements. Therefore, it is the common property of everyone. Under the circumstances, who but a rascal claims this property as his own and while maintaining it commits such sinful activities as killing animals just to satisfy his whims?"* (Srimad Bhagavatam, 10.10.12).

Of course, a vast proportion of our world's environmental problems are caused by the human addiction to eating meat, which in many habitats is a very inefficient way of gaining nutrition and responsible for much of the pressure that we place on the environment. For example, today, we feed about 40% of global grain production to fatten meat animals – just half of this grain would feed all of the world's hungry people (Leitzmann, 2003). Again, the mass production of meat in industrial conditions is something that demonstrates strongly the degradation of our societies' sensibilities and their callousness towards life.

As Albert Schweitzer (1915, p.65) noted *"Only by means of reverence for life can we establish a spiritual and humane relationship with both people and all living creatures within our reach. Only in this way can we avoid harming others..."* We should deal with nature *"the way we should deal with ourselves!* Lord Krishna adds: *The humble sages, by virtue of true knowledge, see with equal vision a learned and gentle priest, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater"* (Bhagavadgita 5.22). There is a need to recognise the species of the natural world as *"part of us as we are of them"* (Batchelor and Brown, 1992, p.32). This requires a different worldview, a way of seeing *"things from the perspective of the mountains, the rivers, the great wide earth"* (Habito, 1997, p.170)

### The Path from Ego to Eco:

Seeing everything as our true self teaches us not to destroy but to protect the earth as our own body (Habito, 1997). To achieve this, we must change our thinking and see things as they are, becoming one with our surroundings, and realising our welfare within the welfare of all species (King, 2005; Suzuki, 2002). In environmentalism, both Buddhism and Vaishnavism have contributed to the construction of the philosophy called ‘Deep Ecology’. This builds upon the realisation that ‘I’ and ‘Nature’ are one. Beyond this, it argues that Self-realisation emerges from true immersion in Nature. Bashō, one of the most respected haiku poets, based his life on “*the idea of sabi, the concept that one attains perfect spiritual serenity by immersing oneself in the egoless, impersonal life of nature*” (Ueda, 1982, p.30). Suzuki (2002, p.85) argued that “*if you want to appreciate something fully, you should forget yourself. You should accept it like lightning flashing in the utter darkness of the sky.*” Otherwise, to “*receive things just as an echo of yourself, you do not really see them, you do not fully accept them as they are*” (Suzuki, 2002, p.85). Accordingly, Gary Snyder (1974), both Buddhist and leading deep ecologist, argues that the whole earth is Sangha.

Deep Ecology regards anthropocentrism, selfishness, as the prime cause of the planet’s problems and promotes a notion sourced from the thinking of the Vaishnava Mahatma Gandhi as its solution (Haigh, 2006; Henning, 2002). As Gandhi (1884-1946, p.218) advises: “*All living beings are members one of another.*” This ‘ecological self-realisation’ is advanced by deep ecology as the most important goal for both an individual and all society.

Ecological self-realisation is a three step process that leads to self-identity with nature through the transformation of self-consciousness (Naess, 1987). John Seed writes: “*Deep ecology is the search for a viable consciousness. ... Moulded by environmental pressures, the mind of our ancestors must time and again have been forced to transcend itself. To survive our current environmental pressures, we must consciously remember our evolutionary and ecological inheritance. We must learn to ‘think like a mountain’*” (Seed et al., 1988, p.38). We begin on the first step with the child-like recognition of our individual self as an independent, wilful being. The second is an adolescent-like recognition of the self as a part of some larger human society, a social group such as family, clan, nation, perhaps species, and thus the ‘I-self’ becomes part of a larger “we-Self” (Coward, 2000). At last, in maturity, comes a realisation of the ecological self; self-identification with the interconnected community of all beings (Seed et al., 1988).

The three steps carry the self from ‘ego’ to ‘eco’, and toward treating nature with “*the same reverence you would extend to your own being*” (Wilber, 1996, p.204), In Vaishnavism, they are paralleled by the three steps taken by Lord Vishnu

Trivikrama to establish the earth and sky (Rg Veda, 1.22.17-18 and 1.154.2) and by the three Gunas of Samkhya that climb upwards to the platform of liberation or enlightenment (Bhagavadgita, Canto 14 and 18; Soifer, 1991). Gandhi's contemporary, Sri Aurobindo describes three greater levels as follows: "*Within the Universal mind and soul of humanity is the mind and soul of the individual with its infinite variation...between them stands an intermediate power, the mind of a nation, the soul of a people*" (Aurobindo, 1956, p.12).

In Buddhism, nothing possesses a fixed essence or intrinsic identity, the distinction between self/other is illusory, and everything is interdependent; "*not only is a flower devoid of any fixed essence, but the practitioner realizes the truly empty reality of the flower when he or she also awakens to the non-duality of self and flower*" (Unno, 2000, p.187). So here too, the expansion of self-consciousness leads to the appreciation of the unity of all things. Nature knows no duality and everything is interconnected; Hinduism concludes '*Ekam evadvityam*' there is only One, which can never be divided.

### **Detachment and Right Engagement:**

Ecological self-realisation, a step along the path to true self-realisation, counters the most serious and damaging of all human delusions, which is the notion of the separate self and its self-identification with its temporary physical materiality. This condition fosters self-assertion, greed, desire, fear and attachment. The Bhagavadgita 16.13-16 echoes the thoughts of such a person: "*So much wealth do I have today, and I will gain more according to my schemes. So much is mine now, and it will increase in the future, more and more. He is my enemy, and I have killed him, and my other enemies will also be killed. I am the lord of everything. I am the enjoyer. I shall be perfect, powerful and happy..the richest man..*[then adds] *But, perplexed by anxieties and trapped in this web of illusion, such people become addicted to sense enjoyment and fall down into hell*". Such people are lost to themselves and their deeds threaten to destroy the world (Bhagavadgita, 16.9). Today's society is driven by the glittering prizes of materialism, its every media glorifies objects that claim to fulfil dreams of glamour, wealth, sexuality and power, and that promise to drown out the cries of a repressed spiritual soul (Timmerman, 1995). Both Vaishnavas and Buddhists know that this cannot be done. To escape from delusion, it is necessary to detach ourselves from the petty material cravings of the small self sufficiently to gain sight of our larger spiritual Self, not just ecological, but universal. The Samkhya philosophy, which underpins Vaishnava texts such as the Bhagavadgita, talks of the material world as a dancer that beguiles the watching spiritual self. Its version of enlightenment arrives when the self manages to recognise

that “*this identity is not oneself and thus becomes purified from false identity and attains detachment from matter*” (Samkhyakarika, 64, in: Larson, 1969, p.274).

Of course, the emphasis on detachment, which is common to many branches of the family of Dharmic religions, is often misunderstood in the West. Here, it is seen as a retreat from the world and its responsibilities rather than a way of seeing the truth about the world and its futile, self-destructive, temporary delusions. Hinduism is hugely diverse in both belief and practice but most branches tend to see the material world as less than the highest reality. The perspective of its Advaita Vedanta philosophy, especially, runs close to that expressed by the Buddha, who taught: “*Look on the World as a bubble, look upon it as a mirage*” (Dhammapada 13. 170). The external world is nothing but an illusion created by imperfections of the mind, like a painted canvas.

The reality is that detachment is necessary to overcome the anaesthesia produced by the buffeting of daily life, which dulls perceptions to the real. Intriguingly, modern social scholars have reached similar conclusions, where they deride much of what is seen as a simulation or spectacle, and advise their followers to break through the illusion of modern life by means of detachment. The Marxian Situationists for example propose their technique of the ‘*derive*’ for detachment, ahead of the task of ‘*detournement*’ or active habitat improvement (Coverley, 2006; Debord, 1967; Baudrillard, 1983). Here too, the purpose of detachment is discrimination; developing an ability to see what is truly real and what is not.

In Hinduism, only that which is eternal and unchanging is thought to be truly real. However, a big divide exists between the thinking of intellectual schools like Advaita Vedanta, and to a lesser degree Kashmiri Saivism, which are monist and regard the material world as an illusion; practical analytical schools like Samkhya and Yoga, which are dualist and see the material world mainly as a distraction; and those that harness emotions and devotion like the Vaisnava Bhakti sects. These see the world as a manifestation of God, as God’s instructional revelation, and the route to liberation through loving service (Prime, 2002). Vaishnavas consider the material world to be an aspect of God, simultaneously one with and yet different from God. It is something that stands in relation to God much as a computer-generated virtual world stands to the mind of its creator and something that, at its best, can be a reflection of God’s spiritual world (Mukunda and Cremo, 1995). Similarly, while many Buddhists prefer not to recognise a positive reality underlying the world or the conscious self, they agree that the self is part of a stream of becoming, ruled by the law of dependent origination and composed of the five continuants of perception, feeling, wilful predisposition, intelligence and form (Radhakrishnan and Moore, 1958). These form part of a stream of existence that exists solely in the present moment – and that present moment is the earth that we inhabit. This is a place of

suffering and Buddhists seek the wisdom that is needed to treat such matters (Payutto, 1993).

Similarly, Vaishnavas hear Lord Krishna who adds that: *“renunciation of the world and undertaking work in devotion are both good for liberation. But, of the two, work in devotional service is better”* (Bhagavadgita, 5.2). He continues: *“Those who are beyond the dualities, whose minds are engaged within, who are always busy working for the welfare of all living beings, and who are free from all sins achieve liberation in the Supreme”* (Bhagavadgita, 5.25). Vaishnavas aspire to be the eternal servants of Lord Krishna and the earth that He permeates and controls. Hence, some interpret their role to include making this earth as much like Lord Krishna’s heaven as possible; *“a place of pure waters, forests full of tree bearing fruits and flowers”* (Cremo and Mukunda Goswami, 1995, p.87). In sum, both traditions urge their followers to detach themselves from the hurly burly of everyday life in order to comprehend the reality of the world and, in the light of that understanding, to engage in enlightened action towards making this world a better place. Thus, *“resensitised to our feelings and immersed in awareness”*, we may find ways to become more ecological (Badiner, 1990, xvii).

### **Karma:**

Buddhism and Vaishnavism share many aspects of the concept of karma. This is the belief that our present inclinations and situation contain influences from our past, possibly from previous lives, that affect how we act. Of course, how we act towards others, including other species of life, produce future karma. In Hinduism, karma is a personal construct, an emotional and mental impetus from the past that affects present actions (Kriyananda, 1995). A karmic memory trace (samskara) is an unconscious predisposition toward a particular action, which Coward (1983) links to motivation. It is constructed by repetition and if, through the exercise of free choice, one chooses to repeat the same action or thought, this strengthens the predisposition into a habitual vasana. The essence of Vedic Karma is that what you do now will affect, not only what happens to you, but also how you will act in the future. Good actions predispose more good actions. Bad actions predispose further bad actions. Similarly, good actions ultimately lead to good results; bad actions to bad consequences. However, every action contributes to a line of credit or debit that must be resolved now or in the future. In Buddhism too, the notion of karma is salient to environmentalism because what we do to the planet rebounds on us; *“when nature is defiled, people ultimately suffer”* (Kabilsingh, 1996, p.147). Even our smallest actions have a corresponding result. Accordingly, we should be as environmentally friendly as possible, treat those species whose paths we cross in the wheel of life with

compassion, and reflect carefully on the complex interweaving of karmic environmental impacts (Kraft, 1997).

Today, global climate change is being driven by the collective impacts of billions of human decisions, some of which have good environmental impacts and rather too many of which have bad effects (IPCC, 2007). Just as individuals accumulate karma through inappropriate life decisions, so too our lifestyle decisions can magnify our burden upon the earth. Currently, the collective result of these decisions has created a huge burden upon the earth, which could lead to very unpleasant consequences. Our species needs to find better ways of living and act urgently, although this reality has not yet affected enough minds to result in effective action (Orr, 1994). For Vaishnavas, eliminating our environmental impact, our burden on the Earth, is closely linked to the desire to eliminate personal karma and this community is awakening to such a link and the need to act (Chauhan et al., 2010). Similarly, the doctrines of mindfulness and karma are driving forces behind engaged action in the Buddhist community. Nature, experienced in its ‘suchness’, may spark a *“trinity of seeing, appreciating, and sharing”* and finally, acting for Nature (Aitken, 1978, p.77).

### **Conclusion: Acting in Mindfulness of the Environment:**

This stream of the conference is concerned with the Buddhist response to the environmental crisis and the paper has placed this concern within an interfaith context. Engaged Buddhism and Caitanyaite Vaishnavism, even those small green tendrils that grow in the UK, both belong to the great family of Dharmic faiths, both share roots in the Vedic religion of ancient India (albeit in very different ways), and both revere the Buddha. Like members of any extended family, there is much that is held in common, especially the belief that human wealth should be measured in Dharma rather than material possessions. Most importantly, both traditions recognise the world as a teacher; they know that the damage to the earth is a consequence of the uncaring human mind (Orr, 1994). The recipe is simple; change minds and those with changed minds will serve the welfare of our sacred earth.

Of course, equally, there is no point claiming that Buddhism and Vaishnavism see the World or their role within the world in the same way. There are vast areas of difference, enough to entertain the academic, fundamentalist and theologian eternally. The question of who is closer to the ultimate Truth may not be discovered in this or many future lives. Still, the fact remains that these spiritual traditions have more in common with each other (and with the other great world religions) than with the shallow doctrines of materialism and greed, which dominate our modern world. They can work together as proven in the strange case of the

creation of the Dow Jones Dharma Index for ethical investment, essentially a compromise with materialism (Dow Jones Indexes, 2008). They share many aspects of their approach to the environment, which is at once a reflection of sacred truth and testimony to human shortcomings. Both Buddhism and Vaishnavism recognise that these human shortcomings are treatable conditions, both seek the best path, and both know that they could do more to engage with, to diminish suffering in, and relieve the human burden upon, the Earth. Both conceive a virtuous circle, where peace and understanding within nature leads to peace within each person, which, through mindful and dutiful service, leads to peaceful and harmonious being upon our planet.

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## **Dealing with Root Causes rather than Symptoms of ‘Dis-Ease’: A Buddhist Approach to Global Crises**

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It is well known that the essence of the teaching of the Buddha was expressed in terms of the Four Noble Truths. The Buddha contrasted his teaching about the Four Noble Truths with numerous metaphysical opinions that were commonly expressed during his time as solutions to perplexing philosophical questions that went beyond the scope of human experience. It was emphatically pointed out that the Buddha wished to make no commitment whatsoever to any opinion regarding such questions. They were therefore, referred to by the Buddha as undetermined, undeclared or unexplained issues (*avyākatāni*)<sup>1</sup>. Several reasons were given by the Buddha for leaving them aside as unexplained issues, among which one of the foremost was that they were issues that were entirely irrelevant to the resolution of the immediate problems of life that human beings needed to tackle. Besides, the Buddha identified them as issues on which no conclusive answer could be given on the basis of human experience. He saw those who committed themselves to opinions regarding such issues as dogmatists who merely engaged in ideological conflict. As the Buddha pointed out, making a dogmatic commitment to views is an instance of falling into a speculative view (*ditthigatam*), of dogmatically grasping a view (*ditthigahanam*), entering into a desert of views (*ditthikantāram*), wriggling of views (*ditthivisūkam*), scuffling of views (*ditthivipphanditam*), fetter of views (*ditthisamyojanam*)<sup>2</sup>. Engaging in speculations regarding matters that cannot be resolved by any appeal to human experience was considered by the Buddha as futile and counter productive. They do not conduce to the kind of transformation of character that leads to insight and understanding promoting the attainment of the Buddhist goal of peace and tranquility that puts an end to all conflict within oneself and with the outside world. The Buddha maintained that whatever he taught since his enlightenment pertained to the problem of *dukkha* and its cessation.

The Buddhist teaching regarding *dukkha* and its cessation is usually interpreted focusing attention on the inner or subjective experience of the individual. This apparently limited focus has resulted in ignoring the wider implications of the Buddhist notion of *dukkha*. There is a tendency to compartmentalize the existential

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<sup>1</sup> Majjhimanikāya (Pali Text Society, London) Vol. 1, p. 429-432.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 485.

situation into what goes on within the sphere of individual minds and what goes on in the outside world and treat the problems pertaining to them in a disparate manner. We talk about the ecological crisis, the economic crisis, social and political conflicts, poverty, various kinds of social discrimination etc. as problems divorced from the inner driving forces which consist of the thought patterns of human beings, their distorted beliefs and emotions. We tend to overlook the fact that most of the crises that we experience in our social environment are due to the physical and verbal expression of those inner driving forces. Drawing attention to the wider implications of the Buddhist notion of *dukkha*, Padmasiri de Silva rightly remarks: “The ecological crisis is only one expression of the existential situation common to all human beings.”<sup>3</sup> Contemporary social crises are, as Padmasiri de Silva observes, “not merely an issue for science and technology.” They are symptoms of “a deeper human crisis that raises fundamental questions about the values we uphold and the kind of lives we lead, raising basic issues of ethics religion and philosophy.”<sup>4</sup>

If the numerous crises are viewed in isolation we tend to look merely at the symptoms of the ‘dis-ease’ without taking into account its root cause. It is true that when a disease has grown in intensity its symptoms also need to be treated. However, a lasting cure cannot be effected merely by treating the symptoms of a disease without treating its root causes. Moreover, the understanding of the root causes is also important in the prevention of disease. Applying this observation specifically to the ecological crisis Padmasiri de Silva points out: “The ecological crisis is part and parcel of the broader predicament of suffering encapsulated in the Buddhist notion of *dukkha*.”<sup>5</sup>

The Buddhist notion of *dukkha* is wide enough to include within its scope everything that is experienced as unsatisfactory in the life of beings. We refer to certain events and circumstances as crises because they are experienced as being unsatisfactory. The ecological crisis is part of *dukkha*, in the sense that it is experienced as involving life threatening consequences which are undesirable from the perspective of living beings who desire to live at ease and dislike suffering (*sukhakāmā dukkhapañikkulā*). The enormity of the suffering engendered by wars and conflicts are too obvious to be described. The very sense of insecurity that prevails in most parts of the globe threatened with acts of violence and terrorism is sufficiently evident and needs no description to understand the gravity of the situation.

The traditional Buddhist solution to *dukkha* is generally understood in terms of the Buddha’s teaching that *dukkha* is a consequence of birth (*jāti*) as expressed in

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<sup>3</sup> *Buddhism, Ethics and Society: The Conflicts and Dilemmas of Our Times* (Monash University Press, 2002) p. 149.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 150.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

the Buddhist formulation of the law of dependent arising which says that due to birth there arises decay, death, sorrow, lamentation and despair (*jāti paccayā jarāmarana dukkha domanassupāyāsā sambhavanti*). It is undeniable that the ultimate goal of Buddhism is to put an end to continued birth as a solution to the predicament of *dukkha*. The Buddhist goal of Nibbāna as understood in the tradition leads to the ending of a series of becoming, of a cyclic continuity of rebirths, putting a final end to all *dukkha*. One reason why Buddhism is viewed as being irrelevant to the resolution of contemporary global crises is the understanding that the Buddhist focus is on escaping all crises at the individual level by putting an end to the rebirth process. According to this line of reasoning Buddhism seeks to overcome *dukkha* by destroying the prospect of being reborn. Accordingly, it is up to each individual to work out one's own liberation. Viewed exclusively from this angle Buddhism has been sometimes interpreted as a 'salvation religion' enunciating an ideal of escapism, and advocating an asocial attitude. The original aim of Buddhism, according to this interpretation, was "not to shape life in the world but to teach liberation, release from the world."<sup>6</sup> Buddhist salvation is interpreted as "an absolutely personal performance of the single individual."<sup>7</sup> It is understood by those who interpret Buddhism in this manner as achievable "by a total and radical rejection of the world in all its aspects."<sup>8</sup> These observations compel anyone who expects to show the relevance of Buddhism to the resolution of contemporary global crises to show exactly how it becomes relevant.

When dealing with the predicament of *dukkha*, Buddhism clearly recognizes the role of human behavior as well as the psychological origins or the roots of human behavior in the suffering that is produced in the social milieu. There is definitely a large part of suffering that is inescapable and unavoidable for any living being born into this world such as the suffering resulting from decay, bodily disease and death, which are aspects of the natural biological course of events in embodied existence. Buddhism obviously draws attention to that aspect of suffering and considers it necessary to put an end to birth in order to escape it. Buddhism also recognizes a large part of avoidable and preventable suffering, which is inflicted not by the inescapable processes of physical and biological nature about which human beings could do little to prevent, but inflicted by human beings themselves. Contemporary global crises are consequences of human interventions in the world, based on distorted ways of thinking, in the form of the expression of unwholesome emotions, urges and desires of mankind. The degree of suffering produced in the world on account of such human interventions far exceeds the suffering caused by the natural

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<sup>6</sup> *The World of Buddhism*, edited by Heinz Bechert and Richard Gombrich (Thames and Hudson Ltd. London, 1984) p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Max Weber, *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism* (Glencoe, Illinois 1958) p.7.

<sup>8</sup> Melford Spiro, *Buddhism and Society* (Harper and Row 1970) p. 65.

course of physical events in the world. The Buddhist account of the origin of *dukkha* expressed in the second Noble Truth becomes relevant in this context.

Mankind has achieved phenomenal growth in scientific knowledge pertaining to the material world as well as astounding technological skill in the manipulation of the material environment. However, to much of our dismay, it is on the background of such scientific and technological development that most of the contemporary global crises have emerged. The magnitude of the current global crises that portend the imminent destruction of the human civilization and even all life on earth is seen to be unprecedented. This clearly shows that there is a deficiency in the kind of knowledge and skill that human beings have been preoccupied with over the last few centuries. The age of science and technology has systematically led to a separation between the material and the moral spheres of human living producing a wide divide between concern with ‘scientific’ knowledge and concern with human values. Questions regarding “What is the good life for humans?” have been ignored or due to the shallowness of the thinking that is driven entirely by the baser human instincts and emotions the common convictions regarding answers to such questions have been mistaken and confused. The foremost question for which the Buddha was in search of an answer was “What is wholesome?” as expressed in the canonical discourse called Ariyapariyesana Sutta where mention is made of the Buddha’s renunciation of the pleasures of the household life in order to search for it (*kim kusalagavesī*).<sup>9</sup> As distinguished from the kind of knowledge that modern science seeks, Buddhism claims to have discovered and imparted to mankind knowledge that leads to the eradication of psychological cankers (*āsavakkhayañāna*). As long as *āsavas* and the latent unwholesome tendencies in human beings continue to be fed and enhanced due to wrong ways of thinking and wrong ways of living human beings become instrumental in increasing unhappiness all round. This explains why the knowledge and skills human beings develop through science and technology do not help in the reduction of suffering.

Modern scientific knowledge and technological skills have provided humans with effective means of fulfilling their intentions. The sole concern of science and technology is with knowledge pertaining to the achievement of ends. They are not concerned with the goodness or rightness of the ends pursued or the means adopted to achieve them. As a result, scientific knowledge and technology have been used to satisfy the immediate urges of mankind without due regard to the long-term consequences of their actions. In the Buddhist view the determining psychological factors of the ends that people pursue in their morally depraved state are greed, hatred and delusion. The tragedy is that when the powers of the human intellect are utilized to acquire knowledge pertaining to the achievement of ends, without checks and

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<sup>9</sup> Majjhimanikāya Vol. 1, p. 160f.

balances regarding the right ends to pursue the consequences are bound to be disastrous. The global crises that we experience today could be understood and explained in these terms. It is such understanding that draws our attention to the relevance of the Buddhist teachings to current global problems.

Reference was already made to those aspects of suffering that result from the behavior of human beings themselves. Buddhism makes a clear distinction between the rightness and wrongness of the ends pursued by human beings. A trait of character, a psychological tendency, an intention or a motive for action, or an action itself performed by a human being could be viewed from the Buddhist point of view as being *kusala* (morally wholesome) or *akusala* (morally unwholesome). The teaching of the Buddha does not seek to rest our moral choices on the commandments of a superior moral law giver. Instead they should be based on the observed nature and consequences of the choices we make. The distinction between *kusala* and *akusala* applies only in the context of humans who have the capacity to reflect on their own condition. The conduct of other lower animals may in a sense be considered as entirely determined due to their incapacity to exercise any rational choice. Fortunately, the lower animals are incapable of exercising the kind of intellectual skills possessed by humans and adopt means other than what are circumscribed by nature to fulfill their natural urges. The case of human beings is different. They seem to have an infinite intellectual capacity to adopt increasingly sophisticated means to achieve their ends. Science and technology provide them with the best avenue to exercise this capacity. This is what poses a greater danger in the human situation. Fortunately, however, human beings are also gifted with the capacity to reflect on questions pertaining to good and bad, right and wrong. What has gone wrong in the contemporary context is that human beings have paid less attention to this aspect of their practical or moral reason and continued long enough in attending purely to their material needs not realizing the limits within which they can be satisfied.

The basis introduced by the Buddha for making the choice between what is *kusala* and *akusala* is very relevant at this point of our discussion. The Buddha pointed out that any action that brings about adverse consequences to the doer as well as others (*attabyābādhāya samvattati, parabyābādhāya samvattati*) and produces the increase of overall suffering (*dukkhudrayam dukkhavipākam*) is wrong and should be avoided.<sup>10</sup> The teaching of the Buddha also draws attention to the causal origins of such human behaviour that is generally productive of such consequences. According to the psychological and causal explanation provided by the Buddha regarding the origins of *akusala* behaviour, greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion or confused thinking (*moha*) are considered as their primary roots or sources (*akuslamāla*). In the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Vol. 2, p. 114; Vol. 1, p.415.

Kālāma Sutta, the Buddha noted that human beings commit acts that harm their own well being and the well being of others when they are overwhelmed by these roots of unwholesome behavior.<sup>11</sup>

It was noted at the outset in this discussion that the teaching of the Buddha was not intended to establish a set of religious or metaphysical dogmas. In fact the Alagaddāpama Sutta is sufficient evidence to the effect that the Buddha cautioned his disciples using two extremely striking similes, the simile of the snake and the simile of the raft regarding the possibility of his own teaching being abused by those who might cling to it as a dogma.<sup>12</sup> The *Dhamma*, which was expected by the Buddha to be taken in a non-sectarian sense as universally valid truths about life, was taught for the sole purpose of overcoming suffering. The teaching of the Buddha, if rightly understood and practiced should never lead to sectarian conflicts. The appeal in the Buddha's teaching was not focused on the maintenance of sectarian identity and the preservation of sectarian dogma, but on the achievement of immediately observable results that are conducive to general well being. In the Udumbarikasāhanāda Sutta the Buddha made it clear to a wandering recluse (*paribbājaka*) named Nigrodha, that his sole aim in teaching the Dhamma was not for the purpose of winning over disciples for himself and increasing his following but purely for the purpose of removing the unwholesome character traits of people that produce suffering for themselves and suffering for others.<sup>13</sup> The kind of religious tolerance expressed in this instance, is noteworthy and there could be no doubt about the benefits of the practicing such tolerance in the resolution of much of the interreligious conflicts that have grown into crisis proportions in the contemporary social context.

According to Buddhism, when the three roots of unwholesome behavior greed, hatred and delusion become strengthened in the psychology of individuals in a society, social crises would inevitably follow. The current ecological crisis is explainable in terms of the Buddha's teaching as mainly a consequence of overexploitation of the natural environment due to human greed. The proliferation of wants far exceeding the legitimate limits of human needs has burdened the natural environment with the overexploitation of resources causing tremendous damage to ecological balance. Technology has been an effective instrument of such exploitation. Patterns of consumption reflect an utter imbalance widening the gap between those who are destitute and deprived of the basic material needs for satisfactory living and those who exhibit wasteful and consumerist lifestyles. The increasing competition for the limited material resources of the world has created tensions in relationships between nations of the world. The resulting mistrust and sense of insecurity that prevails among powerful nations of the world have produced competition for the

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<sup>11</sup> Anguttaranikāya (Pali Text Society, London) Vol. 1, p. 189.

<sup>12</sup> Majjhimanikāya Vol. 1, p.130 f.

<sup>13</sup> Dīghanikāya (Pali Text Society, London) Vol. 3, p. 56f.

acquisition of superior military power causing further tensions. In this process, valuable material resources that could be utilized to improve the living conditions of millions of people across the globe affected by abject poverty, hunger and malnutrition are being diverted to the production of destructive weapons. The jungle law of survival of the fittest seems to operate in the human context in much more subtle ways than among the animals, despite the assumption and claim that humans have reached a high stage of civilization and culture. In a world consisting of limited resources only the expansion of the limits of human sympathy can ensure justice and equity. The tensions that prevail manifesting in the form of a wide variety of social crises in the contemporary world could largely be attributed to a failure in maintaining a sense of justice and equity.

According to the teaching of the Buddha healthy social-living becomes possible only when there is proper moral direction. The Buddha often recognized in his teachings the vital social role that a community that exclusively commits itself to ethical perfection, and succeeds in attaining it, plays in the social milieu. The Buddha pointed out that a society that pays due respect to, and cares for the maintenance of such a community succeeds in maintaining social stability.<sup>14</sup> The rulers guiding the destinies of nations have a great responsibility in avoiding social crises. According to the Buddha the deterioration of a society begins with the moral deterioration of persons who assume leadership. As the Buddha points out “When cattle cross a river, if the leading bull goes crooked all the rest will follow suit.” The same is true of human societies. The unrighteous behavior of those who lead and give direction to society leads to disastrous social consequences. The Buddha maintained that the deterioration of ethical standards and norms of righteousness at the highest level in the social hierarchy gradually leads to the total collapse of a society and eventually affects even the processes of nature. Buddhism clearly sees in this instance a close causal relationship between ecology and ethics.<sup>15</sup> The Buddha considered a righteous ruler (*dhammiko dhammarājā*) as one who constantly seeks moral direction from other morally elevated persons who can provide moral guidance without partiality and bias.

Viewed from the perspective of the teachings of Buddhism the numerous contemporary global crises are different manifestations of a serious moral crisis. Contemporary global crises cannot be resolved without addressing the root causes of them. More and more science and technology will be incapable of resolving these crises. Only wise patterns of thinking that can produce a change in the motivational roots of human behavior can produce an effective solution to such crises. In the final analysis the Buddha’s Noble Eightfold Path consisting of a transformation of the

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<sup>14</sup> The Buddha counts this among the seven principles observed by the Vajjian community guaranteeing the stability of the Vajjian state (*aprihāniya-dhamma*). *Dīghanikāya* Vol. 2, p. 74.

<sup>15</sup> *Anguttaranikāya* Vol. 2, p. 75

person at the level of both cognition and emotion prescribed for the overcoming of *dukkha* experienced by each individual is a path that has to be adopted collectively in the social context to overcome contemporary global crises.

## **A Buddhist Perspective on Global Warming - Our Inevitable Fate?**

*Phramaha Bhatsakorn Piyobhaso<sup>1</sup>*

### **Introduction**

An issue of global warming has been debated around the world and it brings more attention to the people now. This is perhaps owing to recent natural catastrophes witnessed in different parts of the planet in which the world's scientists have expressed their concerns about the imminent environmental crisis, believed to be caused by man's upsetting of the natural balance. From a Buddhist perspective, this essay aims to attempt to consider how the core Buddhist teachings reflect on this global issue which is threatening human wellbeing worldwide. There are many interesting points to be considered, some of them might have already been studied by other authors. In this essay, however, the main point is Buddhist teaching and fatalism. So the question is raised as follows: is global warming our inevitable fate? If so, what is the Buddhist attitude towards this fate?

This essay is divided into four parts. To depict global warming, first, I will discuss background information regarding the global warming phenomenon. Second part will deal with an analysis of this phenomenon according to the principle of Dependent Origination (*Paticcasamuppāda*), however, other Buddhist tenets will be mentioned and referenced where it seems relevant. In the third part which is central, an argument on Buddhism and fatalism will be debated. Herein, the teaching of karma will be analyzed in comparison and contrast with the concept of fatalism. Last but not least, from the proceeding discussion, the essay will culminate with some Buddhist stances towards global warming crisis.

### **What is global warming?**

Global warming is not a new issue, there has been much in media about this subject and it has been already debated on a worldwide scale, thus I do not think it is necessary to go into detail. In addition, I am only someone interested in this subject and see there might be some issues where Buddhist perspectives and analysis can aid the crisis situation. In order to, however, review our existing knowledge and to give some information to those who recently come across with the issue, a precise discussion will be applied. This shall be a ground for looking at the problem from

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Buddhist perspectives and give a portrait of global warming in relation to Buddhist teachings.

In response to the above question, global warming is a term invented by scientists to refer to a steady increase in earth's temperature which is 'caused by polluting gases such as carbon dioxides which are collecting in the air around the Earth and preventing heat escaping into space'.<sup>2</sup> Global warming is a natural phenomenon, until recently, 'the document and climate research show that most of the warming in the past half century results from manmade greenhouse gases and this phenomenon caused the main consequence of climate change'.<sup>3</sup> At first, global warming has been a subject of controversy that some commentators have suggested that global warming has stopped. The issue was also politically debated whether human activities really cause warming. From a report of environmental research organization, however, the evidence that the global temperatures are rising is clear and that humans are largely responsible for this rise.<sup>4</sup> So the subject now moves toward questions of how best to respond. In brief, global warming has been caused by the emission of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and other greenhouse gases such as methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), both of which are released by natural ecosystem and human activities e.g. industrial, transportation and agricultural gases. The global warming results climate change which recently entails severer natural disasters such as hurricanes, cyclones, severe storms, droughts, forest fire, high tides, and flood. To avoid the worst, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which consists of experts, scientists from 130 countries, has proposed the solution by reducing the greenhouse gas emission.

Loads of reports, research and studies on causes, effects and suggested solutions for global warming, have been contributed during the past few years, all of which cannot be included in this short essay. Thus, I will rather concentrate on the theme of Buddhist viewpoint towards global warming crisis. Having considered causes and effects of global warming, we shall next turn our attention to how Buddhism looks at this phenomenon.

### **Global Warming and Dependent Origination**

Many studies on the causes and effects of global warming have been conducted. Lots of evidences from recent environmental crisis are claimed to be caused by the consequences of climate fluctuation. However, as I mentioned early that my primary intention is to look at the problem from the Buddhist perspectives,

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<sup>2</sup> Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary CD 3<sup>rd</sup> version

<sup>3</sup> <http://environment.nationalgeographic.co.uk/environment/global-warming/gw-real.html>

<sup>4</sup> Met Office Halder Centre, *Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change*, p. 4.

The principle to be used here as my main axiom for discussion and analysis of global warming and Buddhism is, the Dependent Origination or called in another name ‘*Idappacayatā*’. The reason why the principle of Dependent Origination is chosen to consider this issue is, because it presents us the way to look at problem by way of cause and effect. Moreover, it suggests the way to end problem from its origin. The short formula can be described by way of arising as “When there is this, that is (*Imassmim sati idam hoti*), with the arising of this, that arises (*Imassuppādā idam upajjati*)” while by way of cessation going “When this is not, neither is that (*Imasmim asati idam na hoti*), with the cessation of this, that ceases (*Imassa nirodhā idam nirujjhati*).”<sup>5</sup> From a cursory glimpse, it is simple enough to say that excessive amount of carbon emission causes the rise of global warming. Because the globe is warming and then the world’s climate is changed and fluctuated and this brings about natural catastrophe claiming loss of lives and property. This is just a superficial look, if we, however, look beyond the surface from the Buddhist point of view, the questions raised is, what are the hidden causes of this excessive emission of carbon? This problem can again be studied by the teaching of Dependent Origination (*Paticcasamuppāda*).

Briefly stated, the Dependent Origination consists of twelve stages: ignorance, karmic action, consciousness, body-and-mind, the six senses, contact, feeling, craving, clinging, becoming, birth and finally, old-age-and-death. These twelve stages can be described in both forward and backward way with each can be the cause and effect for each other. Because of ignorance, beings perform their karmic action in various ways, the karmic action then causes consciousness that allows beings to perceive what they see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think. This consciousness forms the body and mind as complete beings equipped with six senses providing beings to make a contact with the outside world. Having contacted with five classical physical objects; visible object, sounds, smell, taste, touch and mind object as thought, produced three kinds of feelings, pleasant, unpleasant and neutral causing beings to crave more of pleasant ones, oppose to unpleasant ones and trying to escape from them and have equanimity towards neutral ones. As being experiences pleasant feeling, they generate craving and when this craving is stronger it matures into clinging ‘wherein the desire starts to become a "project." Plans are made, actions are taken and this culminates in becoming’<sup>6</sup>. By ‘becoming’ here, we mean the formation of self as a person or being performing various behaviors (birth) and all beings who were born are subject to experience ageing and death. Thus this whole mass of suffering comes to be.

The teaching of Dependent Origination can also be summarized as the triple round, rounds of defilement, kamma and result as follows, ‘ignorance, craving and

<sup>5</sup> Vsm.3/375 as quoted by Payutto in ‘Buddhadhamma’ p.79.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.arrowriver.ca/dhamma/climate.html> (23/02/09)

clinging are the round of defilement, formations (kammic action) and becoming are the round of kamma, consciousness, mentality-materiality, sixfold base (sense), contact and feeling are the round of result<sup>7</sup>. This triple round will spin, resolving for ever as long as the round of defilement is not cut off. In brief, because of beings have defilement, thus they perform kammic action and receive a result as consciousness, body and mind, six senses, contact and feeling.

As both the teaching of Dependent Origination and the Triple Round are analyzed here to consider the cause of global warming crisis, so now shall we move our attention back to what discussed early. In the language of the Dependent Origination, the cause of global warming can be tracked as follows: because of ignorance, we perform various actions, because of actions we are aware of sensations: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking. Because of the awareness of sensation, body and mind are form (the animated organism) ready to function. Because of the presence of body and mind, six senses are equipped. Because of the sense bases, there is a contact between awareness and outside world and this contact generates feeling of pleasure, pain or indifference. As the feelings are caused by the sense contact, we then have a desire to seek pleasurable sense object and consume products made from petro-chemicals and produce carbon dioxide as a by-product.<sup>8</sup> To put the process in line with the traditional formula, it will be;

Because of sense-desire there arises consumerism, because of consumerism there arises commodity production, because of commodity production, there arises resource extraction, because of resource extraction there arises green-house gas release and because of green-house gas release there arises climate change.<sup>9</sup>

The Dependent Origination also offers the other way round (cessation) to understand how the problem comes to an end. We may begin with controlling our sense desire by being content with what we need not what we want. Then consumerism is reduced, less consumerism reduces commodity production, less production brings less resources extraction. With less resources extraction, the emission of green-house gas is reduced and hopefully it will decrease the dangers predicted as the consequences of climate change. The solution to climate change problem as recommended by IPCC is to reduce the green-house gas emission by 25 percent to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020, and by at least half by 2050. If this action somehow fails, as most people are concerned, climate change is going to be larger and more difficult to deal with, then the predicted dangers are inevitable to happen and this may lead to the end of our world.

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<sup>7</sup> Vism.581 p.672

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.arrowriver.ca/dhamma/climate.html> (23/02/09)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

The forgoing discussion presents the problem in view of the principle of cause and effect helping us to understand this global predicament from the Buddhist perspective. The dangers from climate changes, as we discussed above, are only estimated from severer natural catastrophes the world encountered in recent years. If those catastrophes come true, then global warming might be seen as an indication of doomsday. Science and Buddhism precisely state that the world will eventually come to an end one day. If so, the world's destruction is inevitable. Buddhism, however, is different from science in that world's destruction is seen as a common phenomenon; the world is of the nature to arise, have being and decline in conformity with the teaching of impermanence, and there is a chance for the world to be reformed whereas science does not yet confirm its reformation. According to the *Kuddhakanikāya Itivuttaka Catukanipata*, there are four kinds of kappa (eon)<sup>10</sup>: *saṃvattakappa*, the eon that the cosmos is getting destroyed by fire, water and wind, *saṃvattadhāyīkappa*, the eon of emptiness until the reformation of cosmos, *vivattakappa*, the eon of reformation until it is mature and last *vivattadhāyīkappa*, the eon of maturation to degeneration again. We are now in *saṃvattakappa*, the eon of destruction. The Buddha mentioned how the earth is destroyed by fire in the *Sattasuriyasutta*, a discourse on seven suns when he wished to teach the monks about the impermanence of conditioned things (*saṅkhāra*) that do not last long, are undesirable, dispassionate. 'Though the earth (*Sineru* mountain) is large, when the long period of time passed by, there is no rain for many years, for many hundred, thousand and ten thousand years, then plants and grass wither and die, so the conditioned things. When a long period of time passed by, the second sun appears causing small rivers, small ponds everywhere dry...when the third sun appears, big rivers like Ganges, *Yamunā*, *Aciravadī*, *Sarabhū* and *Mahī* all dry....when the fourth sun appears, the big sources of rivers dry....when the fifth sun appears, seas in the oceans subside that there will be so little water left....when the sixth sun appears, the smoke emits from the earth...and when the seventh sun appears, the whole earth and *Sineru* mountain will be burnt, while burning, neither ashes nor soot can be found... so the conditioned things.....'<sup>11</sup>

To see how the world is destroyed in detail, Buddhagosa, the great commentator on Theravada Buddhist canonical texts, described in the *Visuddhahimaggā*, Path of Purification (XII, 32-63 pp.456-462 [415]) that

Now it should be understood how its destruction and reconstitution come about thus. On the occasion when the eon is destroyed by fire, first of all a great cloud heralding the eon's destruction appears, and there is a great downpour all over the hundred thousand million world-spheres. People are delighted; they bring out all their seeds and

<sup>10</sup> Anguttara-Nikaya Part II p. 142.

<sup>11</sup> Anguttara-Nikaya Part IV pp.100-103.

sow them. But when the sprouts have grown enough for an ox to graze, then not a drop of rain falls any more even when asses bray. Rain is withheld from then on. This is what the Blessed One referred to when he said ‘Bhikkhus, an occasion ‘comes when for many years, for many hundred years, for ‘many thousand years, for many hundred thousands year, ‘there is no rain’ (A.iv, 100). Being that live by rain die and are reborn in the Brahma World.

How the world is destroyed by water? Buddhagosa further described that:

A great cloud of caustic waters (khārudaka-caustic waters) appears. At first it rains very gently, but it goes on to rain with gradually great deluges, pouring down upon the hundred thousand million world-spheres. As soon as they are touched by the caustic waters the earth, the mountains, etc., melt away, and the waters are supported

all round by winds.....herein, the period from the time of the great cloud heralding the eon’s destruction up till the ceasing of the eon destroying waters constitutes one incalculable. That from the ceasing of the waters up till the great cloud of rehabilitation constitutes the second incalculable. That from the great cloud of rehabilitation.....

Last the world will be destroyed by wind as Buddhagosa described that: Here a wind arises in order to destroy the eon. First of all it lifts up the coarse flue, then the fine flue, then the fine sand, coarse sand, gravel, stones, etc. until it lifts up stones as big as a catafalque, and great trees standing in uneven places. They are swept from the earth up into the sky, and instead of falling down again they are broken to bits there and cease to exist. Then eventually wind arises from underneath the great earth and overturns the earth, flinging it into space. The earth splits into fragment measuring a hundred leagues, two, three, four, five hundred leagues, and they are cease to exist. The World-sphere Mountains, and the Mount Sineru are wrenched up and cast into space, where they crash against each other till they are broken to bits and disappear.

There might be the question why the world is destroyed this way. According to Buddhagosa, the beings’ defilements; greed, hatred and delusion, the three roots of all evil deeds, are aiding force to the world’s destruction as he described:

When greed is more conspicuous, it (the world) is destroyed by fire. When hate is more conspicuous, it is destroyed by waters-though some say that it is destroyed by fire when hate is more conspicuous, and by water when greed is more conspicuous--. And when delusion is more conspicuous, it is

destroyed by wind.<sup>12</sup>

From what described in the Vissuddhimagga, it can be said that the moral degeneration of human beings has an impact on nature. In reality, the world is degenerating in accordance with the law of impermanence; moral degeneration might be considered as the factor that speeds up this degeneration. When sense-desire becomes conspicuous, environment is destroyed to please human unlimited wants, as a result, it brings about suffering in the form of natural catastrophe. Referring to the dangerous consequences of climate change as scientists estimated, if they are real, then according to Buddhist teaching, global warming crisis indicates the world's destruction by fire. The forgoing discussion implies that global warming is inevitable that will bring the world to the end one day. Does this phenomenon sound fatalistic or determined by something? In response to this question, next we will discuss fatalism, determinism and Buddhism.

### **Fatalism, determinism and Buddhism: Different or Same?**

Before going to further discussion, it is worthy having some information background about fatalism and determinism. According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, fatalism is defined as 'the belief that people cannot change the way events will happen and that events, especially bad ones, cannot be avoided'.<sup>13</sup> Scott (2001) gives a similar definition that it is 'a belief that events are determined by fate. Fatalism is a belief that we have to accept the outcome of events, and that we cannot do anything that will change the outcome, because events are determined by something over which we have no control'.<sup>14</sup> Simon Blackburn has defined fatalism as 'the doctrine that human action has no influence on events. To make it easier to understand, he further gives an example of a bullet 'either a bullet has my number on it or it does not; if it does, then there is no point taking precautions for it will kill me anyhow; if it does not then there is no point taking precautions for it is not going to kill me; hence either way there is no point taking precautions.' The dilemma ignores the highly likely possibility that whether the bullet has your number on it depends on whether you take precautions.<sup>15</sup> This sounds like the expressions 'what will happen, it will happen anyway, so no need to worry or take any precautions' or 'there is a solution to all problems, if there is not, then it is pointless to worry'. There is another doctrine that is often confused with fatalism, that is determinism, which by itself

<sup>12</sup> Visuddhimagga XIII 64 p. 462.

<sup>13</sup> Cambridge University, Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (CD 3<sup>rd</sup> edition), (Cambridge University Press, 2008)

<sup>14</sup> Alex Scott 2001. The Implications of Fatalism <http://www.angelfire.com/md2/timewarp/fatalism.html> 27/03/09

<sup>15</sup> Simon Blackburn, Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy: (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 137.

carries no implications that human action is ineffectual. According to Blackburn again:

Determinism is doctrine that every event has a cause. The usual explanation of this is that for every event, there some antecedent state, related in such a way that it would break a law of nature for this antecedent state to exist yet the event not to happen. This is a purely metaphysical claim, and carries no implications for whether we can in principle predict the event.<sup>16</sup>

In brief, fatalism believes that events are beyond our control and we cannot change the outcome of events whereas determinism holds that every event is caused by something other than itself. At first glance, both fatalism and determinism may be consistent with the teaching of karma in Buddhism. However, that is the misconception, because karma does not mean only the consequences of action, it sometimes functions as intention as given in the Buddha's words, *cetanāham bhikkhave kamaṃ vadāmi*: Monks! Intention, I say, is karma. Having willed, we create karma, through body, speech and mind (P.A. Payutto p.150). Sometimes karma functions as conditioning factor, the agent that shapes the direction of life, in brief it refers to 'saṅkhāra' or volitional impulse which influences our body, speech and mind. Karma sometimes functions as personal responsibility, the expression of thought through speech and mind. For example, a person experiences remorse after he has done bad thing. Karma also functions as a consequence of action; this is called 'vipāka'. Many people, when referring to karma, are often mistaken karma with its result as they give more importance to the relation between karma performed in their previous lives and bad fortune experienced in this present life and everything is determined by karma. But according to the law of karma, what happens now is not shaped only by the past actions, but also the present ones. Karma allows us to change our destiny through present actions.

To distinguish karma from fatalism and determinism, the Buddha mentioned 'three kings of beliefs which are contrary to the law of karma; 1. *Pubbekatahetuvāda*: the belief that all happiness and suffering arise from previous karma (Past-action determinism), 2. *Issaranimmānahetuvāda*: the belief that all happiness and suffering are caused by the directives of a Supreme Being (Theistic determinism). 3. *Ahetu-apaccayavāda*: the belief that all happiness and suffering are random, having no cause (Indeterminism or Accidentalism).<sup>17</sup> Fatalism and determinism may be consistent with the three beliefs in the way that every event, including everything we do, is caused and determined by something (past-action determinism and theistic determinism) and that not every event has a cause (indeterminism) and some event

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 102.

<sup>17</sup> Payutto, P.A. Buddhadhamma, p. 209.

cannot be explained by the law or principle.<sup>18</sup> The law of karma in Buddhism is non-linear and goes beyond that, compared with fatalism, Buddhism holds that karma allows us a chance to change some outcome of event, with determinism, karma is not the cause that determines all event in our life, karma is just one conditioning factor. With indeterminism, Buddhism holds the view that nothing arises without a cause, and nothing arises from a single cause. Thus, Buddhism is different from the above three beliefs. Buddhism teaches us to accept the outcome of event, but it does not mean there is nothing we can do to change the outcome. Buddhism teaches that the event in our life is partly determined by what we do, but this does not necessarily mean that everything must happen as it does, something can be changed.

In the eyes of most people who have a shallow view on the concept of karma, westerners for example, ‘karma functions like fate especially bad fate at that: an inexplicable, unchangeable force coming out of our past, for which we are somehow vaguely responsible and which we are powerless to fight’.<sup>19</sup> Since fatalism is thought to be the same with karma, thus people assume that karma ‘sounds like the kind of callous myth-making that can justify almost any kind of suffering or injustice in the status quo.’<sup>20</sup> When people are stricken by bad fortune, we often hear them express ‘it is just the result of my bad karma that I am unlucky’ or ‘those victims who lost their lives in natural disasters, wars, because of their karma’. They express this way because they see no alternative to resigned acceptance.

Now we debate much about the consequence of global warming from which the world is suffering, is this crisis a consequence of our own karma? If we consider this issue according the teaching of karma, we may agree to say that global warming is caused by our own karma, this is human activities. If we believe in fatalism, we have to accept it and nothing we can do to change it as this phenomenon is determined by our fate, so we do not have an eagerness and effort to make a change. If we believe in determinism, then we cannot blame anybody for this crisis because the event was predetermined by something. We were all determined to produce carbon emission, thus we all are blameless for global warming. On the contrary, ‘from the standpoint of karma in Buddhism, though, where we are from is our old karma over which we have no control’<sup>21</sup>, but it does not mean all the event in our life is entirely determined by old karma that we do not have a will to change it, karma in the present moment gives us a room for freewill to counteract with bad events. If global warming is so strong, little can be done, this is like when the flow of water is so strong, what we can do is just to stand fast. However, if global warming is still

<sup>18</sup> Alex Scott, 2001. The Implications of Fatalism <http://www.angelfire.com/md2/timewarp/fatalism.html> 27/02/09

<sup>19</sup> Bhikkhu Thanissaro, It is not about fatalism: [http://www.katinkahesselink.net/tibet/karma\\_thanissaro.html](http://www.katinkahesselink.net/tibet/karma_thanissaro.html) (23/02/09)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

curable, then there is every reason to take an action to prolong the world as long as possible and this may be like when the flow is gentle enough to be diverted in almost any direction.

There is another argument saying that ‘it is already too late, we are going to die anyway, so why bother? The truth is that we do not actually know what the exact predictions will be like and when they will come. ‘The reports from the scientific community state the impossibility of making exact predictions, precisely because so much depends on how we respond, right now and in the coming years’.<sup>22</sup> This may be like when people were diagnosed as having finger cancer, but deny any possible treatments e.g. cutting of that finger and wait until cancer reaches terminal state which is more difficult to deal with and die afterward. If global warming is compared to finger cancer, we then need to cut off something that is not vital for living, that is our overuse of energy to respond our sense-pleasure, the activity that produces more carbon emission. If we deny taking the action to reduce carbon emission, we may inevitably put ourselves at a risk and end up like patients with finger cancer.

With respect to the world’s destruction discussed early, Buddhism, fatalism and determinism may be consistent by holding the notion that the global warming is evitable and may lead to the world’s destruction as everything comes to an end anyway. However, no exact time of world’s cataclysm has ever been predicted. Fatalism holds the view that the world’s destruction is bound to happen as it does no matter what we do about it whereas determinism holds that world destruction is caused by something which is not in our control. Although Buddhism believes in the world’s cataclysm, but Buddhism does not suggest people to end up with despair. From the viewpoint of climate change experts and Buddhism, the dangerous consequences from climate change may indicate the world’s cataclysm. Without effective and appropriate actions, the world may come to an end soon. Once our elderly parents become ill and will certainly die one day, from our common sense, will it be acceptable to let them die without taking good care of them before their demise? Indeed, nothing can be done to stop them from dying, but before that event comes, should some appropriate things be done in accordance with the situation? Of course, the solution as suggested by climate change scientists, is not intended to stop the world from cataclysm, it is actually to alleviate the severity of natural disasters caused by climate change humanity experience now and also to prevent the severer ones that may happen if we do not respond to this crisis properly or in time.

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<sup>22</sup> Dharmacarini Akasati, 2007. Climate Change: Towards a Buddhist Response  
[http://fwbo-buddhist-articles.org/?request=climate\\_change](http://fwbo-buddhist-articles.org/?request=climate_change) (27/02/09)

## Conclusion:

When Buddhists approach the issue of global warming, it is not as climate change experts, but as members of human race who are concerned about environmental crisis. We have to bear in mind that the reasons why we are called upon together at this conference are not just to exchange our words on environmental crisis, make a nice joint-communiqué and leave it behind when we go back home, but to find out how Buddhist communities, whatever their tradition, can make contribution to the world at this time of crisis.

From the study of Dependent Origination and global warming, we may agree to say that the underlying causes of this crisis are human ignorance and greed. Greed or desire for material object to please the sense is identified as the immediate root of climate change. More and more natural resources are extracted to satisfy our pleasure because of our value system which is based on finding happiness through pleasing the senses. With ignorance, some people have not given much attention to environmental crisis, they still enjoy consumption habits, seeing the culture of buying and throwing away as normal practice. This is because they wrongly assumed that the earth has no limits of natural resources we can extract from. If we still carry on living this way, then we put ourselves at a risk of natural shortage.

According to the principle of Dependent Origination, global warming is caused by desire, to address causes and conditions of global warming, desire should be in number. From what we learned from the principle of triple round (*vatta*), as long as the round of defilement is not cut off, human beings are subject to continue the cycle of suffering endlessly. With regard to global warming crisis, though desire cannot be eradicated immediately, but if it is under our control through living a simple life, using natural resources to respond our need, not our wants, using energy that causes carbon emission as less as possible. Perhaps this will be the best opportunity for the monastic communities to serve as an example of a life-style which offers fulfillment without frenzied consumption. At the same time, the monastic community may emphasize on the teaching of contentment (*Santutthi*), encouraging people to live a simple life in conformity with nature. Nature can exist without human being, but human beings cannot exist with nature, as all of sources for human survival are from nature.

Global warming, according to Buddhism, is inevitable in that when the cause that is to say carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases are released, the globe's temperature increases as a result. From the Buddhist teachings discussed above, we learn that the world will definitely end in a cataclysm, perhaps global warming is its cause this time. However, we do not exactly know when this event will happen. We know for sure that we all will die one day, but we never know when, where and how we die. Before that day comes, should we live our lives through heedlessness or

heedfulness? Suppose now the world is sick, should we find ways to cure its sickness or take no action or speed up its demise by aggravating the causes of sickness? If there is still a chance for us to save the world, there is every reason to take an action. Of course, this cannot be done by any particular individuals, the world belongs to all, thus it is the responsibility for all.

For all these reasons, I would suggest that although global warming is inevitable, it is going to get worse if we still close our eyes to the problem. As Buddhists, we ought to try every possible ways to counteract with this problem. The underlying causes and conditions are spiritual malaise, thus it is indeed the religious duty to cure them before they become incurable.

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## Environmental Ethics in the *Jātakas*: Further Reflections

Dr. Pragati Sahni

The idea of exploring for the presence of an environmental ethics in the Buddhist *Jātakas*, a collection of over five hundred birth-stories or folklore belonging to the Theravāda tradition, is neither a new nor uncommon one.<sup>1</sup> Not only does the collection contain stories that communicate a model way of acting in certain situations many of which can be considered directly associated with environmental concerns, the actors include animals and trees thus striking an immediate resonance with the natural. Though principally in agreement, in this paper I would like to explore an altogether different idea that may support the formation of an environmental ethics based within the stories. I believe that the *Jātakas* are a storehouse of the most innovative and dynamic form of morality within the early Buddhist literary sources and in this aspect can be found and framed hitherto undefined responses to the environment.

In an earlier work I had shown that the environmental ethics in the Pali Canon (a collection of the earliest written literary texts of the Buddhist tradition), of which the *Jātakas* are a part, can be looked upon as an environmental virtue ethics.<sup>2</sup> As with most ancient texts gathering evidence in the Pali Canon that directly relates to environmental matters as they exist today is difficult. However this does not take away from the belief of many scholars that Buddhism must be environmental or at the least contain appropriate resources to construct an environmental theory due to the overwhelming presence of non-violence and compassion amongst other things. Though explorations begin with this belief other factors are gradually identified that support a budding ecology. However these are conjectures at best and critics do not hesitate in questioning the basis of an environmental ethics which goes against the very essence of a world-renouncing Buddhist soteriology. In view of all this I argued for an environmental virtue ethics simply on the grounds that in fulfilling the aim of following the virtues, identified as a bona fide goal within Buddhism, the agent evolved in a way that was also beneficial to the environment. The practice of certain virtues such as simplicity, humility, benevolence and loving kindness can be seen to

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<sup>1</sup> See Christopher Key Chapple, "Animals and Environment in the Buddhist Birth Stories," in Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryūken Williams (eds) *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 131-48 and Rafe Martin, "Thoughts on the Jatakas," in Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft (eds) *Dharma Rain*, Boston, London: Shambhala Press, 2000. There are about 547 stories according to Prof. E. B. Cowell.

<sup>2</sup> Pragati Sahni, *Environmental Ethics in Buddhism: A Virtues Approach*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2008.

have a positive effect on the state of the environment. The virtues of the first four *Nikāyas* of the *Sutta Piṭaka* as well as the fifth *Khuddaka Nikāya* of which the *Jātakas* are a part were found reflected in the *Jātakas* as well. I then made a case separately for the presence of an environmental virtue ethics in the *Jātakas*. In this paper I would like to take this argument further. Not only do I believe that a rationale can be given for an environmental virtue ethics, but also that the *Jātakas* support and substantiate the development of this ethics in more than one way.

Accordingly, my paper is divided into three sections. The first section will discuss some general moral tools or methodology that the *Jātakas* possess. By their very nature these tools can be usefully employed in moral situations to ease the decision making process and they may be particularly valuable in resolving environmental complexities. In the next section I will discuss some specific issues present within or among the *Jātakas* stories that are reminiscent of those found in environmental debates. However the section also identifies responses peculiar to the religion itself. In a way all the above can be seen to support an environmental virtue ethics. I will also claim that though the morals encompassed by the rest of the Pali Canon exist here as well they are attuned to a more pervasive understanding for amongst them can be found several different frames to judge situations. Finally I will mention briefly some negative aspects that also arise in such a rendering and that have to be kept in view. My conclusion will also discuss what the overall structure of the *Jātakas* contributes to the ecological discourse.

As for their historical origin, as mentioned above, the *Jātakas* are a part of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* of the *Sutta Piṭaka* or the first basket of the Pali Canon. A common criticism of the *Jātakas* is to do with them not originally belonging to the Buddhist corpus. They are believed to be borrowed from the common Indian folk tradition of their time. But as I have discussed elsewhere Buddhist themes do emerge from the stories which have been suitably adapted to accommodate the Buddhist moral worldview. Buddhist morality is reflected intrinsically such that the stories appear different from other similar non-Buddhist folklore and it is also mostly undisputed that certain stories are purely Buddhist.<sup>3</sup> Historians have also determined that the *Jātakas* have been around for a long time (as known from the third century B.C.E. sculptures at Bharhut which depict some stories and their verses<sup>4</sup>) —they were part of the Pali oral tradition which was a 500 year old precursor to the written and now known Pali Canon. Thus it appears that the Buddhists did recognize the value of stories as didactic means that would aid their missionary endeavors. They

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<sup>3</sup> As discussed by Nirmala Salgado and K. R. Norman respectively. Nirmala Salgado, “The Structure of Evil and Ethical Action in the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā*” unpublished thesis, Northwestern University, 1992; K. R. Norman, *Pali Literature*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983, p. 81. For more details see Sahni, *Environmental Ethics in Buddhism*, pp. 145-146

<sup>4</sup> Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, London: George G. Harrap and Company, 1916; reprint, rev. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1964, p. 267.

may have resorted to some borrowing but they ensured that the stories were told only once stamped with sound Buddhist credentials.

The actual literal structure of the *Jātakas* is unvarying and the tales are arranged based on the number of numerical verses they contain. The order is ascending with the most quantity of verses or *gāthās* belonging to the later stories. The stories are set within *nipātas* or books with each story including an introduction or *paccuppannavatthu* that explains some situation in the Buddha's life that made him tell the story of a previous life. The actual birth-story is then told in the *atītavatthu* and includes the verses that are mostly spoken by the *Bodhisatta* (or being striving for liberation over many lifetimes) who is the star of most stories.<sup>5</sup> Each *atītavatthu* focuses on the escapades of humans or non-humans (animals, trees, spirits and others). There are also exceptional cases where the verses are included in the introduction rather than the birth story. The final section or *samodhāna* of each and every birth story then contains the Buddha recounting who the character in the story is in his own life-time. For the most part I will be primarily concerned with the subject matter of the story or *atītavatthu* and the verses or *gāthās*. Together with the word commentary with its division into parts the *Jātakas* are referred to as *Jātakatthavaññanā*. Some *Jātakas* stories also appear in other parts of the Canon, sometimes word for word, suggesting that stories pre-existed elsewhere and were later brought in to the *Jātaka* corpus. And finally, since historians have been unable to reach a uniform verdict, the author of the *Jātakas* remains to be certainly established.

## Section 1

In this section I shall show that the *atītavatthu* of the *Jātakas* conveys not only moral principles but also at a more subtle level “moral tools.” Morality, a central theme in early Buddhist philosophy, is a complicated business that becomes inextricably linked with the spiritual intentions of those struggling for liberation. In the first four *Nikāyas* apart from lists of acts not to be done (as in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*), many instances of what possible consequences acts can bring about are vigorously mentioned to ensure that the disciple keeps actions and intentions in check. Thus the frame of morality has already been provided: that good actions or *kusala kamma* must be adhered to knowingly for the highest *kammic* rewards—a quality life, good rebirth or spiritual liberation. The five precepts (which imply abandoning of the following: the taking of life, taking of what is not given, sexual misconduct, false speech and intoxication.) are clear in intent and must be

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<sup>5</sup> Verses are generally considered the oldest in the canonical *Jātaka*. Other portions are given a later date. However this will not be my concern here and I shall be treating the birth-stories as one continuous compendium.

followed. The *Brahmavihāras*—*mettā*, *karunā*, *muditā* and *upekkhā*—are important for the practitioners own contemplation. *Sīla* (right speech, right action and right livelihood) within the Eightfold Path is a central theme. Virtues are numerous and are advised for cultivating a good disposition. The *Jātakas* contribute to these ideas either directly (for instance renderings of the *Brahmavihāras* are mentioned several times) or slightly circuitously but almost always amounting to some version of the above. The principle that immoral deeds will lead to dreadful consequences is a constant theme and appears as a reflection on the *Nikāyas*.

Though several stories do traverse through the pages of the *Nikāya* collection that consider morality and its implications, yet at times these narratives do not say enough about the importance of maintaining a consistently virtuous disposition that is tempered with a notion of integrity and righteousness. The idea of consistent moral practice is not passionately implied in stating principles and moral guidelines either. Neither do the latter remind one of the constant necessity of referral to practical wisdom without which morality cannot be satisfactorily accomplished. And this is why the *Jātakas* begin to matter. I believe its author/s and instigators would have had pressing reasons to incorporate these stories due to the pervasiveness of the morality they represent. The constant pursuit of goodness and the capacity to make the right choice through wise council is compellingly dispensed within almost each story taking morality out of the abstract objective sphere. The *Jātakas* usefulness also appears to lie in their ability to apply moral principles in worldly situations even though the situations presented are rather simplistic. Additionally, I believe, the tales encompass certain moral tools or methodology that can be applied in real and complex situations where making choices is difficult. I call the tools moral simply because they enhance the moral decision making process. I throw some light on these tools below.

The *Jātakas* impart certain essential wisdom on how to approach situations and solve problems. Several stories suggest that unless a full or deeper understanding of the situation is undertaken, the result will not be just. A partial understanding will allow injustice to reign and morality to be disregarded. For instance, the *Kukkurajātaka* where the *Bodhisatta* is born as the king of dogs embraces this very idea.<sup>6</sup> When the leather straps of the king's chariot are chewed on one night the king orders all dogs in his land to be killed with the exception of his own thoroughbreds. On hearing of this and seeing the terror the king's decision has caused among his community the *Bodhisatta* approaches the king and offers to find the real culprits. It

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<sup>6</sup> J 22. This refers to the story number in the *Jātaka* collection and this will be the convention I will follow through this paper. The verses alluded to however will be referred to through the volume and page number of the Pali Text Society edition. For most part I have relied on E. B. Cowell and his teams translation of these birth-stories. *The Jātakas or the Stories of the Buddha's Former Births*, vol. I to VI, General Editor E. B. Cowell, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1895; Indian edn Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990.

turns out that the king's personal thoroughbreds themselves gnawed the straps. The *Bodhisatta* admonishes the king for taking a decision based on *partiality* and *ignorance*. The king is then held guilty of ignorance and of resorting to partial knowledge. Thus the situation is not diffused by claiming ignorance as is often done in moral matters for it is the king's duty to get to the truth as best as he can and not rely on hearsay.

Incomplete knowledge and ignorance forms the basis of some other stories as well. In the *Ārāmadīsakajātaka* some monkeys are given the responsibility of watering the plants and trees in a beautiful garden when the gardener goes on a holiday.<sup>7</sup> In misplaced enthusiasm the monkeys pull out all the plants to check the length of their roots so that they can be watered accordingly. Thus the whole garden is destroyed. The story demonstrates the dire consequences of ignorance of the monkeys. In environmental literature it is often implied that "In order to truly determine what is in the best interest of the other, one needs to gather information about the life and concerns of the other."<sup>8</sup> This of course was not ensured here. Additionally the story points to the foolishness of the gardener himself to have left the garden's maintenance in the hands of the incapable. So not only does the story show the folly of ignorance it also recriminates the short sightedness and lack of wisdom of the one given responsibility. Thus understanding a situation for what it is important before decisions can be made.

Another tool that appeals is the use of ingenuity and the will and persistence to find alternatives in precarious situations. In the *Nālapānajātaka* the *Bodhisatta* appears as the king of monkeys who extols his follower monkeys to be cautious when eating or drinking anything unfamiliar.<sup>9</sup> As a result on discovering a water body none in his liege approach it. The *Bodhisatta* is called upon and in his inspection he discovers that the water body is indeed inhabited by an ogre who will prey on the monkeys. And so he thinks of a way through which his followers can quench their thirst and protect their lives. He therefore suggests to the monkeys the use of long hollow canes to suck up the water without approaching the pool. Thus with some creativity he is able to save the lives of all the monkeys exemplifying not only wisdom but also the need to find alternative ways of dealing with problems. Another story that exemplifies ingenuity based on observation is the *Tiṇḍukajātaka*.<sup>10</sup> In order to eat the fruits of a tree, some monkeys venture into a village full of human beings. But in order to avoid any confrontation with the latter the monkeys decide to approach the tree at night. However they are spotted and the tree is surrounded by

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<sup>7</sup> J 46

<sup>8</sup> Geoffrey Frasz, "Benevolence as an Environmental Virtue," in Ronald Sandler and Philip Cafaro (eds) *Environmental Virtue Ethics*, New York and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2005, p. 124.

<sup>9</sup> J 43

<sup>10</sup> J 177

people who want to clobber the monkeys the next morning. The chief of the monkeys who is the *Bodhisatta* in this story realizes that the only way that the monkeys can escape unscathed were if the people were distracted by some other event or business. Sure enough, a young monkey sets the village on fire. The villagers rush to rouse it and the monkeys are able to escape. Once again not only is the story about saving the life of his followers, it also showcases the creative wisdom and observational power that must be cultivated by the readers of the tale. Commenting on the need to find a sustainable economic order John B. Cobb has used this identical technique in his paper where he succinctly sums up: “To suppose that these are the only two options [global market economy and bureaucratically managed economy] limits us to a choice between two unjust and unsustainable systems. We need to envision ways of organizing the global economy that differ from both.”<sup>11</sup>

Another tool depicted is the use of contrary argument by which I mean juxtaposing an end opposite to the one desired to see the consequences and then choosing the right path. This technique is depicted in the *Rājovāḍajātaka*.<sup>12</sup> Herein a king is curious to learn what his defects are. No one around him is able to tell him despite his constant questioning and so he approaches the *Bodhisatta* who is living his life as a wise recluse in this story. In order to answer the king’s question the *Bodhisatta* gives him some sweet figs to eat. He then enlightens him that when a king is just and fair then the figs of the land are sweet. To try out the truth of this statement the king becomes tyrannical and unjust when he returns. As a result the whole realm becomes unhappy and on tasting figs that grow in his land the king now realizes them to be bitter. The king reverses his rule once more and his realm prospers again. Not only does this story relay that the king’s morality affects the state of nature but it shares a technique that can be quite important in arriving at moral decisions where sometimes the rightness of choice can be established only once the opposite is ruled out as unfeasible.<sup>13</sup>

The strength to take the right decision is also recognized. In the *Bhaddhasālajātaka* a fearless tree spirit approaches the king in order to convince him not to cut the tree she lives in.<sup>14</sup> The king remains convinced however that the tree is suitable for constructing his single column palace and no other. So she fails in her original quest. Nevertheless she then requests that her tree be cut in pieces so that the smaller trees and plants around her are not harmed, even though this death may be more painful for her. The tree spirit stands out glorious in her display of moral

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<sup>11</sup> John B. Cobb Jr, “Toward a Just and Sustainable Economic Order,” in Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III (eds) *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, p. 359.

<sup>12</sup> J 334

<sup>13</sup> That the immorality of the king negatively affects the environment is not a new idea and has already been mentioned in the *Nikāyas* twice. (*Anguttara Nikāya* Vol I, 159-160 and Vol II 74, PTS version) The *Jātakas* themselves embrace the idea in two other stories that I have come across. (J 194 and J 277)

<sup>14</sup> J 465

strength and compassion for others for which she is willing to undergo more suffering.

Careful perusal of situations, ingenuity and the motivation to find alternatives, contrasting situations to arrive at the right choice and the strength to follow the righteous path are some general insights that the *Jātakas* contain in their coffers. All the above can be looked upon just as tools but also as additional moral insights that can be added to the list of the more apparent virtues. Alternatively, each of these are tools can be used in actual situations to ease the difficulty of making decisions and they thereby also enhance the very path of virtues that the stories are extolling. The *Jātakas*, as mentioned earlier, pretty much expound the same virtues that are mentioned countless times in the rest of the Pali Canon, but the situational descriptions along with the tools add a new dimension that would in the very least assist in practical decision making. All of these could be applied in environmental situations where difficulty is often faced in reaching decisions. With a mind set in virtues and with these tools in hand a more righteous decision can be anticipated. However these tales also contain other insights in their descriptions of situations that would be of value exclusively to environmentalists or those trying to determine if the *Jātakas* contain responses to the environmental crisis.<sup>15</sup>

## Section 2

My central belief is that by the practice of certain virtues represented in the morals of the *Jātakas* stories the agent is automatically attuned to environmental concerns.<sup>16</sup> This belief supports the notion of an environment virtue ethics. In this section I propose to show that more ideas supportive of this thesis can be gleaned out from the very form of the stories. I will also explain with examples how the stories additionally contain several different frames to judge situations thus giving the morals themselves a more pervasive significance. My discussion gives rise to several questions and I shall deal with these in the last section.

Human arrogance is often cited as a reason for the degradation of the environment. In arrogance human beings think they are “central and in control.”<sup>17</sup> Human beings appear powerful due to their capacity of knowledge and this has led to arrogance in thinking anything can be achieved without suffering consequences.

<sup>15</sup> This section is inspired by a chapter entitled “Creative Problem-Solving” in Anthony Weston, *A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Ethical Toolbox*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008 (reprint).

<sup>16</sup> In my earlier work the following are some of the virtues I discussed: friendship, gratitude, generosity, non-violence, perseverance, humility and self-sacrifice amongst others.

<sup>17</sup> Louke Van Wensveen, *Dirty Virtues: The Emergence of Ecological Virtue Ethics*, New York: Humanity Books, 2000, p. 98; as quoted in Philip Cafaro, “Gluttony, Arrogance, Greed and Apathy,” in Ronald Sandler and Philip Cafaro (eds) *Environmental Virtue Ethics*, New York and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2005, p. 144.

Environmentalist P. Cafaro states that “It is fascinating to see how arrogance can dim a man’s sense of moral responsibility.”<sup>18</sup> The idea is reflected in these birth stories where the protagonist exerts unwarranted power. The dreadful consequences of such actions are then vividly described. In the *Sañjīvajātaka* a Brahmin who was a disciple of the *Bodhisatta* who himself is a Brahmin is taught a spell by the latter for reviving the dead.<sup>19</sup> But he is not taught the counter spell. In a visit to the forest with his fellow Brahmins he offers to revive a tiger. He acts in arrogance and in a boastful way. His friends are more careful and climb a tree while he is reciting his spell. The tiger does come to life and attacks him within a moment leaving the man who revived him dead. The story relays the misuse of power in dealing with nature and the awful consequences this can attract. A similar idea is expressed in the *ḷatukikajātaka*.<sup>20</sup> Here a rogue elephant (who is Devadatta in the Buddha’s own lifetime) is full of pride and arrogance of his own power. He cares nothing about squashing the young ones of a quail. The quail recites the verses:

Power abused is not all gain;  
Power is often folly’s bane.<sup>21</sup>

The quail proceeds to avenge the killing of her children. The story ends with the death of the elephant. The question of unreasonable power plays an important role in environmental debates today and is an especially recognized aspect of anthropocentrism or “human centeredness.” The stories are obviously a warning that no good will come from its practice.

The wonder and awe nature generates is a valuable tool for spiritual practice. Nature acts as teacher. This is an idea commonly mentioned in the *Therāgātha* where monks learn about impermanence of all things from the changes they see in nature. A similar theme is reflected in the *Jātakas*. The value of such wonder is often acknowledged by environmentalists as when it is said “Wonder...is a mode of attention to an object which is concerned not with its instrumental properties but with what it is, and opens the mind to the appreciation of the particular properties of the object.”<sup>22</sup> In the *Yuvañyajātaka* the *Bodhisatta* is a young prince who observes the momentary nature of dew drops that look as beautiful as pearls in the morning but are gone during the course of the day.<sup>23</sup> This reminds him of the momentariness of life and he is led towards a spiritual life. Similarly in the *Kumbhakārajātaka* the king learns a lesson from a mango tree whose fruit has been taken by people.<sup>24</sup> A bare tree

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<sup>18</sup> Cafaro, “Gluttony, Arrogance, Greed and Apathy”, p145

<sup>19</sup> J 150

<sup>20</sup> J 357

<sup>21</sup> J III 176 (Cowell, Book III, p. 116)

<sup>22</sup> John Benson, *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction with Readings*, London and New York, Routledge, 2000, p. 82

<sup>23</sup> J 460

<sup>24</sup> J 408

on the other hand stands majestically. He compares the latter with a homeless life. Then he observes a hawk being attacked by other hawks for a piece of meat and he compares the latter to material possessions. He sees a bull meet its death as it was seized by lust. From this the king understands the bad consequences of lust. He is inspired therefore to let go of attachment and lust for life is fleeting. In the *Rukkhadhammajātaka* similarly there is recognition that a thick forest can withstand a tempest but a single tree may not be able to. From this one can learn that people in unity stand stronger. Learning such lessons from nature can also be classified as a part of the “hermit strand.” The term was introduced by Lambert Schmithausen and by it he meant that Buddhism recognized that hermits needed unsullied nature to retreat to in order to enhance their practice.<sup>25</sup> This gave grounds for the preservation of wilderness. Similarly nature as teacher ought to be another reason for nature to be left unscathed.

Then there are several stories that describe nature’s wrath towards those who act in ingratitude towards it. Not cultivating gratitude towards those that have contributed to your wellness is a gross blunder that will attract punishment. And here it does not only seem to be just a symbolic idea that nature should be at the receiving end of gratitude, it seems to be taken as a given. The stories below make this adequately clear. In the *Mahāvāṇijajātaka* a group of travelers lost in a forest come upon a lush banyan tree.<sup>26</sup> The tree is magical and cutting a branch in every direction these travelers are provided with water, food, maidens to attend to them and precious goods. All but one traveler want to uproot the tree to see what the roots will give them. This traveler implores the others not to cut the roots as this would destroy a tree that provides pleasant shade. He says:

The tree that gives you pleasant shade, to sit or lie at need,  
You should not tear its branches down, a cruel wanton deed.<sup>27</sup>

He thinks it cruel to cut the tree. Unheeding they strike the roots and invite the ire of the serpent-king guarding the tree who destroys all the travelers and rewards only the non-greedy one. In the *Mahākapijātaka* a man lost in the forest falls into a precipice.<sup>28</sup> He is saved by a monkey, the *Bodhisatta* himself in this lifetime. Instead of feeling gratitude the man is overcome by greed and wants to kill the monkey and eat it. However, the monkey saves himself but the man becomes stricken with leprosy, and is in a terrible way due to acting with greed and duplicity. The story ends with him being reborn in hell. Similarly the opposite is seen when gratitude is expressed towards nature. In the *Ambajātaka* unable to see animals suffer during a

<sup>25</sup> Lambert Schmithausen, “The Early Buddhist Tradition and Ecological Ethics,” *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 4, 1997, 31. Journal Online. Available <http://jbe.gold.ac.uk> (accessed 7 October 1999), pp. 26-8.

<sup>26</sup> J 493

<sup>27</sup> J IV 352 (Cowell, IV, p. 222)

<sup>28</sup> J 516

famine, a hermit collects water through which the animals are able to survive.<sup>29</sup> He is so intent on helping the animals that he forgets his own hunger. The animals acknowledge his kindness by providing him with abundant fruit.<sup>30</sup> The message is clear: gratitude to nature will be rewarded whereas misuse and greed towards nature will attract horrific ends. There is a sense in these examples that though consideration must extend beyond human beings it must be extended for the sake of human beings. This is a problematic idea that I will deal with in section 3.

In environmental literature it has been recognized that “Compassion is applicable in cases where one’s decision or actions have likely implications for the pain and suffering of others.”<sup>31</sup> Compassion is an important virtue in early Buddhism and the practitioner is advised to use it in his meditative practice where he must envision extending compassion gradually in all directions and to all beings. I have already spoken of compassion as an environmental virtue and assumed that compassion by its very nature was bound to have an external effect even when it was internally practiced. However the *Jātakas* give this feeling expression in several stories and these are especially poignant from the environmental point of view. The *Macchajātaka* recounts time when the land was hit by a drought.<sup>32</sup> It describes how the *Bodhisatta*, then a fish, was filled with compassion seeing the fate of his kinsfolk without water. Rather than just nurturing this compassion he appeals to the king of Gods to send rains on the basis of his exemplary righteous conduct. In a sense the story tells of the miraculous production of rain but more that it focuses on the need to act from compassion and to set things right in nature with compassion as a motive. A similar description of compassion can be seen in the *Lohakumbhijātaka*.<sup>33</sup> Here the king of the city of Benares was portrayed as alarmed by some sounds he had heard in his sleep. His Brahmin courtiers advised him to hold a big sacrifice of many animals for protection from these sounds. A young Brahmin however wonders about taking so many lives in the sacrifice but is silenced by his elders for they look forward to the delicacies they will enjoy after the sacrifice. A very compassionate *Bodhisatta* then makes an appearance in this story as a Brahmin with mystical powers who is able to reveal to the king the real cause of the sounds – of beings suffering in hell. This would have no effect on the well-being of the king. The sacrifice is stopped. Being motivated by compassion for the life of the animals made the *Bodhisatta* act the way he did. Once again a positive act follows the feeling of compassion.

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<sup>29</sup> J 124

<sup>30</sup> However exceptions exist. In the *Dūbhiyamātakajātaka* a Brahmin who gives a monkey some water to drink gets abused by the ungrateful monkey. However the ungrateful monkey is identified as Devadutta in a previous life and the story appears to be more about him and his unchanging ways. J 174

<sup>31</sup> Ronald Sandler, “A Virtue Ethics Perspective on Genetically Modified Crops,” in Ronald Sandler and Philip Cafaro (eds) *Environmental Virtue Ethics*, New York and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2005, p. 219.

<sup>32</sup> J 75. A version of this story can be found in the *Cariyā-pīṭaka*.

<sup>33</sup> J 314

Another central issue in environmental literature is materialism. The economist J. K. Galbraith makes an interesting point when referring to over consumption: “If we are concerned about our great appetite for materials, it is plausible to seek to increase the supply, to decrease waste...to develop substitutes. But what of the appetite itself? Surely this is the ultimate source of the problem. If it continues its geometric course, will it not one day have to be restrained? Yet in the literature of the resource problem this is the forbidden question. Over it hangs a nearly total silence.”<sup>34</sup> However the *Jātakas* have no hesitation in pointing out the need to curb over consumption or wrongful consumption. Mostly related to greed, an environmental vice of some importance, several stories warn against it. In the *Vātamigajātaka* a deer is lured into a palace bit by bit as he has developed a taste for honeyed grass.<sup>35</sup> The deer’s craving led it to it into a trap. Similarly the *Sukajātaka* tells the story of a parrot that grew to love mangoes that grew in a distant island.<sup>36</sup> Despite being warned by his father he was unable to give up his sojourns. As a result one day on his flight back from the island he got weary, fell into water and was devoured by a fish. The story warns that greed inevitably causes a fall and it is better to live moderately. A careful use of resources is also suggested in some *Jātaka* stories. In the *Kāmanītajātaka* a greedy king desires to gain three more kingdoms.<sup>37</sup> His desire is so intense that it causes him to fall sick. But he is admonished by being told that he cannot wear four robes, sleep on four royal beds or eat out of four golden dishes. Thus needs are limited and desire endless. Accordingly the story suggests that desires ought to be abandoned. Laziness leading to the misuse of nature’s bounties is mentioned as well. Fondness for taking an easy way out from sheer laziness results in misusing resources. In the *Varaṇajātaka* due to laziness a young Brahmin gathers green boughs instead of the dry ones suitable for firewood.<sup>38</sup> In trying to light these everyone’s rice gruel is delayed the next morning as the fire refuses to catch. So shortcuts are not recommended. It is believed “We have to *think* our way towards better environmental solutions, and apathy shows itself in lazy thinking as well as in halfhearted actions or inaction.”<sup>39</sup> Laziness is not a good attitude even from the point of view of nature.

The *Jātakas* also provide opportunities to judge situations differently. There is no fixed rule and choices are situation-centric. Some criteria are identified on how

<sup>34</sup> John Kenneth Galbraith, “How Much should a Country Consume?” in Henry Jarrett, (ed), *Perspective on Conservation*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1958, pp. 91-92; as quoted in Ramchandra Guha, “Radical Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique,” in Larry May and Shari Collins Sharratt (eds) *Applied Ethics: A Multicultural Approach*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994, p. 130-131

<sup>35</sup> J 14

<sup>36</sup> J 255

<sup>37</sup> J 228

<sup>38</sup> J 71

<sup>39</sup> Cafaro, “Gluttony, Arrogance, Greed and Apathy,” p. 151

a choice can be made. I shall explain this point with the help of an example. In the following stories, though the situation is similar, very different results are seen. The *Mahāsukajātaka* tells the tale of a parrot that refused to leave a barren fig tree, due to a fierce loyalty to the tree that had served the parrot in its better days.<sup>40</sup> The parrot had decided to stay due to gratitude and love for the tree and wished for the tree to be returned to its former glory. The *Kacchapajātaka*, on the other hand, tells the tale of a tortoise that refused to leave a dried up lake due to his attachment to it.<sup>41</sup> He remained buried in the mud of the now dry lake and became a victim of a potter's spade who unknowingly struck him thinking him to be a lump of clay. Due to a fondness for home, one who was unable to leave perished, is the message of this *Jātaka*. The parrot appears to have displayed the following two virtues—loyalty and endurance. And it also clear that the first *Jātaka* is in addition about the virtues of love, friendship and gratitude whereas in the second the vice of attachment is being warned against. The action of the parrot is looked upon favourably; that of the tortoise is taken as foolish. In the case of a moral impasse – here it is to leave or not to leave – it must be decided, in the context of the situation, what course of action is to be followed. The recognition of either a virtue or vice can be taken as the measure or criterion for decision making here. In environmental terms, one suggests the wisdom of migration where life is endangered. The other suggests loyalty to that which has served one: the object must be tended and damage to it undone so that it is restored to its former glory. The *Jātakas* appear to advise that situations must be judged individually to decide the course of action.<sup>42</sup>

Several different frames to judge situations exist in the stories. For instance the *Velukajātaka* encourages that vile things ought not to be nurtured.<sup>43</sup> In this story despite the bodhisattva's advice a monk nurtures a poisonous snake by which he is eventually bitten. The story does not imply a dismissal of compassion but it is about a particular instance where misplaced compassion leads to disaster. In the *Ekapaññajātaka* however a young prince uproots a tiny tree so that it cannot wreck havoc when it grows.<sup>44</sup> Once again there is no absence of compassion here but the presence of wisdom about the future. This wisdom leads to a single act where a tree is uprooted. The latter conclusion is not reached easily, a case is prepared and a justification given by a wise person who is trying to enlighten the prince. So if this instance is brought to the level of a real situation then the uprooting of trees is not something that is being encouraged but simply of a vile one after due discussion and thought. This is also confirmed from other stories where respect for trees as homes of

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<sup>40</sup> J 429

<sup>41</sup> J 178

<sup>42</sup> This entire paragraph has been taken from my book with a few changes. Sahni, *Environmental Ethics in Buddhism*, pp. 159-160.

<sup>43</sup> J 20

<sup>44</sup> J 149

spirits is rampant. Of course both stories mentioned above actually refer to the uprooting of harmful attitudes. In conclusion to this section it can be said that moral principles set out in the Pali Canon are reflected in the *Jātakas*. But here the morals become less abstract with the realization that there cannot be one right answer to all moral quandaries. Problems have to be looked at from different angles and the different stories simply acknowledge this.

### Section 3

The above discussion raises several questions some of which I address in this section starting with a clarification of the representation of animals in the stories. The stories do not represent real animals and I don't think they were meant to represent real animals. The tales are simply symbolic of human life: the stories are wonderfully depicted through spokespersons that may be animals or tree spirits but the traits of these characters are overwhelmingly human. The anthropomorphic nature of these tales must be acknowledged. However, this does not mean that this aspect, of animals representing humans, is not of value. It is valuable precisely because it may set off the imagination of young children who may learn not only virtues but to respect the idea of animals having their own life and ultimately value. It also lends to a certain environmental richness that may not have happened if the characters were indeed humans. But the portrayal of animals whether they are real or not creates problems for an entirely different reason. The qualities of animals in the stories are sometimes wrongfully described. Often animals are given characteristics that defy reality. For instance jackals and crows are mostly described as vile creatures and male elephants are said to leaders of the pack.<sup>45</sup> There is no scientific or even common sense basis for the first and the latter is plainly flawed for a female always leads the pack. Many scholars question the indifference or ignorance that led to such inferences and this sets back efforts to identify a consistent environmental ethics in the *Jātakas*.<sup>46</sup>

On reading the *Jātakas* there is a feeling that immorality is oversimplified. Devadatta is the ever malicious evil-doer. Most evil deeds (with some exceptions of course) are ascribed to him and his wicked personality in his different roles stands out. However in life pointing out such evil intentioned villains is a rather vacuous pursuit bound to fail. For rather than being consistently bad most persons simply suffer from moral hesitancy or some limitation in their personality or they may commit one foul deed. This gets even more complicated in environmental situations. A person who commits an environmental folly is not necessarily a "bad" person and

<sup>45</sup> Waldau has discussed this idea in detail. Paul Waldau, "Buddhism and Animal Rights," in Damien Keown (ed.) *Contemporary Buddhist Ethics*, Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000, pp. 81-112.

<sup>46</sup> See Waldau and Florin Deleanu, "Buddhist 'Ethology' in the Pali Canon: Between Symbol and Observation," *The Eastern Buddhist* XXXII, no. 2, 2000.

may be a charity giver, compassionate towards animals. This complicates the effort to identify the environmental villain. However the problem described here exists not only in the context of the *Jātakas* but in environmental virtue ethics itself. Though I admit this weakness in the latter, in defense I would like to say that there is a very small chance that a virtuous person would intentionally undertake actions that damage nature.

Other questions exist. Though no Devadatta, the *Bodhisatta* commits many deeds that are not environmental in nature. He should be a role model where the virtues that can be called environmental are concerned but he does not live up to this distinction. In several stories he lives in luxury and is therefore associated with materialism and over consumption. In the *Mahākapijātaka* the *Bodhisatta*'s body was cremated with "...a funeral pile with a one hundred wagon loads of timber!"<sup>47</sup> These examples in principle go against the idea of a careful use of resources mentioned above. I have written earlier that:

It has been often noted by scholars that the *Bodhisatta* is not adverse to material opulence and so is quite unlike the simple and austere Buddha of other texts. Even though he strives towards renunciation in many stories, there are instances where he lives among a plethora of grand possessions...However in defense of the *Jātakas* one other interpretation must be accepted: that these examples can be relegated to a didactic context. Stories tend to be more effective when the protagonist, in this case the *Bodhisatta*, identifies with his audience and with those to whom he is reaching out. So living a life of luxury for him is not unbeknown or unusual only for this reason.<sup>48</sup>

There are other instances too of an overuse of resources not explicitly linked with the *Bodhisatta*. The *Kāliṅgabodhijātaka* tells the story of the king who worshipped the Bo tree with sixty thousand carts of flowers.<sup>49</sup> And so though for the *Bodhisatta* materialism can be explained away, other instances continue to linger insidiously.

The *Bodhisatta* also adopts violent means sometimes and therefore goes against the spirit of *ahiṃsā*, a virtue that had been identified as an environmental virtue earlier.<sup>50</sup> In the *Dhammaddhajātaka* the *Bodhisatta*, a bird in this life, kills a crow (though for the right reasons, for he is lying and deceitful) and in the *Mahisajātaka* he silently waits for a rogue monkey who constantly troubles him to meet his end.<sup>51</sup> So in the one story he partakes in the killing itself and in the other he

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<sup>47</sup> J III 375 (Cowell, III, p. 227)

<sup>48</sup> Sahni, *Environmental Ethics in Buddhism*, p. 162

<sup>49</sup> J IV 236 (Cowell, IV, p. 148)

<sup>50</sup> Sahni, *Environmental Ethics in Buddhism*, p. 126-127

<sup>51</sup> J 384 and J 278

becomes a silent supporter of the monkey's death. There may be good and virtuous reasons to destroy life but these examples are problematic because it is unclear where a killing can be justified. Moreover the categorical nature of the virtue is lost as well. However I came upon an interesting example, once again within the stories, which contains an explanation. In the *Sasajātaka* the *Bodhisatta* a hare in this lifetime offers himself as alms to a Brahmin as he has nothing else to give him to satiate the latter's hunger.<sup>52</sup> He then proceeds to clarify that no moral law will be broken by the Brahmin in taking his life. Thus the awareness of the precept of non-violence exists and it is believed that this will not be broken in this case of extreme sacrifice. So the *Jātaka*'s appear willing to relax a categorical principle if overwhelming reasoning—namely exceptional virtue—can be given in support. Maybe such beliefs were deeply embedded in the psyche of early Buddhists and led to the development of *upāya kusala* in Mahayana ideals that made allowances for violence in exceptional cases.

Other questions are related to the motivation behind many positive environmental acts. The motivation itself appears to be human-centered, i.e., done for the sake of some benefit for humans themselves. This suggests that nature is given instrumental value. For instance in the *Khandhavattajātaka* when a young ascetic is bitten by a snake the *Bodhisatta* suggests that good-will be practiced towards snakes so that snakes don't bite the meditating ascetics in return.<sup>53</sup> Very often stories ensure good deeds through fear of punishment to the moral actor. It works like a system of rewards and is quite unlike the Kantian notion of good for the sake of good. In the *Matakabhattajātaka*, for instance, the sacrifice of a goat is stopped only because the Brahmin responsible for the sacrifice fears several rebirths in the dismal animal realm.<sup>54</sup> This suggests anthropocentrism or human centeredness. However, as mentioned above, the notions of power and arrogance are denounced and this does not allow a negative, strong anthropocentrism (implying unfounded superiority and egotism) to take root. In fact a weak anthropocentrism may be more legitimate and accepted as not only does it find "all value in human loci" but it also ensures that "value is not restricted to satisfactions of ... human individuals."<sup>55</sup>

As for positive environmental actions being done for human ends, many think this may not be such a bad thing. Alluding to pre-modern times B. Rollin says "...the wise man took care of his animals—to fail to do so was to harm oneself as well as one's animals. Husbandry was assured by self-interest, and there was thus no

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<sup>52</sup> J 316

<sup>53</sup> J 203. The contents of this story also occur in the *Samyutta Nikāya* and the *Vinaya*. Lambert Schmithauen has discussed this idea in some detail. See "The Early Buddhist Tradition and Ecological Ethics," pp. 18-19.

<sup>54</sup> J 18

<sup>55</sup> Bryan G. Norton, "Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism," in Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III (eds) *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003, p. 169. I have mentioned the idea of a weak anthropocentrism in my book as well.

need to place heavy ethical emphasis on proper care of animals.”<sup>56</sup> According to this writer there was a seeming contract of give and take between human beings and animals. That this idea may have existed at the time the *Jātakas* were written becomes clear from the *Daḷhadhammajātaka* which tells the story of an elephant that served well in her youth and was therefore bestowed many favours.<sup>57</sup> But she was forgotten in her old age. The *Bodhisatta* advised the king to respect her even now for good deeds were never to be forgotten. However Rollin believes such a contractual relation may not be applicable or effective in today’s world where the mistreatment of animals is so rampant. However gratitude itself is crucial even today and remains an unwavering value.

In conclusion it can be said that negative renderings to do with the environment do exist within the stories and must be taken into consideration. But the latter does not impinge on the presence of an implicit “connection” within nature such that can support the development of a comprehensive early Buddhist environmental virtue ethics quite animatedly. From their very structure a link is presented between the stories each of which is a previous lifetime of the Buddha. There is no dearth of portrayals here – as frog, goose, tree spirit, elephant, prince and wizened old man. This is the incessant, unshakable link of *kamma*, each lifetime adding to the future one, not isolated and impermeable. Life is not lived in isolation and actions are committed in relationships. “Taken as a whole, the Jatakas reveal the inner dynamics of dramatic ensembles or groups of “karmic cohorts” traveling together through time in the shared realization of truly liberating conduct and relationships.”<sup>58</sup> The *Jātaka* stories point to the importance of knowing ones self and recognizing one’s actions for in these two lies one’s possible future. This is where they are a crucial contribution to the environmental debate within early Buddhism.

I would like to conclude by addressing a final question about “how” the discussion above contributes as a solution to the environmental crisis. Simply put, as I understand it, it does so by focusing on the character of the agent. The inner state of the agent is often given little importance in environmental literature as compared with other methodology that focuses say on conservation or wilderness preservation. Early Buddhism has little to contribute to the latter issues. But contribute it does in other ways. Its approach is exceptional and is its very own. Its philosophy is devised for human beings (so is human-centric) but in a way that the agent is saddled with much responsibility and is unable to act in a selfish way without breaking basic Buddhist principles. Living by morals such as gratitude and compassion punctuates

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<sup>56</sup>, Bernard E. Rollin, “Scientific Ideology, Anthropomorphism. Anecdote, and Ethics,” in Susan J. Armstrong and Richard G. Botzler (eds), *The Animals Ethics Reader*, London and New York, Routledge, 2003, p. 69

<sup>57</sup> J 409

<sup>58</sup> Peter D. Hershock, *Buddhism in the Public Sphere: Reorienting Global Interdependence*, Oxon: Routledge, 2006, p. 18

life and affects the way persons interact with others and their external environment. The *Jātakas* unflinchingly reflect this approach. It has been my effort to show above how they do so. Not only do these stories reflect the early Buddhist approach to moral behaviour they also embrace more deeply the development of the virtues often pointed out as indispensable in environmental debates. Subtly are provided tools or techniques to be used in arriving at decisions demonstrating the practical orientation of the stories. The early Buddhist position is unique. And the *Jātakas* are unique within this Buddhist pantheon. I believe that the sum total approach of the other literature of the Pali Canon and the *Jātakas* can be employed to address the current environmental crisis by ethicising the agent, by making the agent aware that decisions come from deep-set dispositions the altering of which will alter the state of the environment. In laying down certain parameters of behaviour and action the contribution of this religion is immense. This is the Buddhist approach and it is bound to be of value in the current environmental crisis.

## Buddhist Approach to Environment Crisis

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### Introduction

According to Buddhism, all conditioned things are changed in accord with causes and conditions. Nothing arising, existing and ceasing without cause and condition. This rational process is called the principle of conditionality (*idappaccayatā*), as the Buddha says:

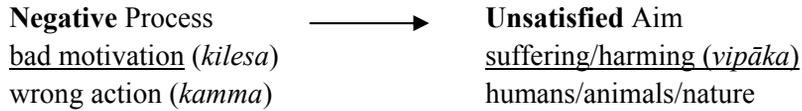
When this is, that is	=	When A is, B is
This arising, that arises	=	A arising, B arises
When this is not, that is not	=	When A is not, B is not
This ceasing, that ceases. <sup>1</sup>	=	A ceasing, B ceases

The problems of environment crisis, such as rubbish pollution (earth element problem), water pollution (water element problem), air pollution (air element problem) and global warming (fire element problem) which we are facing in the world today, are really generated from cause and condition. It must be accepted the fact that most of these environment problems were really generated by humans. It is evident that various disasters that impact to all lives and natural environment are serious more and more. The world, as we have seen, is under dangerous situation as if it will be destroyed in near future.

In this concern, it should be understood that unlimited and uncontrolled developments motivated by human greed and selfishness caused human and animal sufferings as well as harming nature. This can be concluded with the process of conditionality (or the process of cause and effect): “Greed and selfishness (*kilesa*) lead human beings to act (*kamma*) and then causing human and animal sufferings, and harming nature (*vipāka*)”. It can be summarized by this equation in Buddhist perspective:

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<sup>1</sup> S. II. 79.



This clearly shows that humans are not yet really reaching the aim of development, well-being, since they are still suffer with many distress because of their actions. However, every problems can be solved or can be minimized, since humans can merely develop the right thought and apply the right courses in development.

### **The Buddhist Approach to Rubbish Pollution Crisis: (Earth Element Problem)**

The problem of rubbish pollution, such as the dregs of food, vegetable, paper, plastic, aluminum; the dross of chemical, coal, and technological products, is crisis in developed and developing countries or even in undeveloped countries.

According to Buddhist view, the rubbish pollution is the problem of earth element. It is a fact that in each day there are many million tons of rubbish over around the world were buried and fired as well as were filled up the sea as some countries did to expand the land. It is believed that there are not enough place in this world to throw away the dregs in future, the way out of this problem is planed to bring them to throw away in space or at the other planets. It is a fact that rubbish pollution or the earth element pollution can cause and increase the pollutions of water element, air element and fire element in nature. The Buddhist approach to rubbish pollution crisis can be practiced in these four ways:

### **The Way to Prevent Rubbish Pollution**

The process of production to serve human need should apply natural materials that can digest easily. The non - digest materials should be limited and controlled to reduce the earth element that cannot digest naturally.

Both producers and consumers must have great care to the environment in a way that they must deal with the dregs of materials in the proper means, for instance, the dregs of food and vegetable should be made as an organic fertilizer; the papers, aluminums and plastics should be reused and recycled; the dross of chemical, coal, and technological products should be properly buried at the prepared area.

The Buddha's attitude to prevent this problem is clearly mentioned in the Vinaya that he bans the monks to throw away dregs to the river, canal and the ground.<sup>2</sup> This clearly shows the Buddha's great care towards natural environment. According to the Buddha, a small pieces of dregs can harm the natural environment. Therefore, the dregs should be managed by proper means.

Consumers must consume materials as necessary and be worthwhile to minimize the dregs of earth element. This way of practice can see the Buddha's attitude in consuming the four requisites by reflecting on their true values to obtain the real aims, developing oneself and others, and not harming the nature.

### **The Way to Overcome Rubbish Pollution**

The rubbish pollution that happened at any places should be overcoming by proper means, for instance, the dregs of food and vegetable should be made as an organic fertilizer; the papers, aluminums and plastics should be reused and recycled; the dross of chemical, coal, and technological products should be properly buried at the prepared area.

In this regard, we can see the Buddha that permitted the monks, as mentioned in the Vinaya, to take the pieces of cloth from the dust-heap for reusing, for instance, making the robe, mixing with the soil to spread over the cell or making the feet napkin.

### **The Way to Develop the Right Courses to Solve the Problem of Rubbish Pollution**

The producers must really develop right thought in production, aiming on sustainable development. In process of production, the natural materials that can digest naturally is more required; the system of garbage disposal should be really qualified. The process of reuse and recycle the materials should be practiced as much as possible. In the process of consumption, consumers should reflect on the true value of consumption and emphasize to use the materials that can digest naturally.

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<sup>2</sup> Vin. IV. 205.

### **The Effort to Maintain the Right Courses to solve the Problem of Rubbish Pollution Permanently**

Both producers and the consumers must try to maintain the right courses as following :

- The effort to maintain the right ways to prevent the problem of rubbish pollution.
- The effort to maintain the right ways to overcome the problem of rubbish pollution.
- The effort to develop the better way to solve the problem of rubbish pollution permanently.

In conclusion, the problem of rubbish pollution can be solved by developing right thought in production, aiming on sustainable development. In process of production, the non-digest materials should be limited and controlled to reduce the non-digest earth element. Consumption should be guided by wisdom and useful materials should be reused and recycled to reduce the earth element. The dross of chemicals, coal, and technological products should be eliminated by proper means to save the natural environment.

### **The Buddhist Approach to Water Pollution Crisis: (Water Element Problem)**

Water pollution is the contamination of water bodies, such as rivers, canals, lakes, oceans, and groundwater mostly caused by human activities, which can be harmful to humans, animals and nature. It has been suggested that it is the leading worldwide cause of diseases and deaths.

Water pollution mostly caused by domestic households, industrial and agricultural practices. Domestic households cause water pollution by releasing wastewater, urine, stool, food and laundry wastes into the water sources. Industry is a huge source of water pollution due to it releases wastewater, chemical substances, oil waste, coal waste, nuclear waste into rivers, canals, lakes and oceans. Agricultural practices often cause water pollution due to agriculturists release wastewater, chemical substances, animal stools into rivers, canals and lakes.

The unlimited and uncontrolled development of humans in the age of globalization seriously impacts to the water sources. Polluted water or water element pollution, in return, impacts to human living, to aquatic organisms and to natural environment including earth element, air element and fire element.

The Buddhist approach to water pollution crisis can be practiced in these four ways:

### **The Way to Prevent Water Pollution**

Industrials, domestic households, and agriculturists must have great care to the water element in nature in a way that they must not release the polluted water or the dregs of materials into water sources. In this way, the polluted water should be well-treated before releasing to the nature.

The Buddha's attitude to prevent this problem is clearly mentioned in Vinaya that he bans the monks urinate, stool or spit into the river and canal.<sup>3</sup> This clearly shows the Buddha's great care towards natural environment. According to the Buddha's attitude, urine, stool or spit can pollute the natural environment.

Besides this, the agriculturists should avoid to use the chemicals in productions, because the chemicals not only harm to the user, but also harm to the natural environment, i.e., earth element and water element. This is the reason that the Buddha teaches his followers to abstain from trading of poisons, since it is very harmful to humans, animals and nature.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Way to Overcome Water Pollution**

The water pollution that happened at any places can be overcoming by technological and natural processes, for instance, treating polluted water by applying technology, such as the system of water wheel of His Majesty King Bhumibol; applying natural process by pouring bio-liquid into polluted water; planting *Eichornia Speciosa* (Java weed) or morning glory, etc., to absorb the polluted matters from water. Treating polluted water by applying water wheel is the process of using air element to purify water element; treating by pouring bio-liquid into polluted water is the process of using water element to purify water element; treating by planting some plants in polluted water is the process of using earth element to purify water element. From this point, elements can support to each other in positive way.

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<sup>3</sup> Vin. IV. 205-206.

<sup>4</sup> A. III. 207. This should be understood that the chemical is classified as a kind of poison.

### **The Way to Develop the Right Courses to Solve the Problem of Water Pollution**

The producers must really develop right thought in production, aiming on sustainable development. In process of any scheme of production, the system of polluted water treatment should be managed with great care. Then well-treated water can be reused, for example, watering the garden, plants; washing the cars; using for constructions; cleaning the road, etc. By this way, humans can reach the aims without harming the nature.

In the part of agricultural production, an organic or bio-fertilizers and bio-insecticide should be more produced and used than chemicals. By applying this way, the chemicals can be minimized and the problem of polluted water can be reduced accordingly. In addition, human and animal stools should be produced as biogas for domestic using.

The polluted water that is impacted to environment should be well-treated by developing technological and natural processes more and more, aiming for human well-being and for wonderful natural environment.

### **The Effort to Maintain the Right Courses to solve the Problem of Water Pollution Permanently**

Both producers and the consumers must try to maintain the right courses as following :

- The effort to maintain the right ways to prevent the problem of water pollution.
- The effort to maintain the right ways to overcome the problem of water pollution.
- The effort to develop the better way to solve the problem of water pollution permanently.

In conclusion, to prevent this problem, humans must not throw away the rubbish (polluted earth elements) or release the polluted water (polluted water elements) into water sources. The polluted elements must be controlled and be purified before releasing to the nature. To overcome the polluted water, technological and natural processes in treatment should be developed more and more. By this way, applying suitable elements to purify polluted elements is a naturally appropriate means. Lastly, to solve the problem of water pollution permanently, the right courses of preventing, overcoming and developing should be continuously movement.

### **The Buddhist Approach to Air Pollution Crisis - (Air Element Problem)**

Air pollution is another significant problem that mostly caused by human activities. This problem can be divided into two groups, namely, outdoor and indoor air pollution.

The first cause of outdoor air pollution is the release of particles into the air from burning fuel for energy. In other words, the exhaust from burning fuels in automobiles, and industries is a major source of pollution in the air. Even the burning of wood and charcoal in fireplaces and barbecues can release quantities of soot into the air. The second cause of outdoor air pollution is the release of noxious gases, such as sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, and chemical vapors. The results of outdoor air pollution are smog, acid rain, global warming and ozone depletion. There are many sources of indoor air pollution, such as smoking, cooking and heating appliances, etc., cause pollution inside buildings and can pose serious health problems to the people.

Air pollutions were created by outdoor and indoor activities can cause serious problems for human health in many ways with both short-term and long-term effects. Examples of short-term effects include irritation to the eyes, nose and throat. Long-term health effects include chronic respiratory disease, lung cancer, heart disease, and even damage to the brain, nerves, liver, or kidneys. Air pollutions also cause problems for animals as well as for the whole environment. The Buddhist approach to air pollution crisis can be practiced in these four ways :

#### **The Way to Prevent Air Pollution**

According to Buddhist attitude, prevention is the best way to solve the problem. The way to prevent outdoor air pollution is issuing the law to control emanations of particles of automobiles and industries, to control burning of wood and charcoal, and to control releasing of noxious gases in proper ways. To prevent and control indoor air pollution, legislation to control smoking is an important key, but however, this way may be effected in some locations, then personal emanation should be limited wherever possible.

#### **The Way to Overcome Air Pollution**

The way to overcome this air element problem, steps can be undertaken to reduce exposure to air pollution. These can be accomplished by

regulation of man-made pollution through legislation. In this way, industrial countries have to responsibly control on pollution emanation for transportation vehicles and industry as much as possible. This requires a variety of coordinating agencies around the world. In addition, home and office environment should be monitored for adequate air flow and proper exhaust systems established. Applying an artificial rain is another way to reduce air pollution as done in northern Thailand, such as Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lamphun and Lampang in summer of each year.

### **The Way to Develop the Right Courses to Solve the Problem of Air Pollution**

International coordination to control on pollution emanation for transportation vehicles and industry should be moved more seriously. Natural energies, such as bio-diesel (water element), water energy (water element), air energy (air element), should be more produced as alternative energies in future. Scientists and researchers should try to study and research the way to prevent and overcome air pollution. International legislative bodies should appropriately issue the laws to control pollution emanations as much as possible. The knowledge about damaging effects of air pollution should be taught for students in schools and universities, beginning at very young ages.

### **The Effort to Maintain the Right Courses to Solve the Problem of Air Pollution Permanently**

To solve the problem of air pollution permanently, humans must try to maintain the right courses of activities as following :

- The effort to maintain the right ways to prevent the problem of air pollution.
- The effort to maintain the right ways to overcome the problem of air pollution.
- The effort to develop the better way to solve the problem of air pollution permanently.

In conclusion, both outdoor and indoor air pollution is mostly generated by human activities. This must be accepted that because of unlimited and uncontrolled development of humans seriously caused air pollution, particularly in the big cities. Since air pollution is caused by human activities, so the ways to prevent and to overcome should be started from human right thought in

activities aiming maximum of well-being and witting minimize air pollution as much as possible. Only through the efforts of scientists, business leaders, legislators, and individuals can reduce the amount of air pollution on this planet. This responsibility must be met by all of us in order to assure that a healthy environment will exist for ourselves and for our new generations.

### **The Buddhist Approach to Global Warming Crisis - (Fire Element Problem)**

Global warming is the increase in the average temperature of the earth's near-surface air and the ocean. Global warming is the problem of fire element due to the increasing of greenhouse gas in atmosphere that was mostly emanated by human activities. Cutting of trees is another cause to urge increasing of global warming. In fact, global temperature was increasing since the industrial revolution in the middle of twentieth century. Increasing global temperature will cause the level of greenhouse effect to rise accordingly, and may in turn cause broader changes, including ice near the poles melt, and worldwide sea level rise. Changes in the amount and pattern of precipitation may result in flooding and drought. There may also be changes in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events.

Other effects may include changes in agricultural yields, reduced summer streamflows, species extinctions, and increases in the ranges of diseases. These attributed and expected effects of global warming will be impacting on both human life and natural environment more quickly and more intense if we cannot control the world temperature to rise.

The Buddhist approach to global warming crisis can be practiced in these four ways:

### **The Way to Prevent Global Warming**

Emanations reduction of greenhouse gas into the air is the useful way to prevent and control the increasing of global temperature. According to Buddhist view, this is the way to mitigate the causes of global warming. By this way, greenhouse gas emanations of industrial production scheme as well as vehicles treading and transportation schemes should be limited and controlled through which worldwide companies, in conjunction with their governments, make the broad agreement on combating global warming.

In addition, environmental groups, communities and regional organizations must seriously encourage individual action against global warming. The ways

can be done by everyone are that mitigating emanations fire element to the air as much as possible, and mitigating cutoff trees. The idea of saving trees to save the nature is also emphasized by the Buddha.

In *Dīghanikāya*, the Buddha teaches his followers to avoid from harming seed and plant life.<sup>5</sup> In the *Vinaya*, there are monastic rules against harming trees and plants. It is an offence (*pācittiya*) for a monk to fell a tree or to ask someone else to do so.<sup>6</sup> In another passage on tree-felling, the Buddha criticizes a monk who has cut down a large tree used as a shrine, saying: “For foolish man, people are percipient of a life-principle in a tree”.<sup>7</sup> These monastic rules show some ideas of saving trees to save life and the world.

### **The Way to Overcome Global Warming**

It is a fact that no one technology or sector can be completely responsible for overcoming the effects of global warming. There are many key practices and technologies in various sectors, such as energy supply, transportation, industry, agriculture, and some cool roof and tree planting projects that can be accomplished to reduce global warming. Though the ways are vary, but it should be understood that all ways move to responsible for emanations reduction more fire element to the air. On the contrary, emanation schemes of pure air element to the nature is really necessary, since this natural process can reduce global temperature.

### **The Way to Develop the proper Courses to Solve the Problem of Global Warming**

The effects of global warming are wide in their scope, and similarly wide variety of measures have been suggested for adaptation to global warming. These range starting from the little attempts, such as the installations of air-conditioning equipment, up to major infrastructure projects, such as tree planting, and abandonment of settlements threatened by rising sea levels. Long-term measures including water conservation, changes to naturally agricultural practices, construction of flood defences, changes to alternative fuel usage, have all been suggested. These ways to develop the proper courses to solve the problem of global warming may be too hard for human movements,

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<sup>5</sup> D. I. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Vin. IV. 34-35.

<sup>7</sup> Vin. III. 156.

but however no one technology or sector can be completely responsible for controlling and reducing global warming.

### **The Effort to Maintain the Proper Courses to Solve the Problem of Global Warming Permanently**

To solve the problem of global warming permanently, humans must try to maintain the right courses of activities as following :

- The effort to maintain the right ways to prevent the problem of global warming.
- The effort to maintain the right ways to overcome the problem of global warming.
- The effort to develop the better way to solve the problem of global warming permanently.

In conclusion, since global warming is mostly caused by human activities, so the ways to prevent and to overcome should be started with human responsibility. Only through the efforts of scientists, business groups, legislators, environmental groups, communities and regional organizations must seriously encourage individual action against global warming as much as possible. This responsibility must be met by all of us in order to assure that global temperature will be controlled and reduced successfully.

### **Conclusion:**

It may be maintained that the world will be destroyed by unusual elements of earth, water, air and fire. Humans were facing with natural disasters, such as earthquake, cyclone, tsunami, forest fire on increasingly serious levels. These natural disasters are the destructive appearances of four elements as above mentioned.

It is unfortunate that since twentieth century humans have released destructive elements in nature on high level as if they are not the part of it. To destroy nature to satisfy human desire will lead to destructive aim inevitably. The aim of development should be to obtain the maximum of well-being with minimum of harming nature. As venerable Thich Nhat Hanh says : “ We classify other animals and livings as nature, acting as if we ourselves are not part of it. Then we pose the question: “How should we deal with

nature?" We should deal with nature the way we should deal with ourselves...Human beings and nature are inseparable".<sup>8</sup>

The process of production should be guided by positive thought aiming on sustainable development. alternative energies, such as wind wheel (air element), solar energy (fire element), water power (water element), should be widely used for saving natural resources and environment, especially for reducing global warming.

Consumption should be reflected on the true value of materials aiming maximum of well-being without harming. Schumacher, in this regard, maintains: "Since consumption is merely a means to human well-being, the aim should be to obtain the maximum of well-being wit the minimum of consumption. To minimize consumption and maximize human well-being and non-violence is most appropriate to sustainable development".<sup>9</sup> This concern can be summarized by this equation in Buddhist perspective :

<b>Positive Process</b>	→	<b>Satisfied Aim</b>
<u>good motivation</u>		<u>well-beings (<i>vipāka</i>)</u>
good action ( <i>kamma</i> )		humans/animals/nature

<sup>8</sup> Eppsteiner, F. (ed.), **The Path of Compassion : Writing on Socially Engaged Buddhism**, (Berkeley Calif., Parallax Press, 1988), p. 41.

<sup>9</sup> Schumacher, E.F., **Small is Beautiful : Economics as if People Mattered**, (New York : Harper & Row Publishers, 1975), p. 58 ff.

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## **Problems with the Holistic Approach to Buddhist Environmental Ethics**

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### **Introduction:**

In order to contribute to solving the global environmental crisis, Green Buddhism advocates a holistic approach to Buddhist environmental ethics whose theoretical basis lies in the early Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination, with the latter being interpreted as “interdependence of all things.” This holistic approach is shown to have two problems. One is that, according to some recent studies, this “interdependence- of-all-things” interpretation is probably incorrect – from the perspective of early Buddhism; the other problem is that even if this interpretation is correct, dependent origination by itself is not sufficient for an environmental ethic.

### **1. The Global Environmental Crisis and Green Buddhism:**

It is conceived by many that the global environmental crisis is “fundamentally a spiritual and religious crisis and that its ultimate solution has to be spiritual and religious.”<sup>1</sup> So, the world’s religions, especially those Asian ones whose worldviews (at least) appear to be non-anthropocentric such as Buddhism, have a unique role to play in addressing the global environmental crisis, namely to transform our attitudes towards nature in which we live. Like other religions, Buddhism has already taken up environmental issues and begun to formulate her environmental ethics. Green Buddhism<sup>2</sup> is a Buddhist approach to environmental activism. It emerged out of the modern environmental movement and has been led mainly by contemporary socially engaged Buddhists in the West, such as the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, Gary Snyder, Joanna Macy, Rita M. Gross, Stephanie Kaza, and Kenneth Kraft. Green Buddhists claim that Buddhism is an environmentally-friendly religion and they generally adopt a holistic approach to Buddhist environmental ethics. The theoretical basis of this holistic approach lies in the early Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination, which is interpreted by the Green Buddhists as interdependence (or, inter- connectedness, interrelatedness, mutual interpenetration) of all things (or, existence, phenomena). In this sense, all things (in particular, human

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<sup>1</sup> Jamieson (2008: 20); see also the classic by Lynn White, Jr. (1967)

<sup>2</sup> See Ian Harris (1994) and Stephanie Kaza (2000, 2006).

beings and nature) are seen as one.<sup>3</sup> The basic argument of this approach can be simply put in this way: All things are interdependent (in particular, humans and nature are interdependent); therefore, we should protect the natural environment. This approach has received wide acceptance in the West. Green Buddhists, like Joanna Macy, hold that once one recognizes that all things are interdependent (or, nature and humans are one, the world is holistic), then environmentally-friendly behaviors will necessarily follow and so interdependence is sufficient for an environmental ethic.<sup>4</sup> In this paper, I give a critique of this holistic approach to Buddhist environmental ethics from the perspective of early Buddhism. I argue that, despite its powerful intuitive appeal, this holistic approach suffers two serious problems: (1) The popular view of the meaning of dependent origination in early Buddhism as “interdependence of all things” is probably incorrect; (2) Even if dependent origination in early Buddhism did have the meaning of “interdependence of all things,” interdependence by itself cannot be a sufficient foundation for an environmental ethic. My conclusion is that the theoretical basis of the holistic approach to Buddhist environmental ethics is untenable.

## 2. Meanings of Dependent Origination in Early Buddhism:

The early Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination (Pāli: *paticca-samuppāda*; Sanskrit: *pratītya-samutpāda*) is probably the most fundamental Buddhist philosophical principle. As Y. Karunadasa puts it, “The theory of Dependent Origination has a central position in early Buddhism as both a defining attribute of Buddhist thought, and a principal theoretical tool that delves into the very heart of the Buddha’s soteriological mission.”<sup>5</sup> This doctrine is described in its core form (or abstract formula) in the simple but penetrating Pāli verse:

When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises.

When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases.<sup>6</sup>

With regard to this core form, Karunadasa writes, “The Buddhist theory of Dependent Origination at its core level stipulates the interdependent and dynamic nature of all things, describing how phenomena arise through the temporary

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<sup>3</sup> This holistic approach has a good manifestation in the following remark of Thich Nhat Hanh: “We classify other animals and living beings as nature, acting as if we ourselves are not part of it. Then we pose the question ‘How should we deal with Nature?’ We should deal with nature the way we should deal with ourselves! We should not harm ourselves; we should not harm nature. [...] Human beings and nature are inseparable.” Quoted in Harvey (2000: 151).

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Macy (1993) “Greening of the Self”.

<sup>5</sup> Karunadasa & Bell (2006: 1).

<sup>6</sup> Bodhi & Nanamoli (1995: 927).

coordination of various causes and conditions.”<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, citing Taiken Kamura, Karunadasa continues, “this doctrine means ‘all phenomena are established through [a matrix of] interconnections; without these connections, nothing could be established.’ The theory of Dependent Origination thus amounts to a statement of the ‘interdependence of all phenomena.’”<sup>8</sup> This “*interdependence-of-all-phenomena*”<sup>9</sup> interpretation of the doctrine of dependent origination is held by the majority of modern Buddhist scholars.<sup>10</sup> Yet this interpretation has not received an absolute consensus. For instance, in a recent article, “Early Meanings of Dependent-Origination,” which is probably the most recent study on the topic, Eviatar Shulman challenges this popular view with, I think, convincing philological arguments. As stated by Shulman, the aim of her article is to “reveal the earlier original uses of the concept [of dependent origination]”<sup>11</sup> and to argue that “in clear distinction from dependent-origination as “existence in dependence” and as the true nature of all phenomena, dependent origination addresses the workings of the mind alone. Dependent-origination should be understood to be no more than an inquiry into the nature of the self (or better, the lack of a self)”<sup>12</sup> In the abstract of her article, Shulman writes:

Dependent-origination, possibly the most fundamental Buddhist philosophical principle, is generally understood as a description of all that exists. Mental as well as physical phenomena are believed to come into being only in relation to, and conditioned by, other phenomena. This paper argues that such an understanding of *pratītya-samutpāda* is mistaken with regard to the earlier meanings of the concept. Rather than relating to all that exists, dependent-origination related originally only to processes of mental conditioning. It was an analysis of the self, not of reality, embedded in the *Upanisadic* search for the *ātman*. The teaching also possessed important ontological implications regarding the nature of the relation between consciousness and reality. These implications suggest that rather than things being conditioned by other things, they are actually conditioned by consciousness.<sup>13</sup>

Methodologically, Shulman restricts to materials contained in the four major Nikāyas of the Pāli Canon, and cites the following standard exposition of the 12 links in the words of the Buddha:

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<sup>7</sup> Karunadasa & Bell (2006: 11).

<sup>8</sup> Karunadasa & Bell (2006: 2).

<sup>9</sup> *Interdependence* means “everything depends on everything else,” i.e., each phenomenon (or thing) is dependent on *all other* phenomena in the entire universe and so it is more *totalistic* than just “phenomena (or things) arise through the temporary coordination of various causes and conditions.” *All* phenomena include both mental and non-mental (i.e., material) phenomena.

<sup>10</sup> See Shulman (2008: 299, n.3) for the many specific examples of such scholars and their works.

<sup>11</sup> Shulman (2008: 298).

<sup>12</sup> Shulman (2008: 299).

<sup>13</sup> Shulman (2008: 297).

**And what, monks, is dependent-origination?** Dependent on (1) ignorance, monks, (2) mental dispositions. Dependent on mental dispositions, (3) consciousness. Dependent on consciousness, (4) name and form. Dependent on name and form, (5) the six bases (of the senses). Dependent on the six bases, (6) contact. Dependent on contact, (7) sensation. Dependent on sensation, (8) thirst. Dependent on thirst, (9) grasping. Dependent on grasping, (10) being. Dependent on being, (11) birth. Dependent on birth, (12) old age and death, sadness, pain, suffering, distress and misery arise. This is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. **This, monks, I say is dependent-origination.**<sup>14</sup>

Shulman first points out that the 12 links “are an explanation of mental conditioning, an analysis of subjective existence. They do not deal directly with the manner in which all things exist.”<sup>15</sup> This is a commonly accepted view though. Shulman then goes further to claim, in stark contrast to the prevalent view,<sup>16</sup> that the 12 links are *not* a “particular case” of the more general principle *idappaccayatā* (“dependence”) and of the abstract formula quoted above, and that the abstract formula of dependent origination deals *exclusively* with the process encapsulated in the 12 links. The argument she gives for this claim is a philological one:

When the Buddha says “When this is, that is, etc.,” he is speaking *only* of mental conditioning, and is saying absolutely nothing about existence per se. The most significant evidence for this fact is that the phrase “*imasmim sati idam hoti ...*” never occurs detached from [or not closely related to] the articulation of the 12 links. Let us examine a standard appearance of the abstract formula. In the *Dasa-bala-sutta* of the *Nidāna-Samyutta*, the Buddha says: “*Imasmim sati idam hoti ... yad idam avijjā paccayā...*” (When this is, that is ... *That is:* depending on ignorance ...). The abstract formula is followed by *yad idam*, followed by the standard articulation of the 12 links. **If the *yad idam* meant “for example” or “such as,” we could accept the view that the 12 links are a private case of a general principle of conditionality. But it clearly does not.** What it does express is more akin to “that is,” or even more precisely “that what is.” Hence it should be clear that the abstract formula relates precisely and only to the mutual conditioning of the 12 links.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Shulman (2008: 304); emphasis mine.

<sup>15</sup> Shulman (2008: 306).

<sup>16</sup> The prevalent view is that, as Karunadasa puts it, “One common tendency in the interpretation of early Buddhism has been an inability to distinguish the theory of Dependent Origination from perhaps its most important conceptual application: the twelve link causal series. [...] It is certainly erroneous to equate the doctrine of Dependent Origination with the twelve link causal series.” Karunadasa & Bell (2006: 2-3).

<sup>17</sup> Shulman (2008: 307); emphasis mine.

Shulman comes to the conclusion that “there is no reason to believe that dependent- origination originally discussed anything but mental conditioning”<sup>18</sup> and that the 12 links *are* dependent origination (and not a “particular case” thereof).<sup>19</sup> And more importantly for our present purposes, although Shulman admits that the teaching of dependent origination does have ontological implications (though itself is not an ontological teaching as such – because it deals *exclusively* with mental conditioning), she stresses that the doctrine of dependent origination in early Buddhism does *not* have the meaning of “interdependence of all things”:

[Even] if the Nikāya suttas refer at all to “things” being dependent-arisings – and there is serious doubt that they do – they are not saying that things depend on other things, or even that everything is conditioned. **They certainly are not saying that “everything” depends on everything else.** What they may be saying is that the things we encounter are brought into ontological existence because we grasp at them. Or rather, because we grasp at our selves.<sup>20</sup>

For Shulman, “the understanding of [dependent origination] popular today as a general principle of causality relating to all things prove to be a result of later doctrinal developments.”<sup>21</sup> Shulman is neither the only nor the first scholar holding the above view. Before her, the prominent Buddhist scholar Lambert Schmithausen has expressed such a view. Schmithausen argues that the term “dependent origination” hardly means anything but “Origination in Dependence,” in the sense that things that arise do so on the basis of specific conditions, not at random, and has a specific reference to re-birth and liberation of individuals. He writes:

[The canonical texts of early Buddhism] only teach that not only suffering and rebirth but all things and events, except Nirvāna, arise in dependence on specific (complexes of) causes and conditions, which in their turn have also arisen in dependence on causes and conditions, without any primary, absolute cause at the beginning.<sup>22</sup>

It is clear, then, that for Schmithausen the early Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination means specifically “the twelve-membered formula of Origination in Dependence”<sup>23</sup> which is used to analyze “individual bondage and liberation.”<sup>24</sup> Hence, he writes:

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<sup>18</sup> Shulman (2008: 307).

<sup>19</sup> Shulman (2008: 307).

<sup>20</sup> Shulman (2008: 310); emphasis mine.

<sup>21</sup> Shulman (2008: 315).

<sup>22</sup> Schmithausen (1997: 13-14).

<sup>23</sup> Schmithausen (1997: 12).

<sup>24</sup> Schmithausen (1997: 12).

I for one fail to see how this analysis of the presuppositions of individual bondage and liberation could, without a radical re-interpretation, provide a basis for ecological ethics based on an intrinsic value of natural diversity and beauty.<sup>25</sup>

Although Schmithausen admits that “the canonical texts contain also applications of the principle of Origination in Dependence which are not expressly, or not at all, related to rebirth,”<sup>26</sup> he points out that “only later on (especially in Chinese Hua-yen Buddhism) that Origination in Dependence was even developed into a practice of universal *interdependence* and interrelatedness.”<sup>27</sup> Hence, he explicitly rejects the “interdependence-of-all-things” interpretation of the early Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination championed by Green Buddhists:

[T]he idea of a *mutual* dependence, inter-connectedness or interrelatedness, *here and now*, of *all* things and beings does not seem to be expressed in the canonical texts of Early Buddhism.”<sup>28</sup>

### 3. Insufficiency of Interdependence for an Environmental Ethic:

Some writers would claim that, even though in early Buddhism, dependent origination does not explicitly have the meaning of “interdependence of all things,” the latter is nevertheless contained *implicitly* in the former. For instance, Alan Sponberg writes, “[the] Mahayana notion of interrelatedness [which is an implication of the Mahayana doctrine of emptiness] is simply the logical development of the basic Buddhist principle of conditionality [i.e., dependent origination].”<sup>29</sup> Let us assume this to be true.<sup>30</sup> In this section, I argue that *even if* the doctrine of dependent origination in early Buddhism had, explicitly or implicitly, the meaning of “interdependence of all things,” this interdependence itself (or the cognitive understanding thereof), is still not sufficient for an environmental ethic. This is in contrast to the view held by, e.g., the Green Buddhist Joanna Macy who writes, “virtue is *not* required for the greening of the self or the emergence of the ecological self.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Schmithausen (1997: 12-13).

<sup>26</sup> Schmithausen (1997: 13).

<sup>27</sup> Schmithausen (1997: 13).

<sup>28</sup> Schmithausen (1997: 13).

<sup>29</sup> Sponberg (1999: 119).

<sup>30</sup> This may *not* be true, as Mark Siderits (2004: 393) writes, “Not long ago it was widely held [...] that the dependent origination of all things would mean that ‘everything is connected to everything else.’ [...] This view of the matter is less popular today. It is seen to be incompatible with the central Madhyamaka claim that the doctrine of emptiness is not to be construed as itself giving an account of the ultimate nature of reality. But no scholarly consensus has taken its place.”

<sup>31</sup> Macy (1993: 191).

Recently, the environmental philosopher Simon James has undertaken to argue against Green Buddhists that the conclusion that Buddhism is environmentally-friendly does *not* follow necessarily from the premise that Buddhism's worldview is a holistic one in which humans and nature are seen as one (i.e., interdependence). He gives two counter-examples:

Consider a proponent of materialism, someone (let us suppose) who subscribes to the notion that everything, she included, is made of matter. Such an individual clearly believes that we are one with nature (for her, the material universe), but there is no good reason to think that she must be moved by a positive moral regard for the natural world. She *might* be. But she might be a terrible scourge of the environment.<sup>32</sup>

Or consider Spinoza's conviction that humans, and indeed all things, are parts of a single reality, 'God or Nature'. Despite believing that humans are in this special sense 'one' with nature, Spinoza himself was an inveterate anthropocentrist. [...] Despite his conviction that humans are 'one' with nature, Spinoza maintains that we are justified in doing whatever we like with our cousins in the animal world.<sup>33</sup>

Admittedly, these counter-examples of James succeed in refuting the Green Buddhists' claim that environmentally-friendly behaviors will *necessarily* follow from Buddhism's holistic worldview (or interdependence). However, this does not entail that interdependence is insufficient for an environmental ethic, since, as one may argue, environmentally-friendly behaviors, though not necessarily, would *probably* follow from Buddhism's holistic worldview (or interdependence), since it makes us realize that we are inextricably connected with everything else, to the extent that interdependence could still be sufficient for an environmental ethic. However, I disagree with this, for two reasons.

First, as many writers have pointed out, one important cause of environmental problems is people's dysfunctional habit of consumption.<sup>34</sup> Experiences have taught us that breaking old habits is by no means easy; as Padmasiri de Silva asserts, "there is a gap between intellectual conviction and the action needed to break a lifetime habit," and, citing Peter Singer's case for vegetarianism, he writes:

The gap between intellectual conviction and lifetime habits has been well described by Peter Singer in making a case for vegetarianism: "Many people are willing to admit that the case for vegetarianism is strong. Too often, though, there is a gap between intellectual conviction and the action needed to break a lifetime

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<sup>32</sup> James (2007: 451).

<sup>33</sup> James (2007: 451-452).

<sup>34</sup> See, e.g., P. de Silva (1998: 100-104).

habit. There is no way in which books can bridge this gap; ultimately it is up to each one of us to put our convictions into practice” (Singer, 1995: 177; *Animal Liberation*).<sup>35</sup>

My point is that even if one intellectually understands the truth of interdependence, one would still not probably be motivated to take the action needed to protect the environment, since this involves breaking old habits and this is not easy as in the case of vegetarianism.<sup>36</sup>

My second reason for the insufficiency of interdependence for an environmental ethic is this. Even though we are motivated to protect the environment, interdependence cannot tell us, as we would expect from an environmental ethic, *how* we should prioritize between different things. This deficiency has been pointed out by Ian Harris:

Let us take the examples of nuclear waste and an endangered plant species. Everything in the universe depends on the plant as its cause. Conversely, everything depends on the nuclear waste for, without nuclear waste, there could be no totality of interdependent entities.<sup>37</sup>

So, a mere cognitive understanding of the truth of “interdependence of all things” is not sufficient for an environmental ethic.

#### 4. Conclusion:

My critique in this paper can be summarized as follows. I first pointed out that dependent origination in early Buddhism *probably*, to say the least, does not have the meaning of “*interdependence of all things*,” for according to the recent studies, Shulman (2008) and Schmithausen (1997), dependent origination in early Buddhism relates originally *only* to mental conditioning (12 links) and not to *all* that exists, and the 12 links *are* dependent origination (and *not* a “particular case” thereof). Then in response to the possible counter-argument that “interdependence of all things” is a simple logical development of dependent origination in early Buddhism, I argued that, *even so*, interdependence (or the cognitive understanding thereof) alone is still not sufficient for an environmental ethic, because practically there is a gap between the cognitive understanding and the action needed to break old habits and theoretically interdependence cannot tell us how we should prioritize between different things. As a consequence, the holistic approach to Buddhist

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<sup>35</sup> P. de Silva (1998: 101).

<sup>36</sup> I agree with P. de Silva that we need ethical development (or cultivation of virtues) to bridge this gap. P. de Silva (1998: 100-104) writes, “The Buddhist methodologies of self-transformation such as the practice of mindfulness can be used to break through such habits.

<sup>37</sup> Harris (2000: 125).

environmental ethics advocated by Green Buddhism, despite its powerful intuitive appeal, is theoretically untenable.<sup>38</sup>

## **PART TWO: The Virtues Approach to Buddhist Environmental Ethics**

### **Introduction:**

This paper gives a positive exposition of the virtues approach to Buddhist environmental ethics, one that adopts the virtue-ethical interpretation of Buddhist ethics, under which Buddhist virtues are revealed to be environmentally beneficial. It argues that this virtues approach to Buddhist environmental ethics, is both theoretically more convincing (as it is true to the nature of Buddhist ethics) and practically more insightful (as it emphasizes the necessity of ethical development of the agent) than the holistic approach adopted by Green Buddhism. Furthermore, it argues that the Buddhist environmental ethic rendered by this virtues approach can be a viable global environmental ethic, on the grounds that it is anthropocentric, able to induce an active ecological attitude, and action guiding in concrete situations.

### **1. The Global Environmental Crisis and Green Buddhism**

In order to contribute to solving the global environmental crisis, Green Buddhism advocates a holistic approach to Buddhist environmental ethics whose theoretical basis lies in the early Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination, with the latter being interpreted as “interdependence of all things.” This holistic approach has two serious problems. One is that, according to some recent studies, this “interdependence-of-all-things” interpretation is incorrect – from the perspective of early Buddhism; the other problem is that even if this interpretation is correct, dependent origination by itself is not sufficient for an environmental ethic.<sup>39</sup>

More recently, there has been a more promising approach to Buddhist environmental ethics, which is based on Buddhist virtues (e.g., compassion, humility and responsible-ness). The theoretical basis of this approach lies in Damien Keown’s well-argued thesis that Buddhist ethics is a kind of virtue ethics and in the fact that Buddhist virtues are environmentally beneficial. That Buddhism embodies a virtue ethic is due to the existence of a structural analogous relationship between *nibbāna* in Buddhism and *eudaemonia* in Aristotle’s ethics. This virtues approach has evident

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<sup>38</sup> Recently a more promising approach to Buddhist environmental ethics has been proposed in which, it is argued, Buddhist ethics is virtue ethics and Buddhist virtues (e.g., compassion, humility, etc.) are revealed to be environmentally beneficial. I find this virtues approach both theoretically more convincing and practically more insightful than the holistic approach. For more on this approach see, e.g., Sahni (2008).

<sup>39</sup> See my “Problems with the Holistic Approach to Buddhist Environmental Ethics”.

merits. In particular, it is theoretically more convincing than the holistic approach adopted by Green Buddhism, as it is true to the nature of Buddhist ethics. It is also practically more insightful, as it emphasizes the necessity of ethical development of the agent. Furthermore, the Buddhist environmental ethic rendered by this virtues approach can be a viable global environmental ethic.

In the following, I will first introduce virtue ethics in the Western tradition and briefly summarize the arguments given by Damien Keown for the thesis that the true nature of Buddhist ethics is a kind of virtue ethics. The virtues approach to Buddhist environmental ethics builds on this foundation and applies the virtue ethics of Buddhism to the natural environment. Then I will study the implications of some of the major Buddhist virtues for the natural environment and explain why they are environmentally beneficial. Finally, I will evaluate whether the Buddhist environmental ethic rendered by this virtues approach can be a viable global environmental ethic.

## 2. Buddhist Ethics as Virtue Ethics

Virtue ethics<sup>40</sup> (of which Aristotle was a leading exponent) is one of the three major approaches in normative ethics.<sup>41</sup> It offers a third way – an alternative to the deontological and consequentialist approaches that dominated modern moral philosophy until very recently.<sup>42</sup> It is one that emphasizes the *virtues*, or morally good traits of character that a human being needs to attain the *telos* of life, namely to flourish or live well (*eudaimonia*),<sup>43</sup> in contrast to the approach which emphasizes duties or rules (deontology) or that which emphasizes the consequences of actions (consequentialism). The distinct claim of virtue ethics is that the question “How shall I be?” comes before the question “What should I do?”. It claims that we can only know what to do when we have figured out what type of person a morally good, or virtuous, person is; that an action is right, roughly, if it is an action that a virtuous person would do; and that a virtuous person is someone who has the virtues and a right action will then express morally good traits of character, and this is what makes

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<sup>40</sup> The articles Hursthouse (2007a) and Annas (2006), and the book van Hooft (2006) are introductions to virtue ethics. Hursthouse (1999) is a modern classic.

<sup>41</sup> These three major approaches in normative ethics have developed around three classic works in the history of Western moral philosophy – Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Kant’s *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and John Stuart Mill’s *Utilitarianism*. See Baron, Pettit & Stole (1997) for a lively debate between these three approaches.

<sup>42</sup> Keown (2005: 23) writes, “Virtue ethics offers something of a middle way between the other two.”

<sup>43</sup> E.g., as quoted in van Hooft (2006: 129), in Aristotle’s ethics, virtues include courage, temperance, liberality magnificence, magnanimity, proper ambition, patience, truthfulness, wittiness, friendliness, modesty, and right indignation. For an introduction to Aristotle’s ethics, see van Hooft (2006: Chapter 2).

it right.<sup>44</sup> In sum, virtue ethics is primarily concerned with the character of the individual, with his virtues and vices and, more generally, with the shape of his life as a whole. In Aristotle's ethics, the *telos* of life is to attain flourishing (or living well or *eudaimonia*).

In recent years, virtue ethics has undergone something of a revival in contemporary moral philosophy,<sup>45</sup> as has the study of Buddhist ethics amongst scholars of Buddhism.<sup>46</sup> And interestingly, these two hitherto unconnected developments have come together excitingly in the recent claim that the true nature of Buddhist ethics is a kind of virtue ethics.<sup>47</sup> Though the basic idea of this claim has been recognized and stressed by many writers, including Padmasiri de Silva,<sup>48</sup> Alan Sponberg,<sup>49</sup> Peter Harvey,<sup>50</sup> and James Whitehill,<sup>51</sup> it is Damien Keown who first defends this claim with convincing arguments in his ground-breaking work *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, and thereby clarifying the true nature of Buddhist ethics which had been misunderstood beforehand.<sup>52</sup> Here, I briefly summarize Keown's arguments for this important claim,<sup>53</sup> which can be put into three parts: (1) he rejects the consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics; (2) he rejects the deontological interpretation; and (3) he shows that Buddhist ethics bears a great resemblance to virtue ethics.

<sup>44</sup> See Hursthouse (2007a) and Annas (2006).

<sup>45</sup> Virtue ethics has emerged in the past few decades, after the publication of G. E. M. Anscombe's highly influential article, "Modern Moral Philosophy" in 1958. In that article, Anscombe suggested that modern moral philosophy is misguided because it rests on the incoherent notion of "law" without a lawgiver. The very concepts of obligation, duty, and rightness, on which modern moral philosophers have concentrated their attention, are inextricably linked to this nonsensical idea. Therefore, she concluded, we should stop thinking about obligation, duty and rightness. We should abandon the whole project that modern philosophers have pursued and return instead to Aristotle's approach. In the wake of Anscombe's article and with the efforts of such philosophers as Philippa Foot, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Stocker, Bernard Williams, Rosalind Hursthouse, Christine Swanton and Michael Stole, virtue ethics soon became a major option in contemporary moral philosophy. See Crisp & Slote (1997) for a collection of "the strongest and most influential work undertaken in the field of virtue ethics over the last four decades."

<sup>46</sup> One important cause for this revival is that it has been increasingly recognized that it is ethics, not metaphysics, that plays the central role in Buddhism; see Keown (1992: Chapter 1). Scholars who have contributed to the recent rise of Buddhist ethics include, among others, Damien Keown (1992, 2000, 2001, and 2005), Peter Harvey (2000), Padmasiri de Silva (2002), and David J. Kalupahana (1995). Perhaps the most significant event in this regard is the appearance of the on-line *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*.

<sup>47</sup> See Keown (1992: Chapter 1) for a discussion among scholars about the nature of Buddhist ethics.

<sup>48</sup> P. de Silva (1998: 95-97) contends that Buddhist ethics is more focused on building character.

<sup>49</sup> Alan Sponberg (1997: 370) asserts that Buddhist ethics is a kind of virtue ethics.

<sup>50</sup> Peter Harvey (2000: 50) agrees that Buddhism is better understood as a kind of virtue ethics.

<sup>51</sup> James Whitehill (2000 [1994]: 17) writes: "Viewing Buddhist morality and ethics in the light of virtue theory is, I believe, true to the central core of Buddhism."

<sup>52</sup> It should be pointed out, however, that not all scholars agree with this, e.g., David J. Kalupahana (1995: 38-39).

<sup>53</sup> See Cooper & James (2005: 85-89) for another articulation of these arguments.

Keown's reasons for rejecting consequentialist interpretation of Buddhist ethics are two. First, Buddhism does not define the right independently from the good, as is generally done in consequentialist theories such as utilitarianism. In Buddhism the right and the good are inseparably intertwined. Buddhism considers *nibbāna* to be the good and actions are right as far as they participate in this good, independent on the consequences that follow. Keown writes:

[In Buddhism,] an action is right or wrong from the moment of its inception – its nature is fixed by reference to nirvanic values and it cannot subsequently change its status. Wrong (*akusala*) acts cannot turn out 'in the event' to have been right by virtue of their proximate or remote effects; nor can right (*kusala*) acts turn out to have been wrong in view of their consequences. For a utilitarian theory of ethics, however, both of these are real possibilities since rightness and goodness are separately defined.<sup>54</sup>

Second, in Buddhist ethics whether an action is right or wrong is determined by the agent's motivation (or intention)<sup>55</sup> which precedes that action, not its consequences. Keown explains:

[In Buddhism,] an act is right if it is virtuous, i.e. performed on the basis of Liberality (*arāga*), Benevolence (*adosa*) and Understanding (*amoha*). [...] In Buddhism, acts have bad consequences because they are bad acts – they are not bad acts because they have bad consequences, as a utilitarian would maintain.<sup>56</sup>

Keown's reasons for rejecting deontological interpretation are that duties in Buddhism (i.e., rules and precepts) are voluntarily assumed – unlike the categorical imperative in Kant's deontology – Buddhism does not *impose* moral obligations on anyone.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, "since the moral life in Buddhism has a definite *telos* [, namely *nibbāna*,] it is preferable to describe it as teleological [like virtue ethics] rather than deontological in form."<sup>58</sup>

Now comes the core argument – that Buddhist ethics bears a great resemblance to virtue ethics.<sup>59</sup> Keown points out that both Aristotle's ethics (which is a kind of virtue ethics) and Buddhist ethics are non-consequential and teleological (the *telos* in the former is *eudaemonia* (or human flourishing) and that of the latter is

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<sup>54</sup> Keown (1992: 177).

<sup>55</sup> On how Buddhism, given this intentional nature of its ethics, should respond to the *unintended* harm to the environment, see Harvey (2007).

<sup>56</sup> Keown (1992: 178).

<sup>57</sup> Keown (2005: 26). On this point, Sahni (2008: 102) writes, "However, to limit the Buddhist position to deontology would not do justice to its more inclusive philosophy and its employment of varied moral arguments. It may be assumed then that following duties among other things is essential in the aspiration for a high moral character." For the differences between deontology (the ethics of duty) and virtue ethics, see van Hooft (2006: Chapter 1 Distinguishing virtue ethics from the ethics of duty).

<sup>58</sup> Keown (1992: 232).

<sup>59</sup> This core argument is in Chapter 8 Buddhism and Aristotle of Keown (1992: 193-233).

*nibbāna*). “By teleological,” Keown writes, “we should understand the continual expansion of individual capacity towards the goal of complete perfection, rather than the generation of a single transient utility.”<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, Keown argues, there exists a structural analogous relationship between Aristotle’s *eudaemonia* and Buddhism’s *nibbāna*: the *telos* in both cases is “intrinsically related to the means through which it is pursued.”<sup>61</sup> By this he means in both cases virtues are *constitutive of* the *telos*. In other words, in both cases the *telos* consists inherently of virtues and so virtues are not (just) an instrumental means for the attainment of the *telos*. To possess the virtues precisely *is* to attain the *telos*.<sup>62</sup>

Based on the above arguments, Keown concludes that the true nature of Buddhist ethics is a kind of virtue ethics.<sup>63</sup> In a recent and more accessible work, Keown explains why Buddhist ethics is best seen as a virtue ethic:

Buddhism is first and foremost a path of self-transformation that seeks the elimination of negative states (vices) and their replacement by positive or wholesome ones (virtues). This is the way one becomes a Buddha. The transformation of the ‘man in the street’ into a Buddha comes about through the cultivation of particular virtues (paradigmatically wisdom and compassion) leading step by step to the goal of complete self-realization known as nirvana.<sup>64</sup>

Keown further points out that, like virtues, the precepts also play an essential role in Buddhist ethics, because keeping these precepts can help one eliminate vices and thereby letting the virtues have chance to be cultivated. He aptly describes the relationship between the precepts and the virtues as two faces of a coin:

Although the precepts, whether lay or monastic, are of great importance, there is more to the Buddhist moral life than following rules. Rules must not only be followed, but followed for the right reasons and with the correct motivation. It is here that the role of the virtues becomes important, and Buddhist morality as a whole may be likened to a coin with two faces: on one side are the precepts and on the other the virtues. The precepts, in fact, may be thought of simply as a list of things that a virtuous person would never do.<sup>65</sup>

On this interpretation, the virtues are just the positive counterparts to the precepts and the precepts just the negative counterparts to the virtues.<sup>66</sup> For instance, the person

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<sup>60</sup> Keown (1992: 202).

<sup>61</sup> Keown (1992: 202).

<sup>62</sup> This is an extremely important point and will be referred to later to argue *against* the charge that the virtues approach induces a passive ecological attitude which is just a kind of by-product.

<sup>63</sup> Keown (2005: 25) writes, “I think it fair to say that the growing consensus among scholars is that Buddhist ethics bears a greater resemblance to virtue ethics than any other Western theory.”

<sup>64</sup> Keown (2005: 25).

<sup>65</sup> Keown (2005: 12).

<sup>66</sup> P. de Silva (1998: 62) and Peter Harvey (2000: 68) also express this idea.

who keeps the first precept of not killing, not only avoids taking life, but also positively develops the virtues of loving-kindness and compassion.

### 3. Buddhist Virtues and their Implications for the Environment

Buddhism is ‘green’ because the Buddhist virtues may and should be exercised with respect to non-human life and the wider world which sustains life.<sup>67</sup>

[...] what truly sustains the presence of an environmental ethics in early Buddhism is its ethical doctrine embodying virtues.<sup>68</sup>

Although virtue ethics has a long classical tradition, its application to environmental ethics is new.<sup>69</sup> The virtues approach to Buddhist environmental ethics is so-called because it applies Buddhist virtue ethics to the environment. Major works of this approach (from the perspective of early Buddhism) are the two recent monographs: *Buddhism, Virtue and Environment* by David Cooper and Simon James (2005), and *Environmental Ethics in Buddhism: A Virtues Approach* by Pragati Sahni (2008). Both of these works follow the lead of the pioneering work of Damien Keown (1992) in regarding Buddhist ethics as a kind of virtue ethics, and both raise the discussion to a high philosophical level.

Now that Buddhist ethics has been shown to be best classified as a virtue ethic in which the ultimate goal (*telos*) of a person is to attain *nibbāna* and in order to attain *nibbāna* the person has to live a life exemplifying those “virtuous” character traits (virtues) such as compassion, humility, responsibility, etc. The next task in introducing the virtues approach to Buddhist environmental ethics is to show that some of these virtues, which are aimed at achieving the goal of attaining *nibbāna* for the person, are indeed friendly to the environment (and hence we are justified in calling them “Buddhist environmental virtues”). Many Buddhist environmental virtues have been discussed in the literature.<sup>70</sup> Here I choose to explicate some of the

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<sup>67</sup> Cooper & James (2005: 106).

<sup>68</sup> Sahni (2008: 5).

<sup>69</sup> E.g., Thomas E. Hill, Jr. (1983) is an early work in this area. After that, we have the articles by Geoffrey B. Franz (1993, 2001) and Rosalind Hursthouse (2007b), as well as Sandler & Cafaro (2005) which is the first anthology on environmental virtue ethics and Sandler (2007) which is probably the most recent monograph on environmental virtue ethics. Hursthouse (2007a: 13) writes, “[...] it looks as though applying virtue ethics in the field of environmental ethics may prove particularly fruitful.”

<sup>70</sup> Buddhist environmental virtues have been discussed in several places. E.g., Cooper & James (2005: Chapter 5) discuss three self-regarding virtues: humility, self-mastery and equanimity, and three other-regarding virtues: solicitude, non-violence and responsibility; Sahni (2008: Chapter 5) discusses five virtues: respecting all life, simple living and contentment, generosity, responsibility and wisdom; James (2007) discusses compassion, gentleness, humility and mindfulness; and Keown (2007) discusses compassion, wisdom, self-restraint and mindfulness, and mentions generosity, patience, sympathy, love, modesty, non-covetousness and skilful means. See also Sandler (2007: 82) for a typology of environmental virtue which consists of totally 30 in number.

major ones, and do this briefly, since the environmental friendliness involved, in most cases, is nearly self-evident.

**Compassion** is a cardinal Buddhist virtue. According to Buddhism, a person practicing this virtue has to extend his compassion to all sentient beings (including non-humans) and even to non-sentient beings (including plants and rocks) as well. So a compassionate person would have a positive moral regard for the natural environment. **Gentleness**, also called non-violence, is another Buddhist virtue, which is the positive counterpart to the first precept of not killing (or more broadly, not harming) any sentient beings. Since a gentle person would naturally also be gentle in dealing with non-sentient beings such as plants and rocks, a gentle person would also have a positive moral regard for the natural environment. **Humility** is another Buddhist virtue. A person practicing this virtue would be humble in that he would not regard himself as being superior to other sentient beings and even non-sentient beings. So a humble person, too, would have a positive moral regard for the environment. **Mindfulness** is a Buddhist virtue which is about maintaining awareness in an individual. An individual practicing this virtue would be aware of what he is doing to the environment and so would not do harm to the environment unthinkingly. So a mindful individual would have a positive moral regard for the environment, too. **Responsibility** is the Buddhist virtue which requires one be “answerable for the effects of one’s intentions and actions.” To be responsible is “to constantly keep this in mind and to act, so far as one is able, with a view towards the effects of one’s actions.” Responsibility induces in the individual an active attitude towards caring of the natural environment. In the words of David Cooper and Simon James:

Good Buddhists, one supposes, should be responsible, which means, in part, that they should not just be the passive observers of the environmental ills of the world, but should make at least some efforts to resolve them.<sup>71</sup>

#### 4. Critical Evaluation

Early Buddhism is stereotyped as a world-denying religion and Buddhists as aiming only at liberation from suffering (i.e., *nibbāna*). It is therefore hard to conceive that there exists an environmental ethic in Buddhism. In fact, based on this premise, some (radical) scholars have denied that Buddhism can have an

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<sup>71</sup> Cooper & James (2005: 135-136). This is a very important Buddhist environmental virtue and will be referred to later to argue *against* the charge that Buddhism plays a passive role in protecting the natural environment.

environmental ethic.<sup>72</sup> For me, the single most striking advantage of the virtues approach is that, *basin on the same premise*, that Buddhists aim only at liberation from suffering (i.e., *nibbāna*), it shows ingeniously that it is the exact *opposite* that is the case, namely, that Buddhism *has* an environmental ethic and *is* environmentally-friendly. Furthermore, the environmental ethic rendered by this virtues approach is true to the very nature of Buddhist ethics, which is virtue-ethical, and therefore rests on a sound theoretical basis. This demonstrates that the virtues approach is theoretically more superior to the holistic approach. On the practical side, the virtues approach provides “an ethic of character – one that provides guidance on what attitudes and dispositions we ought and ought not to have regarding the environment,”<sup>73</sup> as well as insights into how, in practice, an individual can develop environmentally-friendly behaviors, namely through cultivating the proper character traits (i.e., environmental virtues). This advantage is evident, as “it is always *people* – with character traits, attitudes, and dispositions – who perform actions”<sup>74</sup> and “how one interacts with the environment is largely determined by one’s disposition toward it.”<sup>75</sup> For instance, if one has the attitude that nature’s resources are merely for human’s use, then one will tend to perform actions to over-exploit them. This is easy to understand. Because the virtues approach provides this “ethic of character” with regards how an *environmentally virtuous person* ought to be, I would regard it as eminently more insightful than the holistic approach.

It is generally conceived that a new global environmental ethic is needed to solve the critical issues in the global environmental crisis that face us today.<sup>76</sup> Although the virtues approach to Buddhist environmental ethics has the evident advantages as discussed above, we still have to evaluate whether it can be a *viable* global environmental ethic. A viable global environmental ethic is expected to possess, among others, such desiderata as (1) it is non-anthropocentric (as opposed to anthropocentric), (2) it can induce in the individual an active (as opposed to a passive) attitude towards protecting the natural environment, and (3) it is action guiding (i.e., it can tell what one ought to do in concrete situations). In the following, I evaluate the virtues approach according to each of these desiderata.

Anthropocentrism – the idea that humans are separate from, and superior to the rest of nature, and that this therefore justifies using nature simply as a resource – has been regarded as the culprit of the global environmental crisis,<sup>77</sup> and therefore as

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<sup>72</sup> E.g., Noriaki Hakamaya who rejects all kinds of ecological interpretations of Buddhism for the reason that *true* Buddhism *negates* nature; see Schmithausen (1997: 5).

<sup>73</sup> Sandler & Cafaro (2005: 2).

<sup>74</sup> Sandler & Cafaro (2005: 2-3).

<sup>75</sup> Sandler & Cafaro (2005: 3).

<sup>76</sup> See, e.g., Routley (1973), Calliott (1993, 1994), Brennan & Lo (2008); see O’Neill, Holland & Light (2008: Part 2 A new environmental ethic?) for an objection.

<sup>77</sup> See, e.g., the classic by Lynn White, Jr. (1967).

incompatible with a global environmental ethic. So the first and foremost question we need to ask about the virtues approach to Buddhist environmental ethics is this: “Is the environmental ethic resulted from the virtues approach anthropocentric?”. Some scholars, such as Holmes Rolston III, have argued that virtue ethics, in its very essence, is anthropocentric and hence unable to support an environmental ethic which shows genuine moral concern for the natural environment.<sup>78</sup> His reason is that it is the good of the individual human being, rather than that of the environment, that this approach is aimed at (e.g., *nibbāna* of the individual human being in the case of Buddhist environmental virtue ethics). If this was the case, then the virtues approach would make no difference from the approach based on the Judeo-Christian tradition – both are anthropocentric. However, this objection has been, I think, admirably refuted by David Cooper and Simon James.<sup>79</sup> They point out that the term “anthropocentric” is ambiguous here. In the first case of the virtues approach, “anthropocentric” just means “with human interests” which does not necessarily imply doing bad to the environment, whereas in the second case of the Judeo-Christian tradition, “anthropocentric” not only means “with human interests” but also implies doing bad to the environment (e.g., over-exploiting it). For instance, you can say practicing compassion, one of the major Buddhist environmental virtues, is anthropocentric (i.e., it is with human interests, namely *nibbāna* of the individual concerned) but it certainly does not do any bad to the natural environment.

The second desideratum for a global environmental ethic is that it is able to induce in the individual an active attitude towards protecting the natural environment. In this regard, the virtues approach to Buddhist environmental ethics has been criticized, e.g., by Lambert Schmithausen, as inducing in the individual a *passive* ecological attitude which is just a by-product. He writes:

I do not deny that the spiritual perfection of individuals may have an automatic ecological effect. But at least as far as Early Buddhist spirituality (as I for one understand it from the texts) is concerned, I shall try to show that what follows from it spontaneously would seem to be, above all, only a largely “passive” ecological attitude, emerging as a kind of by-product, hardly an “active” one based on positive value, perceived to inhere in intact nature and in natural diversity as such, which is, however, what is most required in the present situation. Besides, even if spiritual perfection were to culminate, automatically, in ecological behaviour and action, it may not be possible any longer to wait until the spiritual perfection of a majority of people has sufficiently advanced or even reached completion. It would, of course, be so much better if people behaved and

<sup>78</sup> Rolston (2005: 70) writes, “Environmental virtue ethics, taken for the whole, is a misplaced ethic, a displaced ethic.” Rolston’s position is that the recognition of “intrinsic value” in nature is more fundamental than nurturing virtues for environmental purposes.

<sup>79</sup> See Cooper & James (2005: 30-31) and James (2006).

acted in such a way spontaneously, due to spiritual perfection, but will there ever be enough perfected people and do we indeed have that much time left? As in the case of the moral commitments (like not killing living beings) which are taken up right at the beginning by both monk and lay person, it may be necessary to motivate as many ordinary, imperfect people as possible to commit themselves to ecological behaviour, and even action, *here and now*. In my opinion the present situation requires an ecological ethics based according a positive value to nature intact and to natural diversity.<sup>80</sup>

This criticism of the virtues approach is a serious one. However, it can be refuted, I think. As I emphasized in the foregoing, Buddhist (environmental) virtues, as argued by Keown, are *constitutive of nibbāna*, not (just) a by-product of it. In other words, *nibbāna* consists inherently of virtues and so virtues are not (just) an instrumental means for the attainment of *nibbāna*. To possess the virtues precisely *is* to attain *nibbāna*. David Cooper and Simon James have presented a good argument for the case that Buddhist (environmental) virtues are constitutive of *nibbāna*:

Buddhism is virtue ethical in character because it regards virtue as constitutive of its goal of nirvanic felicity [...] Nirvanic felicity is not even notionally independent of virtuous character and behaviour. This conclusion follows from two premises [...] The first is that, whatever else or more the condition of someone 'in' Nirvana might be, it is that of someone possessed of full understanding of 'the way of things' – of wisdom, as it is often referred to. Second, the possession of this understanding or wisdom is conceptually inseparable from that of virtue. Given these two premises, our conclusion follows. If virtue is constitutive of wisdom, and wisdom of nirvanic felicity, then virtue itself is constitutive of the Buddhist goal.<sup>81</sup>

That Buddhist (environmental) ethics play an *essential* role in the attainment of *nibbāna* has been explained very well by Sahni:

[O]n teleological grounds the aims of the two – early Buddhist ethics and environmental virtue ethics – appear unconnected. This dilemma disappears once it is realized that environmentally virtuous behaviour is a part of virtuous behaviour. Since virtuous behaviour is not only a means to *nibbāna* but also intrinsically related to it, environmentally virtuous behaviour is also intrinsically

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<sup>80</sup> L. Schmithausen (1997: 7-8). Schmithausen's position is that 'positive (or intrinsic) *value* of nature' plays an essential role in an environmental ethic. He thinks that the plausibility of an environmental ethic presupposes that "intact nature and bio-diversity are regarded as a *value* [...] primarily for their *own* sake, in their *own* right."

<sup>81</sup> Cooper & James (2005: 79). See Holder (2007: 129) for another argument with the same conclusion. However, I need to point out that this constitutive reading of virtue ethics has been subject to criticisms recently; see, e.g., Nicholas Everitt (2007), who argues explicitly that this constitutive reading of virtue ethics is implausible.

linked to *nibbāna* through being an essential part of virtuous behaviour. And by accepting the presense of an environmental virtue ethics in Buddhism problems of teleology do not arise, for the aim of early Buddhism, of Buddhist ethics and of environmental virtue ethics are not opposed, and in aiming for one the others are attained. [...] It is true in Buddhism that no motivation exists that is evocative of a concern for environment. But environmental good happens through the practice of virtues. This, then, is the Buddhist position.<sup>82</sup>

So, Buddhist (environmental) virtues are constitutive of *nibbāna*, not (just) a by-product of it. Furthermore, the virtues approach does not induce in the individual a passive ecological attitude. For, as I explicated in the foregoing, the Buddhist virtue *responsible-ness* requires a Buddhist be responsible for the effects of his intentions and actions. This means, in the words of David Cooper and Simon James, “they should not just be the passive observers of the environmental ills of the worlds, but should make at least some efforts to resolve them.”<sup>83</sup> Hence, the virtue *responsible-ness* induces an active attitude towards environmental protection.

Now we come to the third desideratum for a global environmental ethic. For this, we ask whether the virtues approach to Buddhist environmental ethics can provide any specific guidelines on what one ought to do in concrete situations. Virtue ethics has been criticized as unable to provide a foundation for environmental ethics, on the grounds that it is unable to address practical, policy-oriented questions pertaining to the real-world environmental issues.<sup>84</sup> This criticism is also a serious one, as I agree that there is little point in an ethic that cannot be applied to practical issues.<sup>85</sup> However, I think it can be responded to in a quite satisfactory way by appealing to the recent work done by some virtue ethicists.<sup>86</sup> Especially, Ronald Sandler, an environmental ethicist, in his recent book, *Character and Environment: A Virtue-Oriented Approach to Environmental Ethics*, illustrates the virtue ethics method for determining what one ought to do in concrete situations. His method involves in particular the key notion of virtue-rules (v-rules):

V-rules correspond to substantive specifications of particular virtues. For example, because a disposition to help alleviate the suffering of other people when there is little cost to oneself is partly constitutive of compassion, there is a v-rule: “help alleviate the suffering of other people when there is little cost to oneself.” Because a disposition to avoid compromising the availability of basic

<sup>82</sup> Sahni (2008: 143).

<sup>83</sup> Cooper & James (2005: 135-136).

<sup>84</sup> The dominating approach to environmental decision-making in real situations is using cost-benefit analysis based on utilitarianism; see, e.g., O’Neill et al. (2008).

<sup>85</sup> By this I don’t mean that an ethic must be able to provide a decision procedure to solve each and every moral problem, including those hard moral dilemmas.

<sup>86</sup> See, e.g., Hursthouse (1991) for applying virtue ethics to the specific moral problem of abortion, and Damien Keown (2001) for applying Buddhist virtue ethics to the specific moral problems in bioethics.

environmental goods is among the virtues of sustainability, there is a v-rule: “do not compromise the availability of basic environmental goods.” V-rules can be taught, learned, and applied in concrete situations by those who do not have the corresponding (i.e., virtuous) dispositions. They can also be derived through individual and collaborative reflection on what dispositions are constitutive of the virtues. Thus, v-rules are accessible by the same means (moral education and ethical reflection) and action guiding in the same way (by application to concrete situations) as laws within deontological theories and secondary principles within act-utilitarian theories. [...] Deliberation in concrete situations involves identifying which virtues are operative (or which v-rules apply) and determining what actions they recommend. It also involves determining what to do in the event that different operative virtues (v-rules) favor contrary courses of action. In cases where an agent has difficulty identifying the operative virtues (or applicable v-rules), is unable to determine which actions are favored by those that are operative, or there are conflicting v-rules, she can look to role models, advisors, case studies, and collaborators for assistance.<sup>87</sup>

Sandler goes on to apply his method to the case of assessment of genetically modified crops.<sup>88</sup> Sandler’s method shows that the virtues approach is not inherently impractical and that it can provide action guidance in concrete situations. In sum, the virtues approach to Buddhist environmental ethics can be a viable global environmental ethic.

## 5. Conclusion:

I have presented a positive exposition of the virtues approach to Buddhist environmental ethics and given a critical evaluation thereof. This approach has some evident advantages: it is theoretically sound, as it is true to the (virtue-ethical) nature of Buddhist ethics; and practically it gives insights into how an individual can develop environmentally-friendly behaviours, namely through cultivation of environmental virtues. However, it also has some potential problems in fulfilling some of the desiderata of a global environmental ethic, including being anthropocentric, being just a by-product and inducing a passive ecological attitude, and not action guiding in concrete situations, but these potential problems are not, in the final analysis, compelling. In sum, I find this virtues approach theoretically more convincing and practically more insightful than the holistic approach adopted by Green Buddhism. I totally agree with the following remark by Alan Sponberg:

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<sup>87</sup> Sandler (2007: 98).

<sup>88</sup> Sandler (2007: Chapter 6 A Virtue-Oriented Assessment of Genetically Modified Crops).

Thus, the real value of Buddhism for us [facing the global environmental crisis] today lies not so much in its clear articulation of interrelatedness as in its other crucial dimension, in its conception of the ethical life as a path of practice coupled with its practical techniques for actually cultivating compassionate activity.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Alan Sponberg (1997: 374).

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## **Outline: Buddhist Approach to Environment Crisis**

*Ven. Dr. Xianda*

### **The Importance of Environmental Protection:**

The Earth is the only place in which human beings can survive – there is no where else in the whole universe that is just as suitable for human beings to live in, at least no such place can be found at this moment. So once the living conditions on Earth are damaged, it would also mean that mankind faces a direct threat for survival. The Earth is such a perfect place for the complex but delicate structure of the human body – every detail seems to be tailor-made for the survival of the human being, so much so that it is difficult to believe that we can find any other more suitable habitat apart from Mother Earth. From the Buddhist point of view, the Earth is the 'vessel-world' (*bhajana-loka*) upon which we depend to live, and it is known as our 'supportive-retribution'. Both the 'primary-retribution' and 'supportive-retribution' are the inseparable components of the whole living entity. This means that the deterioration of the environment within the 'vessel-world' translates into suffering and misfortunes of our very own life. No sentient being can live independent of 'supportive-retribution'.

Right now, all kinds of environmental crises threaten mankind's survival. Global warming, rising sea-level, damage to the ozone layer, pollution of the water bodies, atmospheric pollution, aggravation of the acid-rain level, rapid disappearance of forests, desertification, alarming rate of extinction of wildlife, scarcity of resources, pollution by toxic chemicals, hazardous waste, rubbish cities, all sorts of harmful radiation – all these collude to pollute the environment to a critical degree. We will have to implement decisive measures to hold back the rapid deterioration of our environment before mankind faces more and more crises and calamities to the extent of a total collapse of the environment. The fact that the environment upon which we depend for survival is progressively collapsing is something that we can ill ignore or hesitate upon.

According to Buddhism, greed, hatred and delusion are the root sources of all evil actions performed by sentient beings. In our search for the root sources of environmental crises and their solutions, we discover that environmental issues are in actual fact problems in human nature, we have to actually face up to our internal problems of greed, selfishness, self-centeredness and irresponsibility.

When industrialism and commercialism become the mainstream economic model in which the whole society is concerned only with quick and instant returns,

consumerism deluges society like the torrents of flood waters released from the dams, sinking the rationality in man that distinguishes needs from wants. Every corporation seeks to maximize profits, but none is concerned about the deteriorating environment. The principle of commercialism in this day and age is nothing but to excite the desires of consumers, with no scruples but at all costs. Consumers on the other hand, seek to gratify their greed for material goods and creature comforts, and so run the mill for relentless consumption. The trend spins off and people's desire to consume keeps accelerating. In today's world, people's desire for creature comfort has inflated to such an unprecedented extent that they have come to a stage of compulsive spending, to the degree that they would secure loans to finance their spending. Because of this frantic consumption, when people fail to service their loans promptly, we see the world going through inevitable repetition of financial crises and economic downturns. Further, because all this excessive consumerism requires huge quantities of resources to produce the commodities needed to satisfy the demand-supply balance, the result is that all the pressure on resources and pressure from pollution are passed on to Mother Earth, causing tremendous damage to the natural environment, thereby bringing about all the environmental issues mentioned above, and threatening man's very own survival. If the so-called abundant material life has our own survival as its price, then this is too high a price to pay.

People often think in a selfish way, that the environmental crises will not immediately threaten their own survival. The fact is, in this crisis, no one individual can really save his own skin. People also often think in this selfish way: in this whole wide world, what is a little consumption on my part, what is a little indulgence by just this one 'me', how would this contribute to any serious harm on the Earth and its environment? For the environmental crisis to reach today's scale, individual contribution is not all that negligible. Damage is cumulative, a little indulgence by one individual multiplied by six billion – roughly the total population on Earth – equals to the reality of environmental crisis we face today. Each and every one of us could be the last straw that breaks the Earth.

Added on to this, we see many governments in the world that lack the critical awareness and political will to protect the environment: some governmental organizations eager to score political points, or in consideration of political advantages, or even for petty personal gains, make many policies that hurt the environment; they might also mislead the public by arguing in favor of lobbies or interest groups which continue to inflict great damage on the environment. Some other governments may have proposed policies for the protection of the environment, but this may be an eye ball-drawing gimmick to attract their electorates, their proposals rarely get to be implemented. More countries adopt an evasive attitude toward environmental issues – they do not solve the problems at their roots, but rather adopt casual approaches to the environmental crises. Due to a lack of prompt

and efficient governmental actions, the environment continues to degenerate rapidly. The great misfortune that globalization brings about is that in order to maximize development and advantages, every country scrambles for the world's resources, or to gain control over these resources. But when it comes to owning up the causes of environmental crises, every country is only too eager to pass the buck.

Man is the most intelligent life form on Earth, the technological and scientific advances in recent years are the best proof of this. However, if there were only technological and scientific advances, without moral criteria, without compassion to fellow humans and other sentient beings, then such advances would not necessarily bring about security and happiness for mankind. Benjamin Hoff said 'Those who have no compassion have no wisdom. Knowledge, yes – cleverness, maybe – wisdom, no. A clever mind is not a heart.' If there were no ethics which take into consideration benefits for the whole of mankind, the more advanced scientific progress we have, the more destructive these become. This is rather like between two persons who do not have wisdom, the one who is cleverer may be more destructive than the less clever one. Therefore even if we possess advanced technology and knowledge, but if the end result is that our very own survival is being threatened, then what we possess cannot be said to be 'wisdom'. Today's environmental crises can be seen as a result of advancement in science and technology but a degeneration of morality and conscience.

### **Subduing Greed:**

The Lotus Sutra says 'all suffering spring from one cause – greed is the root.'<sup>1</sup> The fundamental cause of environmental crises is our greed (*tanha*). Buddhism has all along advocated that the crux of liberation from suffering is to eradicate greed rooted in our mind. Today, the crux of managing environmental crises will be to lessen and even eradicate the greed in sentient beings. If we do not lessen or control our greed, not only will our environment continue to deteriorate, and even if we were given a chance to start afresh, even if we were given a brand new Earth, we would still ruin it in the same way to the extent that mankind can no longer survive on it. Therefore it is only by being contented and having few wants that we can really solve our common problem of environmental crises. Each individual would work hard to lessen greed in their mind; this has all along been what Buddhism expects of Buddhists, it would now also be what we demand of everyone in the world in our common efforts to resolve the environmental crises.

In this world full of temptations of creature comfort, people often equate happiness in life with material wealth. When people get some money, they will wish

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<sup>1</sup>Taisho, Vol.9, p.15a

to have more money; when they have an apartment, they will wish to have a bigger more luxurious house; when they have a car, they will wish for a limousine; and if possible at all, they will want a private jet or private ocean-liner. No matter how much material wealth we possess, we will never be satisfied. Greed never finds fulfillment. More importantly, even if we possessed the whole world, it would not really bring us happiness. The mind that is always chasing after external comforts will ever be passive and dependent. The mind in this state is actually very empty, lost and confused; a person in this state always feels that happiness is within grips and yet ever elusive. After all, external wealth does not equal to internal happiness. With possessions, one has to worry about losing them, and at the same time they will want to hanker after whatever that is not within their possession yet. External material possessions not only have not given them real happiness, in fact they shackle people to become slaves of wealth. Life lived in fear of gain and loss is not a life of happiness. Happiness is never decided by how much wealth a person has.

Buddhism does not categorically deny the importance of material life. The possession of material necessities is important for human life. This point has been positively evinced in Buddhist teachings. However dependence on material comfort should be moderate. We should understand our needs, and know what is necessary and what can be desisted from. When we can liberate our minds from excessive greed toward external material comfort, we can then put our main energies into what is really important in life.

Buddhism advocates a happy life of contentment and little wants<sup>2</sup>, because greed can never bring about happiness for a person. Contentment and paucity of wants is the beginning and the foundation of a happy life. From the point of view of the Buddhist karma doctrine, being contented and of little wants also means being appreciative of one's good fortune. It means being true to and steadfast with one's moral orientation. When the whole world is facing a global environmental crisis, this is a responsible attitude and lifestyle. Not only is it helpful toward finding our happiness in life, but also an important approach toward salvaging the current environmental crisis.

So we hope that consumers could begin to control their desire for consumption, be able to break away from the environment that excites our greed and calm down to give a thought to how our excessive consumption and wastage have caused all these environmental crises mentioned earlier. We should stop and think 'do we really need all these things?' A world not rampaged by greed will see societies that are more harmonious, and the environmental crises will be better controlled and

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. *Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra*, Taisho, Vol.12, p.526b and *The Discourse on the Eight Realizations of Great Beings*, Taisho, Vol.17, p.715b

improved. Therefore to temperate greed is to lessen pressure on the environment, and doing this is to resolve the environmental crisis.

### **Buddhist Rainy Retreat: An Example for the Harmonious Co-existence of Human and Other Beings**

We live in this world with other sentient beings, interdependent to form an eco-system. It is essential for mankind's survival to ensure that each chain in the eco-system is complete. We have to understand that we humans are only sharing the ecosystem found on this Earth with other living things. All animals and plants have equal rights to live on Earth, and humans do not have absolute right of possession over Mother Earth. Man's happiness cannot be founded upon sacrificing the lives of other living beings, otherwise ultimately we would not be able to save our skin. In fact, humans and other living beings are totally capable to live together harmoniously on Earth. A good example is the Buddhist practice of annual rainy retreat. From the time of the first rains retreat after the Buddha attained enlightenment, for more than 2500 years, the Buddhist cleric communities (Sangha) have kept up with the practice of observing the rains retreat. During the rainy season, the grounds are teeming with life – insects and seedlings all compete to be nourished by the fertile earth. In order not to hurt these life forms, Buddhist monastics voluntarily restrict their activities within a small area for the three months of rainy season. We take the initiative to step back and give these living beings the space and time that they need to grow, to freely and safely roam the earth. In so doing, we show our respect for the living space of these living beings and their equal right of living on earth. This kind of respect is the basis for the establishment of a harmonious relationship between man and nature. Perhaps this practice itself cannot be transplanted wholesale into today's consumerist society, however the spirit behind this practice should be given a long hard look, especially when we are looking to resolve our environmental crises – the value of this spirit behind rains retreats should be revisited, and promoted and implemented in different ways in different levels of society. Protecting the environments needed by other living beings is actually protecting ourselves. In order to protect wildlife on the verge of extinction, we should learn from the practice of rains retreat how to protect wild animals and to inculcate the attitude of co-existing harmoniously with nature - for the sake of wild animals on the verge of extinction, and for the sake of other living beings, we should give back voluntarily the space and time they need for their survival, we should protect the environment upon which they depend to survive. The extinction of any species can trigger a series of irreversible ecological problems. To conserve near-extinct wildlife and plants is an urgent and imperative action toward saving the delicate ecological balance. Besides learning from the Buddhist practice of rains retreat, we don't seem to have much choice.

### **Advocating Compassion:**

Buddhism is a religion of compassion. Compassion has always been the Buddhist ethical principle. Compassion means non-violence, not harming the lives of living beings. All Buddhists, be they laymen or laywomen who have taken refuge in the Triple Gem, or monks and nuns, must observe the training rule of abstention from killing. Advocating compassion and getting more people to learn and follow the Buddhist training rule of non-killing has far-reaching bearing on the resolution for the extinction crisis of endangered species.

Buddhism not only advocates non-killing, it further advocates the protection of animals. Buddhists have a culture of releasing wildlife back to their natural environment as a practical application of the spirit of compassion. All animals are capable of feeling. For instance, although sparrows are tiny, when they teach their little ones to flap their wings and learn to fly, we observe that the adult sparrows are protective of the little ones; when humans get near the little ones, the adults would screech nervously and make loud noises as warning, they would even risk their lives to fly at trespassing animals. This bond between the parents and their offspring is no different from what humans feel. Buddhism says, “People cherish their lives, animals cling on to survival”. To be compassionate to animals means not to harm them, but to protect them and give them a chance to live.

Promoting the Buddhist spirit of compassion has a very important role to play in conserving the endangered ecosystem. We are very happy to see that many people who are concerned about conserving the environment have realized the importance of protecting wildlife; these people engage themselves in various courageous activities to protect wild animals. Compassion transcends the boundaries of religion. Those who do not see the need to protect wildlife and plants, and people who are not inclined to be compassionate are like the fable of the two-headed bird recorded in the *Discourse on the Buddha's Deeds*<sup>3</sup>: one of the two heads wanted to poison its counterpart, but in the end, it died along with its victim. Some people are blinded by petty immediate benefits and could not see that all are mutually dependent; so they would not stop to sacrifice the lives of other animals to satisfy their greed, thinking that this is alright as long as it does not hurt themselves directly, and it does not tip the ecological balance. Perhaps in the past, when the flora and fauna were in abundance, the destruction to any one species might not be significant on the whole, and so its destruction did not have apparent effect on the human environment. However as multifarious species are faced with precipitous decline now, with many rapidly becoming extinct, when one species of animal or plant gets destroyed, there is a direct impact on the eco-balance. Every animal or plant species has a direct or indirect relationship with our survival, for they provide direct or

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<sup>3</sup>Taisho Vol.3, p.923c-924a

indirect conditions for our survival in this planet. If we are not compassionate to other living beings, then we would be well like the two-headed bird, while one head plots the death of the other, it is pushing itself toward death as well. Therefore, to be compassionate to other sentient beings is as good as being compassionate to ourselves.

Compassion must be translated into real actions. Salvaging endangered species especially needs urgent actions that call for the participation of every one. We can actually play a part in practicing compassion in our daily life, toward the goal of salvaging endangered species and conserving their natural environment. Chinese Buddhism places a special emphasis on vegetarianism, which is also a healthy lifestyle promoted all over the world today. Medical science has proven that excessive meat-eating is the main reason for health risks. A vegetarian diet effectively prevents heart problems, diabetes, vascular sclerosis etc. Further, most people buy meat from supermarkets nowadays. Meat from the supermarkets can pose serious health problems – the meat are supplied by commercial animal factories which rely on chemical feeds and stimulants to rear their live stock, resulting in a very short growth period for the animals. If we could start on a vegetarian lifestyle, then undoubtedly we would be doing our health a favor and at the same time contributing to the conservation of wildlife from extinction. Imagine: every day, 60 billion people feed on meat of animals – this to the animals is an absolute calamity. If these 60 billion people could change their meat-eating habits – even if it is only for those few months in a year when the animals breed – then this would have a decisive impact for the protection of animals and salvaging of endangered wildlife. We all should strive to promote not eating wild animals, and try to abstain from buying goods manufactured with wildlife origins, such as clothing, furniture or other lifestyle goods made from hides or fur.

Agricultural production often faces the problem of pests, and people tend to use huge amount of very toxic pesticide to get rid of this problem. To earthworms, frogs and fish, the earth and the streams are their whole world. When pesticides kill pests, the pollution from pesticides also causes large numbers of living beings living in the wild to die – like the fish in the streams, the earthworms in the earth and the birds that live on them. The use of pesticides to get rid of pests is a cruel and violent practice; it is also a serious breach of food safety pertaining to the agricultural products churned out in this way. Moreover, because of the large amount of pesticides being absorbed into our lands, problems like water pollution and shortage of potable water sources surface. When we develop hatred toward agricultural pests, and become obsessed with getting rid of them, we forget about consideration for other animals, the result being that we ourselves become one of the victims of our obsession. Compassion is actually wisdom, especially in the context of bailing ourselves out of the environmental crises. From the point of view of conservation of

the environment, and in terms of the spirit of compassion in Buddhism, we would advocate that as far as we can, we should avoid using toxic pesticides. When we have less of hatred toward sentient beings, and more of compassion toward them, more often than not we ourselves are at the receiving end of benefits.

### **The spirit of the 'garment of cast-off rags': a case for recycling of resources:**

We have limited mineral and energy resources here on Earth. The rapid economic development in countries all over the world puts a huge demand on all types of resources. If this goes on, we would find ourselves at a dead end as global energy crisis gets out of hand. Buddhism puts forth the idea of recycling some 2500 years ago. In early Buddhism, monks practiced the 'four dependence', and among them, was the idea of collecting rags cast off by people, clean these and piece them into big pieces of cloths, known as 'robes' – garments for the monks. This idea of re-using scrap is something valuable for us to learn. If we could give up our habit of wasting, and instead cultivate the habit of re-using scrap, we could in fact help ourselves by saving a lot of unnecessary expenditure. Moreover, this helps to conserve resources, lessen pollution caused by manufacturing processes, mitigate pressure on the resources and extenuate environmental crises – killing a few birds with one stone.

We often see this in schools – clothes as good as new are discarded by the roads, and we are not talking about just one or two pieces. Every year, huge quantities of clothing are left behind in the dormitories by graduated students. There are many people around us who would buy lots of clothing for themselves in a year – most of these clothes get worn once or twice and get discarded. This is but one of the many instances of wastage in modern life. We should actually learn from the spirit of 'garment of cast-off rags' in Buddhism. In everyday life, we can give away things we no longer need to other people who might need them more, especially those things that are put to idle after being used just once or twice. The books that we bought, we could put them up for free circulation after reading them, or we could simply give them away to other people who might be interested. We can even exchange books with others. Although computers and mobile phones have high rates of overhaul, we should try our best not to just buy new ones to keep up with the most up-to-date models. If there are old appliances that are still in working order, we should just continue to use them. Simple lifestyle habits and choices like this go a long way to taking the heat off energy pressures and environmental crises.

## **Do Not Underestimate Your Function: we can all play important roles in the management of environmental crises**

The resolution of environmental crises needs active participation of each and every one of us; and each individual has a responsibility in this. As Buddhists, we should all the more have the self-awareness to undertake this responsibility in protecting our environment. The most important thing is to start doing it ourselves: turn off lights that are not necessary; cut down on the use of air-conditioning in summer time; in winter, we can put on more warm clothes than turning on the heater; cut down on the use of private vehicles and commute using public transport; and to go green when building houses by using energy-saving designs and material etc. Through all these means, we could save much resource for our Mother Earth. More examples: we can separate recyclable and non-recyclable substances when we clear our trash, not discarding waste into rivers and lakes, collecting used batteries and hand them over to special recycle units charged with proper handling of such material. By doing these, we would be doing our utmost to prevent further pollution to land and water. All these actions may seem simple, but they have immediate impact in contributing toward cutting down pollution and mitigating the environmental crises.

Of course, certain technological innovations can also contribute, so we should support such technological innovations or improvements and try our best to use facilities that would not add on to pollution. We have mentioned above that political will is essential in resolving environmental crises. So in areas of legislation and election, Buddhists should support policies which are pro-active in environmental protection, or support political parties with political will to resolve environmental issues. In this way, governments will have the political impetus and the much needed political resources to engage in such resolutions. We should also encourage donations to Buddhist interest groups concerned with conservation of the environment, to support their 'green' activities. In the context of environmental crises resolution, the effort of every single person counts.

### **Conclusion:**

The problem of environment crises that we face today is due to the unprecedented inflation of man's greed. The *Dhammapada* says 'The most glorious conquest is the conquest of oneself.' The crux of environmental crises resolution still lies in limiting and eradicating greed in human beings. We can do this by practicing compassion, cultivating habits in frugality and simplicity, and taking upon ourselves to be responsible toward environmental safety.

Besides personal efforts, in terms of collective action, we could emulate the Buddhist monastic practice of rains retreat – we could start a 'World Buddhist Green Month', and encourage Buddhists all over the world to go green in this month, by decreasing consumption, not wasting energy, not polluting the air and water sources, and also to voluntarily give space and time to animals and plants during their breeding season. We believe if we would strive together, then our environment will definitely be rehabilitated.

The Earth cannot be replicated, therefore let each and every one of us cherish our planet, our Home.

## **Buddhist Perspectives for Environmental Equilibrium**

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### **Introduction:**

The environmental crisis and the shortage of natural resources have been hot issues for global agendas since the past few decades. Humanity in the past century has consumed an enormous amount of natural resources that accumulated over hundreds of millions years.

It is time for humans to help one another to maintain whereabouts as naturally as they are. One agent that has been helping to prolong the environment not to be more eradicated is the religious sector. Such an agent has played an important role in deeply growing the root of people's consciousness for volunteering acts and the benevolently behavior without any compulsion or enforcement by law or any regulations. Almost all religions have the same final aim of bringing up good people for good society in order to live peacefully without apartheid, exploitation, or any human differences.

Buddhism is a major religion that has played a great role in balancing and prolonging the natural ecosphere for more than 2500 years. It is a religion that devotes great attention on environmental protection. The Buddha's teaching accentuated all good deeds—physically, verbally, and mentally. He taught his followers to prevent all wrong doing and refrain from such acts if they are to occur. Moreover he also taught and intensified ethical and mind development to be truly warmhearted and merciful. If one follows the teaching no matter that s/he is a Buddhist or not, one can spend his/her life time happily and peacefully in all scales of environmental, economic, social, politic and whatsoever milieu.

Buddhism offers humankind forceful concepts for the protection of the long-term ecological future through principles of interdependence, universalism, moderation, environmental protection, environmental education, sustainable development and a consciousness of the rights of future generations<sup>1</sup> One crucial

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<sup>1</sup> Judge C. G. Weeramantry: <http://www.asiantribune.com/index.php?q=node/6210>

Buddhist practice is to live in harmony with nature. Buddhist positions intensify harmonious interactions between humans and nature. Living beings are mutual interdependent. Buddhism teaches the way to share love, compassion, kindness and other virtues to the surroundings not only among humans but also other living beings like animals and plants. One should not harm trees, grass and other living species even those non-living. We should act tenderly and mercifully. If we harm nature and our surroundings, it means we harm ourselves physically and psychologically.

Buddhist teachings offer profound insights into psychology of desire and the motivating forces of activities to reach the highest potential that humans can attain. The spiritual approach to each action leads the vital forces that truly benefit the world which are wisdom, compassion, and restraint. One should be delicate from his/her own heart and behave accordingly and regard the living ambient as one's own body while spiritually practicing through simple, frugal, and pure ways. One needs only to acknowledge the common thread that runs through life and seek to love – to balance with the way things really are.<sup>2</sup>

This article has the objectives of recommending the ways to hold the environment to its equilibrium state from the Buddhist points of view. It runs from the introduction, recent environmental problems and causes, and the solution to secure the situation.

### **Recent environmental problems and causes:**

Recent issues of global warming and environmental deterioration have been globally informed people around the earth to recognize what humans have done to their habitation. Hot issues in world agendas from various media have educated the world's citizens to protect their living environment, reduce the amount of garbage especially the ones from plastic and foam, classify refuses, and recycle as much as possible. However, humans are still continually consuming enormous amounts of energy resources in their daily life, and produce extreme amounts of trash and pollution.<sup>3</sup>

Immoderate development and excessive usage of chemicals in the post industrialized world have led to the superfluous consumption of natural resources. Deterioration of natural environment, the extinction of a variety of living species, and the desertification of lands are soaring. In contrast, the remaining areas of rain forest,

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Evans, Bruce and Arenson, Jourdan in Payutto, P.A. (1988), p. xiii

<sup>3</sup> Ven. Sheng-yen – adapted: <http://greentheme.blogspot.com/08/2007buddhism-environmental-protection.html>

especially those of the tropical are shrinking. Although humans may recognize the situation, they still consume intemperate amounts of natural resources, produce large quantities of waste to pollute the earth, the air, rivers and oceans.

Giant industrial and commercial private sectors are the main factors of natural resources misuse and mal-management. Natural resources consumed by the modern industrial and commercial groups are non-renewable. The narrow-minded drive for profit hunting escalates monstrous amounts of toxic substances spouting into the skies, rivers, seas, oceans, and scatter across the land where they become the whole world's problem. The reactions of the environment due to humans' selfhood are acid rain, the greenhouse effect, the ozone hole, radioactive contamination, the continually hotter climate, an immense quantity of cancer cells in the body of Nature and many others. If the situation is continually moving to this direction without being taken care of, then many creatures may have become extinct even before the earth is destroyed.

Recent global warming campaigns and the movement of calling for nature cannot solely solve the crux. It is each individual's mission and responsibility to help preserving the biosphere at its balance and equanimity. In order to address the problems directly we have to investigate the relevant causes of the deterioration and figure them out to heal the situation thereof. The recent environmental problems and causes analyzed from Buddhism point of view are narrated here. These are the defilements and the life views.

### **Defilements:**

According to Buddhism's points of view, the main harmful actions creating serious problems worldwide are due to all defilements of greed, anger and delusion. The Buddhist words are *lobha* (desire or greed), *dosa* (anger or aversion), and *moha* (delusion). These profanes have been the cause of almost all environmental problems. In order to really resolve these problems, it is necessary to bring the defilements under control.

Humans' greed is endless no matter how hard they try to satisfy with it. We are trapped in the unlimited hunger of seductive things. When we demand a lot, we consume a lot accordingly, although most of the time they are not what we really need. This is another way to exploit the nature. When we turn to the anger point, we may realize the rage that modern people in contemporary society are often experienced because of the hectic life that runs around the clock. Contemporary technological urban dwellers are dip into the sap of media, Internet, cell phones, computer, and other digital equipments which are not living being. Hence they are

unconsciously gradual stepping back from nature. They then start not getting used to being kind, compassionate, being loved and lovable amid such artificial surroundings.

Another important defilement is the delusion—the ignorance of the truth of nature. This is more important than the other two profanes. When one does not have the right knowledge and the right view of living, one cannot solve the problems correctly.

### **Live views:**

The life view that should be mentioned here is '*dhitti*,' a term frequently stated about view and attitude in Buddhism. '*Ditthi*' means view or false view; clinging to view, faith or ideology. Ideologies, opinions, beliefs, the religious and political views, and social values are all aspects of '*dhitti*'. This is a view that creates huge effect on humanity. It further covers the attitudes and world views held by whole cultures and societies. When one possesses this tarnish of wrong views, wrong beliefs, and unskillful social values, the destructive outcome occurs. '*Dhitti*' has influence on the mentioned defilements by cultivating and maintaining all the unwholesome deeds which makes it much harder to resolve (Payutto, P.A.1998, p. 54-55).

The Buddha warned that views are potentially the most dangerous of all mental conditions. Views lead to consequences extended beyond the mental and intellectual domain. They are subjective mental constructions that form perspectives in objective reality. One's world view affects life's activities. Unskillful views bring about uncountable destruction. By contrast, skillful views are the most beneficial of mental conditions. (Payutto, P.A.1998, p. 55)

A kind of wrong value that should be stated here too is the '*tanha*.' In Buddhist perspective, there are two kinds of value—true value and artificial value. True value is created by '*chanda*' (zeal, aspiration, or will) while that of the artificial is created by '*tanha*' (craving, or selfish desire). The asset of true value is determined by its ability to meet the need for well-being while '*tanha*' is a selfish desire for pleasure and acquisition.

A view that is pervasive but rarely recognized in modern life is happiness. Most people equate happiness wrongly with sense pleasure and the satisfaction of desires which ones cannot obtain through seeking actually. They can only touch happiness through the skillful view by bringing about the relevant causes and

conditions. This perpetual yearning is called '*tanha*' which leads to an unsustainable consumption of the environment. (Payutto, P.A.1998, p. 56)

Many pleasures are taken for granted in consumer society—games, entertainment media, junk food. These are created for the purpose of satisfying craving which are not beneficial for life but are often detrimental to well-beings. Nonetheless, we can see the attempts of the private commercial and industrial sectors to stimulate such craving and accentuate this artificial value. Advertisers activate consumers' desires by projecting pleasurable images onto products they sell to exhilarate the consumers' appetite. The induced buyers are trapped by believing that they belong to a higher social class if they consume such products which are mostly fictitious. The true value is outweighed by the artificial one. These are to stimulate excessive and unnecessary consumption which are not worthwhile.

There are also beliefs that are wrongly held but have control over modern human civilization. These beliefs are based on three main perceptions that are misled. (Payutto, P.A. <http://www.geocities.com/cmdsg.geo/coarise.htm>).

1. The misperception that humans are separate from nature, and humans must control, conquer or manipulate it according to their desires.

2. The misperception that fellow human beings are not equal. This perception intensifies the differences between human beings rather than their common ground.

3. The misperception that happiness is only found from plenty of extravagant materials in external surroundings.

The third stated attitude is a misunderstood of the objective of life. These three misperceptions have determined the direction of human development. As long as the views upon those defilements are not comprehended, it will not be possible to remove such ill will.

The referred wrong views are originated from the misled education in the past. For example, natural sciences have developed under the influence of the aspiration to conquer nature. This implies the perception of human beings as separate from nature. Social sciences have studied human beings in terms of their factions and power struggles rather than their status as fellow residents of the same mother earth. Humanities have developed under the idea that freedom and happiness are external conditions resulting from control of nature and fellow humans. (Payutto, P.A. <http://www.geocities.com/cmdsg.geo/coarise.htm>)

**The solution to end the environmental problems from Buddhist perspectives:**

It is clearly seen that the post modernized civilization produces an immense amount of pollution. Excessive consumption of natural resources and destruction of ecosystem are caused mainly by humans' psychological craving, the unskillful view and the defilements of greed, hatred, selfishness and mutual destruction. In order to address these circumstances, we should propagate right views world wide by focusing on Buddhism's point of view. We should follow the concept of leading a contented life with few desires, being satisfied and happy. To apply the Buddhist aspect to the area of the environment, we have to look for underlying principles that are appropriate for the current world that we inhabit.

Buddhist principles that are addressed here are mainly the procedure cited in the Eightfold Noble Path which referred to as the fourth of the Four Noble Truths—the suffering, the cause of the suffering, the end of the suffering, and the way to end the suffering. It is the middle-way performance to reach the state of suffering free or the ultimate happiness of mankind without taking advantages of other living beings and stay peacefully amid the equilibrium ecosphere.

The recommended solution to unravel the environmental whereabouts are Right view; Right thought; Right action; Right livelihood; Right effort, Right mindfulness, and Right concentration. In addition, the Sufficiency economy perspectives are also addressed, and the cooperative network among Buddhist organizations is finally recommended.

### **Right view:**

Right view is the foremost of the Eightfold Noble Path. It means to see and to understand things as they really are and to realize the Four Noble Truth. It is also a major component of the intuitive wisdom in the Buddhist notion of the Threefold training.

Right view is the cognitive aspect of wisdom which is not an intellectual capacity. It is attained, enhanced and sustained through all capacities of mind. Right view forms right thought and right action. If there is right view, right belief, and right social values, then greed and other defilements will be lessen. Thus the environmental crisis will be reduced, and can gradually be recovered to its equilibrium.

Three right views that should be considered here are the ones relating to humans' freedom since Buddhism prescribes freedom as a synonym for peace and happiness. This approach of freedom is crucial because not only the free people can live happily and peacefully in the current world but they can also help one another to

help the betterment of the environmental crisis. The three right views are as follows: (Payutto, P.A. 2003; and Payutto, P.A. <http://www.geocities.com/cmdsg.geo/coarise.htm>).

1. The first view is the notion of the first kind of freedom. This is a physical independence of want and deprivation and to be adequate of the four basic necessities of life which are food, clothing, shelter and medicine. Ones should consider humans as one unit in the whole natural system of cause and effect, in which all elements depend on one another. Since each action affects the whole ecological system, one should live in accordance with natural environment, be harmonious and beneficial to the system.

2. The second view is the approach to the second kind of freedom. This is a social independence of exploiting one another and to bond good relationship with other fellow humans. All living creatures are co-dwellers within the natural system and all are under natural laws. Each individual desires happiness and strongly wants to avoid suffering and death. We should encourage universal love, compassion, mutual help, harmony, and all efforts to create true happiness to the whole ecosystem.

3. The third view is the realization of the third kind of freedom which is an inner freedom. This is the finest and noblest notion of life arises from human development at the individual level. It is the ultimate freedom which creates true happiness and is superfluous over external freedom, which is mostly materialistic oriented. This mental and intellectual maturity enables us to have a harmonious attitude to the external environment, and act in a constructive way to deal with the external environment.

It is the third view of inner freedom that is acquired to elaborative study. In Buddhism, humans who reach the highest level of development will completely destroy inner defilements of greed, hatred and delusion. This view brings us the contention within ourselves without exploiting the other two freedoms. For people in general, the surest gauge of development is the absence of wrong view, and the advancement of the right view. If these are done, the remained profanes will be lessen gradually. The wrong view has much more intense and far reaching effects. Buddhist system of human development stresses the elimination of wrong view as the important conception. The way of reaching the end does not have to traverse around the universe to gain knowledge of what is right or wrong. All this knowledge is latent within oneself.

**Right thought:**

Right thought refers to the volitional aspect of wisdom. It is the kind of mental energy that controls one's actions. Right thought can be described as commitment to ethical and mental self-improvement. Right thought is composed of 1.the thought of rejection or the resistance to the pull of craving or desire, 2.the thought of good will or the resistance to feelings of anger and dislike, and 3.the thought of harmlessness or not to think or act cruelly, violently, or aggressively, and to develop compassion

(<http://www.thebigview.com/buddhism/>).

Right thought or right intention is closely associated with right views. We should have the right thought to control the mind since mind is the direction of actions. We should intend to control the mind to have less desire, anger, and delusion. Furthermore, we should have goodwill of upholding equality among other sentient beings. We should pay more respect for others' rights, more concern for other people's life, and more clear realization of our sameness as human beings. This leads to the benevolent relationship among each individual in the ecosphere.

We should have the right thought of love, kindness, and compassion. If we find a little time to contemplate our surroundings quietly, we will realize that humans are the same-made of flesh, bones, and blood. We all do have similar internal feelings of the wish for happiness and we all have an equal right to be happy. However it is very important to follow a right method in seeking happiness (Gyatso 1985: 12).

Competition for profit with the exploit of natural resources must be balanced by cooperation and supported by '*metta*' (unlimited, unconditional, universal love). This is an important attitude of goodwill for Buddhists. Most people have love for their own family, relatives, and friends, but not for others. From Buddhist perspective, love or goodwill must be equal for everybody without any distinction within the natural sphere. We have to consider environment as the other kind of friends besides our human companions. World problems must be faced with compassion, love, and true kindness. (Gyatso 1985: 13; Payutto, P.A. <http://www.geocities.com/cmdsg.geo/coarise.htm>).

**Right action:**

Right action here refers to the deeds that involve bodily actions that are wholesome to the biosphere. These actions lead to sound states of mind which are composed of 1.the withholding of the harming sentient beings intentionally or

delinquently, and 2.the withholding of the taking what is not given, which includes stealing, robbery, fraud, deceitfulness, and dishonesty. This principle implies to act kindly and compassionately, to be honest, to respect the belongings of others without violence.

If giant industries and commercials perform to the first precept of abstention from harming living beings, they will not chop down the rainforest since it is a habitat for other creatures and set up the conditions for top soil erosion. This leads to floods and famine thereby and causes innumerable suffering on others. We have to be highly aware of the consequences of our actions which is a prerequisite for any truly skilful action. The second precept of abstention from taking what is not given can be seen from a crude sense to a very subtle one. Many people usually pluck flowers in a field or in the sideways while walking through or passing by without the realization that the action deprives others of the pleasure to appreciate them. We should also follow the principle of non-violence which reminds us of the harm-free actions with a great responsibility for the consequences happened, especially with the usage of natural resources in a constructive useful way as much as possible. The tender and merciful action can lead the world to the pleasurable natural equilibrium. (Rijumati. [http://www.fwbo.org/articles/buddhism\\_environment.html](http://www.fwbo.org/articles/buddhism_environment.html))

### **Right Livelihood:**

Right Livelihood refers to the right way of earning one's living and gaining the wealth legally and peacefully. The recommended livelihood are those that void harming other beings which are 1.dealing with weapons, 2.dealing with hurting other beings, raising animals for slaughter, slave trade or prostitution, 3.dealing in meat production and butchery, and 4.selling intoxicants and poisons, such as alcohol and illegal drugs

(<http://www.thebigview.com/buddhism/>).

The convenient but selfish ways of living have destroyed the quality of humanity. Surmount inhuman acts of immeasurable brutality in animal slaughter for the constant supply of the world kitchen with meat has degraded the human race as a whole (Rijumati. [http://www.fwbo.org/articles/buddhism\\_environment.html](http://www.fwbo.org/articles/buddhism_environment.html)). If one follows the stated precepts, the environment can be kept in a merciful and peaceful milieu.

**Right effort, Right mindfulness, and Right concentration:**

Right effort is enforced by mental energy. It can occur in either wholesome or unwholesome states. The same type of energy that energizes desire, envy, aggression, and violence can also fuel self-discipline, honesty, benevolence, and kindness. Right effort refers to four types of endeavor that rank in ascending order of perfection which are 1. to prevent the arising of the unwholesome states that are not arisen, 2. to abandon unwholesome states that have already arisen, 3. to awake the wholesome states that have not yet arisen, and 4. to maintain the wholesome states that have already arisen.

(<http://www.thebigview.com/buddhism/>).

Right mindfulness is the controlled and perfected faculty of cognition. It is the mental ability to see things as they are, with clear consciousness. Right mindfulness leads to the mental ability to sense, to feel, to perceive things, to have mental formations clearly with full consciousness. It enables us to be aware of the process of conceptualization. One has to be right mindful while having right effort and right precepts to withhold one's action in wholesome way that leads to natural equilibrium. Mindfulness is practiced in four levels which are the body, the feeling (repulsive, attractive, or neutral), the state of mind, and the phenomena.

Right concentration refers to the development of a mental force that occurs in natural consciousness. Concentration is a focus of mind where all mental faculties are unified and directed to one selected object. With the power of concentration, we can look deeply into the environmental crisis and be aware of the feelings of greed or craving that is confronting and to stop the excessive holding and consumption of the resources.

**Sufficiency Economy perspectives:**

Besides the Buddhism perspectives, there is another approach that is related to Buddhist teachings. His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej has advocated the idea of self-sufficient economy since his accession to the throne. 'Sufficiency Economy' is a philosophy that guides the way of living toward 'the middle path' which is closely related to religious statement but it serves as a secularized normative prescription. In the post-crisis environment, it has been reemphasized as the solution to globalization and changes

(<http://www.sufficiencyeconomy.org/show.php?Id=96>).

Sufficiency Economy is a holistic concept of moderation and contentment. It sets out to shelter the people and the country from the occurred shocks, and acknowledges interdependency among people at all levels to face the circumstances of interdependence and globalization. Its values include integrity, diligence, harmlessness and sharing, which are bond with religious conception. Its final goal is to achieve balance and sustainability. Such a philosophy is crucial to strengthen the moral fiber of the nation. It also helps to reach a balanced phase combining patience, perseverance, diligence, wisdom and frugality. This leads to the capability to cope appropriately with critical challenges arising from extensive and rapid socioeconomic, environmental, and cultural changes occurring due to globalization. ([http://www.chaipat.or.th/chaipat/journal/dec00/eng/e\\_economy.html](http://www.chaipat.or.th/chaipat/journal/dec00/eng/e_economy.html))

### **Cooperative network among Buddhist organizations:**

In order to attain a remedy for the environmental crisis, global religious organization, especially those of Buddhism, should cooperatively advise all humankind to take responsibility to protect the environment while dealing with industrial, commercial, and technological activities. Human beings should not keep on destroying the environment just for the sake of temporary convenience or for technological innovations and competition of industrial and commercial wealth. They should pay close attention to protect the environment while engaging in various kinds of production and manufacturing. We need mutual care for the success of environmental work while being personally involve in the movement of environmental protection.

Since the past decade, Buddhist community has promoted four major principles of environmental protection regarding nature, lifestyle, social etiquette and spiritual oriented. The principles for environmentalism are as follows: (Ven. Sheng-yen.

<http://greentheme.blogspot.com//08/2007buddhism-environmental-protection.html>).

- 1) Nurturing natural resources and protecting the ecological environment;
- 2) Holding cleanliness in family life and using daily necessities simply and frugally;
- 3) Developing interpersonal politeness and social etiquette;
- 4) Considering humankind as equality for possessing the dignity of life and the right to live at all time and place, without any segregation.

The environmental tasks of most people are predominantly correlated with material aspects. However the tasks should go deeper from the material level to that of the spiritual of society. Environmental protection must be combined with respective religious beliefs and philosophical thinking into a more serious mission besides sole campaign slogans. The spiritual environmentalism is more important than that of the material oriented. The purification of humankind's mind and heart is more important than the purification of the environment. Our mind should be free from unwholesome intentions so that our living environment will not be spoilt and polluted by us. But for people in general, the cooperative Buddhist organization may have to cultivate the habit of protecting the material environment first, and then go to the deeper steps until they are being capable of cultivating environmentalism at the spiritual level (adjusted from Ven. Sheng-yen.

<http://greentheme.blogspot.com//08/2007buddhism-environmental-protection.html>).

### **Conclusion:**

We can see that the main causes of the environmental problems are mainly due to human beings. Analyzing in Buddhism points of view, the misbehavior of consuming and destroying unnecessary natural resources resulted from the wrong views, wrong beliefs and attitudes, and unskillful social values. The distorted attitudes and beliefs escalate the problems to a more critical level. These misperceptions are the acquiring external condition for happiness, attempting to conquer nature, treating fellow human beings as rivals or strangers.

Buddhism offers humankind of the forceful concepts for the protection of the long-term ecological future through principles of non-violence, interdependence, universalism, moderation, environmental protection, environmental education, sustainable development, and cultivating awareness in spiritual practice.

We can witness that it is not sufficient to only rescue the external environment. The required further attempt is to change personal attitudes and values to the right ones. The recommended remedy is to follow Buddhism's concepts of nature. If we can deepen our relationship with nature, understand the interpenetration, and live more in harmony with our environment using Buddhist principles, then a growing awareness of nature will begin to be in our spiritual practice.

One essential way to dilute or even erase all the environmental contamination is to follow the "Threefold training" which is the middle-way path stated in the Four

Noble Truths. This training is a basic sense of humanity that can be summed up in three parts--morality or the precepts; concentration or mental development; and intuitive wisdom. If each member of the world society follows the practice, it can surely preserve the recent environment not to reach at a more eradicated level. However, the training is a gradual one, it requires time.

It is agreeable that the perception of separating humans' life from nature and the desire to conquer nature are a mistake. Human beings must be a part of nature and live harmoniously and peacefully with it. It is a balanced development which takes into account the economy, society, politics, and environment, with the aim to make people in the ecosphere happy, self-reliant, and facing the same direction with the evolving world, while still preserving the national identity.

With right understanding of the meaning and objective of life and the nature of freedom and happiness, we will relate to the physical environment in a harmonious way. One should reach the inner freedom of contentment and self-satisfied first before reaching the social and physical freedom since the inner one is the foundation of the latter.

For a friendly relationship with nature, we must see the present situation in a more profound way. We must see ourselves as parts of the whole interrelated natural world, not as separate entities, as owners or as controllers of nature. If we have the insight that we are part of nature, and we see that changes in nature must also have an effect on us, our actions will be constrained, clearly defined and balanced. In our interaction with the natural environment, we will take into account the widest range of factors possible, enabling our actions to be most beneficial for all concerned, including the natural environment. A balance will be achieved as long as we are aware of our position within the overall natural process. We will be able to successfully act as a factor within that process guided by wisdom and right view. (Payutto, P.A. <http://www.geocities.com/cmdsg.geo/coarise.htm>)

Our education should incorporate right view into the learning context. The physical and applied sciences and technology should be motivated by a pure desire for knowledge and quality of life rather than a desire to exploit nature for his/her own wealth. The social sciences should not look at mankind with a divergent view of human society disconnected from nature, or as a collection of scattered factions caught up in power struggles. Rather it should see mankind as fellow citizens of the same mother of nature. The humanities should concern themselves with the human effort to realize the highest quality possible for a human being, which is inner freedom. This will in turn become a foundation for the proper development of the natural and social sciences. (Payutto, P.A.)

<http://www.geocities.com/cmdsg.geo/coarise.htm>)

One should also have inner control of the way one lives first by behaving ethically specifically those of action and livelihood, then developing the mind, while attaining the wisdom state. All have Enlightenment as their ultimate aim.

‘Sufficiency’ is another key method to cope with the overwhelming changes of the present circumstances both from internal and external realms. Two underlying conditions are necessary to achieve sufficiency are knowledge and morality. The application of knowledge is by implementing it to the planning and action. At the same time, the application of moral/ethical criteria is to enforce the conditions that people are to possess honesty and integrity, as well as conducting their lives with perseverance, harmlessness and generosity.

The environmental protection movement should be synergized especially from the Buddhist commonality. In addition to cherishing natural resources, protecting the ecological environment, and selecting lifestyle, we should further learn to respect the lives of others. The suggested itinerary is reducing the amount of garbage, recycling the waste, living in a pure, simple, considerate and frugal life, and minimizing the pollution as much as we can. In addition it is advised that we always remind ourselves of the thought of numerous other people besides us especially the incalculable descendants in future generations besides our present one (Ven. Sheng-yen. <http://greentheme.blogspot.com//08/2007buddhism-environmental-protection.html>).

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## **Buddhist Approach to the Environmental Crisis**

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The teachings of Buddha essentially develops on a moral code of conduct for human beings. The discussion here endeavors to focus on what is presently termed as ecology or balancing ecological factors as far as preservation of flora and fauna is concerned as dealt with in Buddhism. The term ecology denotes the study of human beings, animals, plants and trees in relation to environment. This study, in fact, was initiated well before the advent of Buddha. Ancient Indians showed immense interest in plant-world and accepted the same as an integral part in their lives. The discovery of unfolding of first manifestation of life in the plants bears testimony to the elevated mental endowment of those Indians. They cherished an unshakable faith that trees or plants are the first offsprings of mother earth. Animals appeared afterwards. Flora and fauna are complementary to each other. They are inseparably connected to each other for their survival and nourishment. The need for plants for the continuance of human and animal life can never be questioned. It is well nigh impossible to enumerate the benefits we derive from plants, a fact well-known to all.

While dealing with the topic of ecology, Prof. Dipak Kumar Barua, in his "Applied Buddhism: Studies in the Gospel of Buddha from Modern Perspectives" writes "E. P. Odum expands the ecosystem idea to include any unit including all the organisms in a given area interacting with the physical environment so that a flow of energy leads to a clearly defined tropic structure, biotic diversity and materials' cycles within the system."<sup>1</sup> Thus much of the present day ecology focuses on energy flow, through and nutrient cycling within eco systems. All life-forms in the forests coexist in a mutually reinforcing relationship. All the diverse interests are held in complete harmony.<sup>2</sup> It is seen that in the Vedic and Brahmanical literature, Botany and Ethnobotany, came into existence.

In the Buddhist literature, the names of a huge number of trees, plants, creepers and herbs are met with in the Jatakas. Not only their names but we come across with the mention of their presiding deities too. This goes to show the importance paid to the trees and the tree-gods as related to human life. This divine

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<sup>1</sup> Wiens, J. A. ed: Ecosystem Structure and Function. (Corvallis, Oregon State University Press, 1972), pp. 11-24 (Odum, E. P.: Ecosystem Theory in Relation to Man).

<sup>2</sup> Prof. D. K. Barua, Applied Buddhism: Studies in the Gospel of Buddha from Modern Perspectives, p. 57.

aspect of trees ensured a taboo on causing any damage or destruction of trees. The trees have often been regarded providing shelter and favours, acting as a friend in need. So the relation between human beings and trees as shown in the Jataka are not only physical but also moral. The Sala tree is depicted as the most delightful and sublime one was the dwelling place for Bodhisattva. From the Rukkhadhamma Jataka (No. 74), it becomes clear that the Sala tree is not only the object of glorification but the importance of plants, shrubs and bushes are highlighted. The greatness of a Sala tree is also described in the Bhaddasala Jataka (No. 465). A mango tree is narrated in KalingaBodhi Jataka (No. 479), with lavish description. In the Mahavanija Jataka (No. 221), the story of the benevolent banyan tree is told. In fact, if we look at the role of trees in Buddha's life, we find how significant it was. Buddha was born in an idyllic ambience with majestic Sala trees all around in the Lumbini garden. Again, well before attaining Buddhahood, Prince Siddhartha, accompanied by his father, went to a village to witness the proceedings of the ploughing festival where he happened to find an attractive Jambu tree. The prince sat under the tree and soon got absorbed in a trance and meditated. Another incident involving trees in Buddha's life was the Archery contest. Incidentally, the tree under which Buddha attained the perfect knowledge came to be known as Bodhi tree. Buddha spent seven weeks of which four weeks near the Bodhi tree after enlightenment. To be precise, Buddha had an intuitive charm for not only trees but also places calm, serene and surrounded by nature. In the fifth week he went to the Ajapala Nyagrodha Vçkua or the goat Herds' Banyan tree, in the sixth week at the Mucalinda tree. In the seventh week Buddha came to the Rajayatana tree. Gautama selected a very nice place for meditation before his Enlightenment at Uruvela Senanigamo.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Asha Das says, 'All these trees are associated with Buddha which dominated at every turn in his life.'<sup>4</sup> Gautama accepted milk-rice from Sujata under the banyan tree. It provides shelter to many birds and insects, providing ecological balance. Buddha preached his first sermon to the five disciples (Panca vaggiya bhikkhus) in the Deer Park (Migadava) at Isipatana, a woodland. The tragic story of Lord Buddha's Mahāparinibbana is depicted in the Mahāparinibbana Suttanta of Digha Nikaya. While on his way to Kusinara, Buddha stayed in the Mango grove of Cunda. Thus we find at every important step in his life, he showed an extraordinary zeal in spending time amidst natural surroundings.

The world at present is faced with an unprecedented crisis. This is the environmental crisis. The love of natural surroundings which characterized the Buddhist age, even amongst Buddhist disciples, is hardly traceable now. Humanity, at present, is haunted by the desire to achieve more and they hardly pause for a

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<sup>3</sup> 'Tatthaddasāu ramaḍiḃyāu bhumiḃhagaū pasadikaḃca vanasandaū nadiḃca sandantiḃ setakaū supatiḃtham ramaniyam, samanta ca gocaragamaū'. Ariyapariyesana Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya.

<sup>4</sup> A. Das, The Tree - Thrones of the Buddhas, p. 120.

moment to think what is in store for them in the future. The fear of environment pollution is, however now, engaging the attention of the wider section of people across different parts of the globe. In this connection the relevance of Buddha's gospels cannot be over emphasized. Buddha's teachings are called 'akalika' that is timeless. He permitted his disciples to change, and alter his minor teachings when needed, to fit into the changing world. That is why his religion has succeeded in occupying a permanent place in modern life. The stress on peace, specially, by the United Nations Organization, points to the importance of Buddha's teachings of the eight things enumerated in the Potaliya Sutta<sup>5</sup> one is avoidance of onslaught on creatures. In the light of Buddha's Gospels emphasizing the moral code of conduct, the concept of ecology as regards conservation of forests and wild life may be recalled. Ecology addresses the interrelationships of organisms and their environment. As far as the question of ecology obtaining in the forests is concerned, it may be noted that a forest ecosystem comprises of bio-diversity, wild life forest side communities, agriculture, water, medicines and pesticides, food obtained from forests, raw materials for cottage industries, timber and fuel wood, fodder etc. Incidentally three types of forests are worth discussing - natural, plantation and sustainable. In this country the first two types of forests are mainly met with. Scientists have chalked out programs for preservation of forests. As it has already been noted, Buddha, throughout his life, has been so closely associated with forests already discussed. The verses in Dhammapada<sup>6</sup>, Buddha's remarks on forest life are obtainable and he advises his disciples to live in a tranquil place. Further we see in the Ratana Sutta<sup>7</sup> that the Blessed one admonishes: 'Like unto the woodland groves (Vanappagumbe). The Commentary explains this compound as 'vane pagumbo', thicket or bush in the forest with blossomed tree-top in the first heat of the summer season (i.e. the forests and groves look glorious with blossomed tree-tops in the first month of the summer season) hath the sublime Doctrine, that leads to Nibbana, been taught for the Highest Good.' Buddha found out a three fold relationship amongst human beings, plants and animals and their function on ecology.<sup>8</sup> On another occasion he utters 'It is treacherous to break the branches of a tree whose shade one sits or sleeps.'<sup>9</sup> As regards Indian environment friendly gestures, mention may be made of his Holiness the Dalai Lama and other Buddhist societies who have upheld the cause of ecological ethics.

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<sup>5</sup> Sutta No. 54, Majjhima Nikaya.

<sup>6</sup> ramaniyani arannani yatha na ramati jano Vitaraga ramissanti na te Kamagavesino --Verse, 99, Dhammapada

<sup>7</sup> Khuddakapatha.

<sup>8</sup> Prof. D. K. Barua, Applied Buddhism : Studies in the Gospel of Buddhism from Modern Perspectives, p. 68.

<sup>9</sup> Petavatthu, verse no, 259.

The extent of air and water, pollution, particularly in a metropolis like Kolkata, has reached dismal proportion. The air has become alarmingly toxic and water is found to contain high percentage of arsenic to the detriment of Kolkata's vast multitudes. The extent of carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide too has reached a critical stage. Thus a procession of silent deaths continues to play havoc. It is true the presence of Buddhist environmentalists in India is negligible but it has to be kept in mind that Buddha's discourses have been at work, rather silently, to maintain the ecological balance for the sake of plants and animals including the population in urban territories. While the position as stated above is so hopelessly bad in Calcutta, a different picture is seen in Thailand.

Bhikkhu Buddhadasa a Buddhist monk here diligently worked for betterment of the living condition of people. His efforts at uprooting the causes for destruction of natural environment cannot be forgotten. Apart from him, the name of Ven. Dhammapiṭaka is worth remembering, who too, has been working tirelessly for proper upkeep of forests. His work magnum-opus *Buddhadhamma: Natural Laws and Values of Life* speaks for itself. He stresses on three Buddhist moral values that aims at a categorical constructive and beneficial attitude toward environment. Ven. Dhammapiṭaka elaborates profusely Buddha's attitude to nature - the forests in particular. Conservation of plant and animal work is now not a luxury nor a fashion or whim. It is an inescapable need for the continuance of human life and without it the world is likely to fall in pieces. The remedy lies in conservation of existing forests, proper reforestation of all waste lands, river catchments, barren lands and greening of towns, cities and all localities. This is the demand of the twenty-first century. With tremendous progress in technology and science, humanity is now the undisputed master of this planet. Humanity is mad after exploiting all available avenues to add to this further apparent prosperity and so called advancement, to occupy a prominent place in the present competitive world scenario. Other factors such as explosive overpopulation, deforestation and rapid industrialization to quote a few, have added to these woes. The planet earth is heading towards a catastrophic end due to misuse of all available natural resources.

The silver lining is that humanity is learning from these misdeeds and some world communities have stood up to save the earth from total annihilation. It is however, heartening to find: even Buddhist monks and nuns have appreciated the slogan for 'back to the forest' and they are encouraged to pursue their vocations in the greener region to do away with kilesa (defilements) which stands in the way to achieving mental freedom. Similarly, Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, ex-University professor of Buddhist Philosophy in Thailand, championing the cause of 'Green Buddhism' has been busy in the movement for conservation of forests. In the same strain, even Archan Pongsak Teehatthamamoo, a Thai Buddhist monk and an environmentalist says 'Dharma, the Buddhist word for truth and the teachings, is also

the word for nature. That is because they are the same. Nature is the manifestation of truth and the Buddha's teachings. When we protect nature, we protect the truth and the teachings.<sup>10</sup> Mention may be made also of Phra Prajak Kuttajitto, a well known activist in North East Thailand, who returned to lay life after serving in prison twice for his attempts at conservation of forest, for trespassing on National Forest Reserves Land and founding a meditation centre there and other allied defiance. In Thai society, some values and functions still exist in forest monasteries and the movement is gathering momentum Buddhist approach to the environmental crisis may be initiated in the same line. The Buddhist texts have laid emphasis that nature and human beings are required to live in harmony and it has also been stressed that it is absolutely unethical to injure or destroys trees.

'Yassa rukkhassa chayaya nisideyya sayeyya va na tassa sakha bhanjeya mittadubbho hi papaka.'

The ecologists are afraid of the negative reaction on the environment by people through exploitations of the earth. But Buddhism has a wider view and is of the opinion that over all actions of conscious people play a more significant role to make the world habitable or inhabitable. Thus environmental ethics, as per tenets of Buddhism, may be maintained through practical application of Buddha's gospels of Four Noble Truths (Cattari Ariya Saccani). The Buddhists approach to the environmental crisis should be in the same line. The Patimokkha of the Pali Vinaya Piṭaka lays stress that if a monk or nun is thoughtless with regard to plants, this is an offence to be atoned for (bhutagamapatavyataya pacittiyam-Pacittiya). Added to this, Brahmajāla Sutta of Suttapiṇaka, may be referred which deals with sāla, 'morality' which includes abstention from injuring or killing seeds and plants (bijagama-bhutagama samarambha). The relevant passage from this Sutta runs as follows: whereas some recluses and Brahmanas, while living on food provided by the faithful continue addicted to the injury of seedlings and growing plants whether propagated from the roots, cuttings, joints, buds or seeds. Gotoma, the recluse, holds aloof from such injury to seedlings and growing plants.<sup>11</sup>

What the Buddhists are required to do now is to imbibe the teaching of Buddha on environment and come forward and take active and sincere initiative in educating the rural masses on conservation of plant world and undertake the work of tree-planting on a vigorous scale.

A few points concerning Dalai Lama's comments on peaceful relations with the Environments are here discussed in short. Dalai Lama cherishes the view that human beings are intended to be non-violent and that every destructive action is

<sup>10</sup> Batchelor, Martine and Brown, Kerry eds. Buddhism and Ecology (New York, Cassell Publishers, 1992) pp. 87-99.

<sup>11</sup> Rhys Davids, T. W. tr. Dialogues of the Buddha, Pt. 1 (London, Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1969), pp. 6-7.

against basic human nature.<sup>12</sup> His contention is that religious help to form cultures, world views and ethics and these are likely to assist in finding solutions to environmental problems. Bharati Puri in her work 'Engaged Buddhism says, 'Dalai Lama's thought clearly states that religions life and earth ecology are inextricably linked and organically related. He articulates this thought with the understanding that if human beings are interested in developing a more diverse and comprehensive context for understanding human earth-relations, then the perspectives of religious traditions can be of invaluable help. Buddhist environmentalists are interested in connecting human rights with environmental rights within the cosmological model. This leads to their contention that mastery of man over nature is not acceptable. According to Dalai Lama 'a clean environment is a human right like any other and that all living beings have a right to breathe clean air, drink fresh water and find food.' He asserts further that 'no understanding of the environment is adequate without a grasp of the religious life that constitutes the human society that saturates the natural environment and that, for better or worse, alter all the world's natural system'.<sup>13</sup> All Buddhists aspiring to find a solution to the environmental crisis, will do well to remember this. Dr. Bharati Puri adds that 'Dalai Lama does not deal specifically with the environmental discourse. But his persuasive thought gives cues for a philosophy which can harmoniously blend man and nature.'<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Bharati Puri, Engaged Buddhism The Dalai Lama's world view. pp. 92-93.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 93.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 93.

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## **The Global Environmental Crisis and Sustainability of Civilization: Time for the Buddhist World to Awaken**

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### **Introduction:**

Buddhism is an ancient and precious faith. Among its most attractive tenets are its recognition of impermanence, of the connection between cause and effect, and the importance of compassion. The Buddhism in which I was instructed also stresses the importance of empiricism – of careful testing and observation rather than blind faith. In my view, this is vital; while the teachings and texts of the Buddha can provide a profound set of principles to guide individual and social harmony, and indeed towards enlightenment, there is also a risk that the practice and understanding of the Buddha’s teaching can decay into empty ritual and superstition.

In my view, one consequence of a hollowed faith would be the complacent view that humanity, or indeed of civilization and its underpinning technology, is now on such an upward and inexorable trajectory towards some form of universal prosperity that the ancient Buddhist principles of self-restraint, of the middle path and the first noble truth of dissatisfaction (*dukkha*) are no longer required, important, or relevant. Any such position would be a critical and dangerous mistake. While this view may be rare in the Buddhist world, there are many influential Western scholars who have propagated excessive complacency. For example, the influential US agricultural economist D. Gale Johnson has argued that the “creation of knowledge” has “made it possible for the world to escape the Malthusian trap”.<sup>1</sup> That is, Johnson argues that human ingenuity is at least as important as environmental factors in the production of the food needed to maintain good population health, even considering future human population growth.

While this quote could be argued as an aberration, a highly selective example, it is in fact part of a widespread current within mainstream economic and social science thought,<sup>2</sup> or it least, it has been until very recently. Partha Dasgupta, the Bengali-born ecological economist, in response to this stream of excessively

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson DG. Population, food, and knowledge. *American Economic Review*. 2000;90(1):1-14.

<sup>2</sup> Butler CD. Globalization, population, ecology and conflict. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*. 2007;18(2):87-91.

optimist thinking, has lucidly commented that ideas like Johnson's exalt "new ideas as a source of progress, supposing that the growth of ideas is capable of circumventing any constraint the natural-resource base may impose on the ability of economies to grow indefinitely".<sup>3</sup>

### **Gambling with the planet:**

The world's scientific and environmental community is increasingly warning that our global civilization is imperiled.<sup>4</sup> Several recent papers, written by teams of the world's most eminent climate scientists, have concluded that the worst-case climate change scenario trajectories are being realized, or even exceeded. The indicators of this worrying trajectory are diverse: they include the emissions and atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases, the rates of melt of Arctic ice, sea level rise, and the number of hungry people. At the recent Climate Congress in Copenhagen, Denmark (held in March, 2009) a keynote speaker, Professor Hans Schellnhuber, chair of the German Advisory Council on Global Change, likened humanity's treatment of the global environmental commons to a form of Russian roulette. In this macabre and cruel game, originally a method of torture, a victim has a 1/6<sup>th</sup> chance of a horrible and violent death. Schellnhuber has argued that to have the same chance of survival as a Russian roulette player the world needs to restrict global temperature rise to no more than 2 degrees C. Already, the world has warmed by 0.8 degrees C since 1900.

The optimists among you may think that a 5-in-6 chance of survival is a promising gamble. This would be true if you lost something small, such as a day's wages. But if you could lose your life then this risk would not be taken, unless you are suicidal. Clearly, humanity is not consciously suicidal. As a species we have become fantastically successful. We have been to the moon, and the internet allows an increasing and unprecedented level of human connectivity. Yet many think that we are taking this risk with our civilization. At the same conference, Professor Stefan Rahmstorf, another keynote speaker, warned that global sea level is now likely to increase by 1 to 1.5 meters by the year 2100. Rising sea level may well be the "trump" which does the most damage to global civilization, through its knock-on effects on displacement and loss of fertile coastal land.

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<sup>3</sup> Dasgupta P. Population and Resources: An Exploration of Reproductive and Environmental Externalities. *Population and Development Review*. 2000;26(4):643–89.

<sup>4</sup> Rees M. *Our Final Century*. London: William Heinemann; 2003; Butler CD. Environmental change, injustice and sustainability. *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry*. 2008;5(1):11-9; Lovelock J. *The Revenge of Gaia*: Penguin; 2006; Strong M. *Where On Earth Are We Going?* Toronto, Canada: Alfred A Knopf; 2001.

Most environmental scientists make these predictions with little emotion. This reflects their scientific training, especially if they are based in the physical sciences. Scientists who stray too far from their home discipline are rarely rewarded, and often criticized for being “out of their depth”. Scientists who study atmospheric chemistry or the melting of glaciers in Greenland can legitimately predict the consequences for measures such as the extent of flooding in Bangladesh by 2100, but they virtually never then analyze the likely human consequences. This role is best performed by social scientists. However, until very recently, social scientists in large measure have been blind or deaf to the emerging environmental crisis, reflective of a long split between these two great avenues of science.<sup>5</sup>

In any event, the human, health and social consequences of such disruption are little analyzed. Low-lying countries and river deltas, such as in Bangladesh and the Mekong delta are likely to be flooded, as will cities such as Alexandria and parts of Bangkok. While extensive and expensive sea walls such as those that protect the Netherlands might seem feasible, it will be extremely difficult to build these on the scale needed. Nor (unless we act rapidly to decarbonize the global energy system) will sea level rise peak in 2100. Unless we act now it will continue to rise, possibly for centuries. Nor is adverse global change restricted to sea level rise or even to climate change. Numerous other factors, including falling biodiversity, deteriorating soil quality and the loss and contamination of the world’s fresh water combine to threaten human well-being.

Similarly, it would be a critical error for people of faith, including Buddhists, to ignore these warnings. However, few Buddhists, whether lay, monastic, junior or senior, have much scientific education or understanding. As a group, Buddhists appear to poorly comprehend the peril that now confronts our civilization. This paper will briefly describe some of the interacting social, economic and environmental factors which are coalescing to form this global “eco-social” crisis. Prominent among these factors are climate change, steadily rising sea levels and changes in global and regional agricultural productivity.

These evolving and emerging elements overlie a background of a world in which some nations have for more than sixty years possessed and controlled nuclear weapons – tools of immense and terrifying destructive power. Additionally, for generations, an increasing number of wealthy people and populations have acted with extreme selfishness, thus creating karmic causes for misery and suffering on an ever-increased scale. The global financial crisis is one manifestation of this selfishness and short-sightedness. The severity of its consequences will be dwarfed by the emerging global eco-social crisis, which has many similar causes.

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<sup>5</sup> Wilson EO. *Consilience. The Unity of Knowledge*. New York: Alfred A Knopf; 1998.

Most predominantly Buddhist nations have made a disproportionately small contribution to this emerging maelstrom, but many are particularly vulnerable. Yet many rich populations are also vulnerable to this unfolding crisis, especially because of their disconnection with basic ecology and their reliance on long, distant and complex supply systems of food and energy. Wealth, as conventionally measured, has also disguised recognition of the eco-social problem and has fuelled complacency.

### **Making the diagnosis:**

There is now a clear risk of a cascade of events, which, should it occur, will exceed the curative capacity of any global institution. By cascade, I mean a linked chain of events which, once precipitated, initiates numerous and largely unpleasant consequences which manifest at the other end. As with any unpleasant disease, diagnosis is essential to give the patient (in this case civilization) a reasonable chance of survival. Because global civilization has not yet collapsed (and indeed, were it not for the global financial crisis it could seem even more powerful and wonderful than ever) there is enormous skepticism that it is imperiled. But think about this for a minute. A car that is accelerating towards a wall needs to slow down to avoid collision. But if the “well-being” of the car is measured only by its velocity, then it will be considered to be at its peak immediately before it hits the wall. If we wait until the evidence of global civilization collapse is obvious to everyone then it will be far too late to correct. Environmental scientists claim that they can see the wall. They appeal to civilization to change course. They fear no plausible method exists to save global civilization if it starts to unravel.

### **Are there ways to save civilization?**

To increase the chance of survival civilization must rapidly move to “decarbonize” the global energy system; to move to a “solar” economy. But we also need to practice self-restraint, self-reliance and to maximize global co-operation. If we can act collectively, courageously and powerfully then we might still enjoy a healthy and prolonged old age. In any case participating in the changes that are required will serve as a form of “social vaccination”, helping to reduce the despair and self-destructive nihilism which could otherwise serve as an accelerant of collapse.

### **A sketch of the growing global eco-social crisis:**

The challenges of the global ecological crisis are probably even less well understood by populations of low-income countries, who face so many other problems. There is no space to describe this crisis in detail, but I would like to stress the number and interaction of these problems. If the earth system was a human body, we could imagine an elderly person who has a fever, a cough, and problems with several organs, such as their liver and kidneys. In addition, this imaginary person would have damage to his or her teeth, eyes, ears and skin. In real life, we might quickly see that such a person does not have long to live. If we then knew that this person was mentally ill, and prone to self-destructive behavior, we would be even more concerned.

Of course, the Earth is not a person, and it has an enormous capacity for self-repair. This ability has enabled the Earth, with its cargo of life, to survive for billions of years. Few if any scientists seriously think that life is in danger. However, what is increasingly clear is that many of the almost seven billion people who now live on our Earth are in danger.

About ten thousand years ago (at the start of the comparatively warm period – called the Holocene - in which civilization has developed) the global sea level rose by about 120 meters, probably over a period of several thousand years. This was caused by the melting of the vast polar ice sheets. The phenomenon of recurring sea level change, together with other evidence of persisting global climate change, is sometimes interpreted as meaning that we need not worry too much about the rate of current or near-future sea or climate change. However, at the start of the Holocene, the human population on the Earth was tiny in comparison to that of today. As the sea rose, humans would gradually have been forced inland, but it is unlikely this displacement would have caused serious conflict with other people, as the population of people living inland was, at that time, very low. However, even if conflict did sometimes occur, we know that the weapons then available were primitive by today's standards.

Now, even a sea level rise of half a meter over this century is likely to be force the resettlement of millions of people, not just from densely populated deltas and coastal areas, but also from small island states, like the Maldives. Indeed, unless the many actions required to respond to climate change are initiated quickly, sea level rise by 2200 could exceed five meters – and will keep rising. Many displaced people will seek refuge, but many will be unwelcome. In recent years many boats carrying African refugees have been lost in the Mediterranean Sea, while the Australian navy

has been accused of passively allowing several hundred asylum seekers, which sailed from Indonesia towards Australia drown.<sup>6</sup>

Climate change threatens many more forms of havoc than a rising sea level. Other predicted consequences are more heat waves, bushfires, severe floods and intense droughts. Countries such as India and regions such as sub-Saharan Africa are particularly likely to experience worsened droughts and other negative effects.<sup>7</sup> The main “greenhouse gas” carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is also changing the acidity of the ocean. This is likely to have profound, generally adverse effects on many marine organisms and the food webs which upon them. In addition, climate change is also likely to change the distribution of many fish stocks. Overfishing, coastal “dead zones” and damage to coral reefs threaten the productivity of the global fisheries. While land and coastal aquaculture systems are a partial compensation for this, aquaculture systems are themselves environmentally harmful and vulnerable.

Unfortunately, our collective environmental problems do not end with harm to the climate and ecosystems. Numerous other large scale perturbations exist, such as the scale of the global nitrogen cycle and the extent of contamination with endocrine disruptors and other health-harming pollutants.<sup>8</sup>

Collectively, these problems are enormously challenging to solve. Of concern is the fact that the longer we delay serious attempts to solve them, the harder the task will be. Indeed, the challenges now are much more serious than they were 20 years ago.

### **Reasons for our collective failure to address the global ecological crisis:**

Our world now has an extraordinary capacity for global environmental and social observation and analysis, both of current and previous times. We have a steadily growing ability to forecast the near and mid-term future (e.g.: to 2200). However, the volume and complexity of this information, combined with its partition into many streams of knowledge has greatly slowed dissemination of the wider scientific understanding which is starting to evolve, and which is vital if we are to cope with our common future. A more complete understanding of our approaching

<sup>6</sup> Kevin T. A Certain Maritime Incident: the sinking of SIEV X. Melbourne: Scribe Publications; 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Tubiello FN, Fischer G. Reducing climate change impacts on agriculture: Global and regional effects of mitigation, 2000–2080. *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*. 2007;74:1030–56.

<sup>8</sup> Grandjean P, Bellinger D, Bergman Å, Cordier S, Davey-Smith G, Eskenazi B, et al. The Faroes statement: human health effects of developmental exposure to chemicals in our environment. *Basic & Clinical Pharmacology & Toxicology*. 2007;102:73–5.

peril has also been blocked by many vested interests which have effectively conspired to fuel doubt and complacency.<sup>9</sup>

For example, many corporations continue to profit from the massive erosion of the Earth's environmental wealth which has occurred, especially in the last century. The fossil fuel industry (oil and coal) have particularly contributed to highly organized and well-funded campaigns designed to challenge the science and severity of climate change and other forms of adverse environmental change. Until recently, the strategy of organized denial of the risk we collectively face has been amplified by several powerful governments, most notably the United States. My own country, Australia failed to ratify the Kyoto Protocol - the embryonic global agreement which has tried to limit greenhouse gas emissions such as CO<sub>2</sub>, methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) - until very recently (2007).

A second powerful set of reasons has also limited understanding of these issues. The most obvious is the psychological difficulty of contemplating the frightening and terrifying chain of events which would unfold if civilization were to crumble. Here's a hypothetical example. We would lose our capacity to fly around the world. We would no longer be able to launch satellites. Gradually, we would lose our ability to replenish the rare metals and other elements needed to make mobile phones. The price of oil would rise to levels which would make the recent price look modest. The World Food Program would fail to acquire and to ship food to refugee camps and temporarily feed other populations experiencing famine. After some time, the internet would probably break down, as electricity supplies become increasingly fractured and fragile.

As the ability to travel, communicate, and learn from each other declines, there would be an ever-increasing risk of social breakdown and a global loss of co-operation. International trade would slow, and countries that are net food importers would become acutely vulnerable to hunger and famine. Health services would suffer, including because of reduced electricity and pharmaceutical supply. Education systems would deteriorate, as would our collective capacity to design and repair the myriad social, technical and informational systems upon which we depend.

Collectively, this scenario is depressing and paralyzing. No one likes to think about it. It's much easier, psychologically, to deny the likelihood of these events, and return to "business as usual". However, business is not usual, and at some point events will intervene in ways which will force us to awaken. But, if we wait too long our actions will be too late.

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<sup>9</sup> Stauber JC, Rampton S. Toxic Sludge is Good for You. Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry. Monroe, Maine: Common Courage Press; 1995; Beder S. Global Spin: The Corporate Assault on Environmentalism. Melbourne: Scribe Publications; 1998; Butler CD. Globalization, population, ecology and conflict. Health Promotion Journal of Australia. 2007;18(2):87-91.

There is a third major reason for the widespread denial of the risk we face. This can be traced to the fable of “crying wolf” as described in the collection of fables credited to Aesop (620-560BC), a slave and story-teller who lived in ancient Greece, and thus was almost a contemporary of the Buddha. In this fable, people are desensitized to hearing the warning, and therefore are unprepared when the wolf finally arrives. Many warnings of collapse were made in the 1960s and early 1970s, most famously in “The Limits to Growth”<sup>10</sup> which sold millions of copies. Yet, to date, collapse has not occurred. Indeed, until just before the global financial crisis erupted, official forecasts of the future have been excessively optimistic, predicting ongoing economic growth for the rest of this century. The fact that no global collapse has occurred in our lifetime, combined with the amazing evolution of technology has made these reassuring forecasts appear plausible, especially to people with little comprehension of the scope of the environmental crisis, its capacity to interact with adverse social factors, and to indeed precipitate civilization collapse.

However, to students of both history and Buddhism, the prospect that civilization may collapse should not be surprising. The reality of impermanence is fundamental to Buddhist teachings. Asia has seen the rise and collapse of many civilizations and empires, from the Khmers in Cambodia to the temporary Japanese ascendancy over much of East and South East Asia before and during WW II.

In Australia, up to 60,000 years of Aboriginal dominance were ended only two hundred years ago. Five hundred years back, massive dislocations and death of indigenous populations occurred throughout America. In Europe and the Middle East many cultures have vanished, including the ancient Romans, and further east, the even older city state cultures of Sumeria and the Indus valley.

However, unlike any of these civilizations, our society today is almost global. It is also armed with thousands of nuclear weapons, controlled by at least nine countries (US, USSR, UK, France, China, Pakistan, India, North Korea and Israel). Like all faiths (and accessible to many people without formal religious faith) Buddhism stresses compassion. While Buddhism stresses equanimity and acceptance, this is not the same as indifference. A detached passivity about our human dilemma is unacceptable. Buddhists can and should contribute to finding solutions to our evolving crisis.

### **The contribution Buddhists can make to solving the global ecological crisis:**

Buddhists can make an important contribution to improving the chance of civilization survival. Most importantly, the tolerance and friendship Buddhists offer

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<sup>10</sup> Meadows D, Meadows D, Randers. J, Behrens III W. *The Limits to Growth*. New York: Universe books; 1972.

to one another can be a “social lubricant” to reduce the friction which is likely to arise in a more resource-constrained world. Buddhist values can permeate science, technology and advertisers, promoting the “right livelihood” which is critical. The understanding of right livelihood needs to evolve. Until recently, cigarette smoking was largely seen as harmless. We now know that smoking is a major cause of heart and lung disease, and contributes to many forms of cancer. Thus to be involved in the growth, making or selling of tobacco is not a right livelihood. Similarly, involvement in the burning of coal, oil or gas is not really right livelihood, nor is the promotion of excessive consumerism.

Buddhism can also contribute to sustainability through its promotion of moderating consumption. Buddhists understand that happiness does not come from the acquisition of material goods, but instead from acts of kindness, friendship and morality. This does not mean that I am advocating excessive austerity, nor that Buddhists should be totally passive. A global legal structure will still be required, and moderation does not mean abject poverty. Never the less, it is increasingly inappropriate to seek or to receive status simply through the acquisition of vast wealth. And those who are wealthy should provide social leadership, rather than follow lifestyles of indulgence.

Enormous strides in technology are required. The world is not as short of climate sparing technologies as coal and oil devotees suggest. In Europe, a “giant array” of linked solar- thermal, wind and geothermal electrical generators has been proposed, both to power Europe and to also enable the desalination of large volumes of seawater.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, Buddhists could do the best they can to contribute to these solutions, while recognizing that they cannot guarantee success. Globally, humans have been generating a lot of bad karma lately, evident especially through the development of weapons of mass destruction and the exploitation of fellow human beings and of other species. If we continue too far along this path, then we will reap the consequences. However, if we have done our best then we can at least die without regret. And rescue remains possible. As the American writer Thomas Friedman says, pessimists may often be correct, but it is optimists who generate the change we need. However, too much optimism is harmful, because it generates complacency. Perhaps, again, we need a middle path.

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.desertec.org/>

<p><b>Article Appendix: Key findings from the 2009 Climate Congress in Copenhagen</b></p>
<p><b>Without immediate remedial action the world is on track for “dangerous” climate change.</b> Events such as global mean surface temperature, sea-level rise, ocean and ice sheet dynamics, ocean acidification, and extreme climatic events are increasing at rates that are much faster than was considered plausible only a decade ago. There is a significant risk that many of the trends will accelerate, leading to an increasing risk of abrupt or irreversible climatic shifts.</p>
<p><b>Societies are highly vulnerable to even modest levels of climate change, and poor nations and communities are particularly at risk.</b> A rise in the global average temperature above 2 degrees C will be very difficult for contemporary societies to cope with, and will increase climate disruption in the rest of this century and beyond.</p>
<p><b>Rapid, sustained, and effective mitigation based on coordinated global and regional action is vital.</b> Weaker climate targets for 2020 increase the risk of crossing thresholds, which could make the task of meeting 2050 targets impossible. Any additional delay in initiating effective mitigation actions increases significantly the long-term social and economic costs of both adaptation and mitigation.</p>
<p><b>Climate change is having, and will have, strongly differential effects on people within and between countries and regions, on this generation and future generations, and on human societies and the natural world.</b> An effective, well-funded adaptation safety net is required for those people least capable of coping with climate change impacts, and a common but differentiated mitigation strategy is needed to protect the poor and most vulnerable.</p>
<p><b>Inaction is inexcusable.</b> Many tools and approaches - economic, technological, behavioral, management – already exist to deal effectively with the climate change challenge. They must be vigorously and widely implemented to achieve the social transformation required to decarbonize economies. Many benefits will flow from a concerted effort to alter our energy economy, including sustainable energy job growth, reductions in the health and economic costs of climate change, and the restoration of ecosystems and revitalization of ecosystem services.</p>
<p><b>Meeting the Challenge</b> To achieve the social transformation required to meet the climate change challenge, several constraints must be overcome, and critical opportunities seized. These include reducing inertia in social and economic systems; building on a growing public desire for governments to act on climate change and to remove subsidies which hasten environmental loss. We must also reduce the influence of vested interests who act to increase emissions and to reduce resilience; and foster innovative leadership in government, the private sector and civil society.</p>
<p><b>Social challenge:</b> We must engage society in the transition to norms and practices that foster sustainability.</p>

## **Cultivates our Mind and Save the Earth**

*A presentation at the UN Vesak Celebration in Bangkok, Thailand, May 2009*

*by Ven. Bhiksuni Chuehmen, Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order*

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### **Earth warming? Climate change?**

A UN report mentioned, “Climate change is one of the most critical global challenges of our time. Recent events have emphatically demonstrated our growing vulnerability to climate change. Climate change impacts will range from affecting agriculture - further endangering food security-, sea-level rise and the accelerated erosion of coastal zones, increasing intensity of natural disasters, species extinction and the spread of vector-borne diseases.”<sup>1</sup>

From the UN statement, we realize that our natural resources will be decreasing day by day and our future generations will be affected? The air that we breathe is also unclean each day and our health will be gradually threatened. Do we feel safe and see hope in our future? The answer is positive when people in our global village are awakened about the interdependent of nature and human life. And that we transform our mind and discipline our action to save planet earth.

As early as in the 1960s, or even earlier, environmentalists, scientists, economists, researchers, philosophers, and so forth through seminars, newspapers, television, radio gradually began to notice that our earth is warming up; our climate is changing – and it will be becoming a greatest threat that we will be facing in our human world. In 1970, a modern environmental movement begins with the chapter - Earth Day, and yearly bringing people from all walks of life into this seminar. Under the initiation and sponsorship of the UN, three most important policy conferences attended by government representatives at the highest levels and focused on a wide

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<sup>1</sup> <http://unep.org/themes/climatechange/about/index.asp>

range of issues related to what has come to be known as sustainable development were held. The three majors were in June 1972 in Stockholm, the second in 1992 in Brazil, by far the largest and most prominent global environment summit; and the third from August to September 2002 in South Africa.

### **Human-induced environmental pollution and ecological destruction?**

From the many progresses which the UN and worldwide environmentalists have made in environmental protection mostly focused externally, but it is ironic that environmental crisis on our planet earth today is closely interconnected with human beings. That is to say, human beings are the creators of problematic issues and can also help in solving environmental issues, though this requires everyone to be self-awakened.

Besides the environmental issue that we could see, Buddhism emphasizes on the inner environmental protection of thoughts, body, concept and spiritual; and to deepen our Buddhist perspective, every one needs to be self-awakened and conduct oneself abiding the Buddhist precepts and principles; thereby constantly purifying one's raising thoughts and motives to save our planet earth.

### **Karmic Retribution**

When the earth began, everything in existence was natural, and all living organisms coexisted in harmony. However, technology has made life on earth much more complicated, and consumerism has gradually damaged our once natural relationship with the earth. That is, current environmental changes on earth are becoming a great threat to our lives and our health. Needless to say, climate change on earth today is human-induced from air/water/soil pollution, mining, overpopulation, over-fishing, over-grazing, and clear-cutting of the world's once-prolific forests.

People have endless pursuit for more and more material things, including excess consuming to satisfy their senses – rich tasty food, too much meat-eating, beautiful clothing and accessories, luxurious homes and cars, indiscriminate wastage and so on. The social lifestyles indeed attributed towards climate change; thus human beings are now facing the retribution of being counter-attacked by nature. Therefore to save our world from further disasters, we shall begin the transformation of our minds and discipline our actions.

### **The Buddha, the first to teach on environmental protection**

Buddhism is a religion with deep environmental consciousness. Buddhism not only emphasizes to treat human with compassion, it also care and show concern towards the great land and vast ocean; that is, “Every thing on earth is possessed with Buddha-nature,” and “Sentient or non-sentient beings, are integrated with wisdom”<sup>2</sup>

The Buddha realized that all things arise because of interdependency and all beings, sentient or not, have the same perfect wisdom as he acknowledged that all living beings possess Buddha nature<sup>3</sup>. His teaching encompasses respect for life and peaceful coexistence with all living things. This respect for life applies to every form of life – from animals, large or small to enormous trees and blades of grass, land or mountains or stream or oceans. Thus, the Buddha could be said to be the first environmentalist in the world. In the Buddhist sutras, there are many teachings on environmental protection, append below a few of those, including:

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<sup>2</sup> 「大地眾生，皆有佛性」、「情與無情，同圓種智」。

<sup>3</sup> Upon his enlightenment on the diamond seat under the Bodhi Tree, the Buddha exclaimed, “Wondrous! Wondrous! All sentient beings possess Buddha nature, and can also attain Buddha-hood, but because of their delusion and attachment; that obstacle from awakening! -- from Flower Garland Sutra (*Avatamsaka Sutra*), *Taisho Tripitaka* vol. 9, no. 278

1. The *Suka Sutra* says, “If sentient beings continually engage in the ten unwholesome actions<sup>4</sup>, the impact will be felt in the environment, which will suffer.” When one performs wholesome actions, one can help to reverse the damage to the environment. Our actions impact ourselves, others and even the earth. Our existence is intimately intertwined. This is what we mean when say, we are coexistence in oneness.
2. The *Vinaya-matrka-sastra*<sup>5</sup> states, “There are five types of trees one should not cut, that is bodhi trees, medicine trees, large roadside trees, trees in cold groves, and banyan trees.”
3. In the *Anguttara Sutra*<sup>6</sup> the Buddha said, “Planting of trees is the giving of coolness, besides purifying the air, it is also conservation of the earth which is beneficial to others and merit for oneself.” Planting trees not only beautifies the environment, it is also a form of practice.
4. In *Sutra of Fifty Encounters of the Bodhisattva*<sup>7</sup> mentioned that if a bodhisattva sees a bareness land with no well and tree, should build the wells and plant trees for the benefit of others.
5. The *Vinaya-matrka-sastra*<sup>8</sup> mentions that a bhiksu who plants three kinds of trees, that is fruit tree, flowering tree, and leafy tree, in honor of the Triple Gem, has cultivated blessing and is not committing wrong.

In the *Jakata* tales there was a story about an early life of the Buddha as a parrot. One day, the forest caught fire and every other animals ran for their lives or watched, but

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<sup>4</sup> The ten unwholesome actions are related to the three means of deeds through body, speech and mind. The body actions are killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; the actions of speech are lying, slander, harsh speech and malicious gossip, and the actions of mind are greed, anger and delusion.

<sup>5</sup> 《毘尼母經》 Taisho Tripitaka Vol. 24, No. 1463, chapter 5, p830a.

<sup>6</sup> 《增一阿含》卷十,

<sup>7</sup> 《菩薩行五十緣身經》 Taisho Tripitaka No. 812, p773c,

<sup>8</sup> 《毘尼母經》 Taisho Tripitaka Vol. 24, No. 1463, chapter 5, p829c. .

the brave little parrot, fought against the fire by dropping into a nearby pond, wetting its wings, and then flying over the fire, flapping its wings and dropping a few drops of water. Even a little bird knew to save the extinction of nature, we, as human beings, claimed to be the most intelligent of all sentient beings; are we performing to protect our environment?

### **Environmental protection within one's heart and spirit**

Since ancient times, temples have been built harmoniously with mountains and forests; monastics have planted trees, not only to beautify the environment, but also to enhance water quality and soil conservation. The Buddhist concepts of “oneness and coexistence,” “compassion and life protection,” and “simplicity and cherishing” daily life are the basis of our most essential conduct of environmental protection.

In protecting the environment, everyone should practice “cherishing” as their priority. To cherish and value the earth's resources is the environmental protection of one's body and mind. When one's thought is not polluted, it is environmental protection of thoughts. With correct ideals and always thinking positively, that is the environmental protection of ideals. With wholesome speech, one abstains from frivolous speech, double-talk, and harsh words; this is environmental protection of speech. When one's mind is free of defilement with no jealousy, anger or resentment, one enjoys an environment open to spirituality.”

In the *Sutra of Bodhisattva Dangzi*<sup>9</sup>, it says, “Whenever Bodhisattva Dangzi steps on the earth, he worries that the earth might feel pain.” Every step he makes, he does not dare to put down heavy foot because he is afraid to cause pain to earth. Every word he speaks, he does not dare to talk loud as he worries to wake up the earth in its sound sleep. He dares not to litter anything on the ground, being afraid to pollute the earth. Bodhisattva Dangzi's compassionate care for the earth is a spiritual

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<sup>9</sup> 《菩薩睽子經》 Taisho Tripitaka Vol. 3, No. 174, p0437c.

awakening to every Buddhist to be enlightened on environmental protection – towards a responsible and environmental way of life.

A selfish person cares only for him/herself. Besides emotional love for our own family and friends, we should practice universal love towards society, our country, other nations including every human and thing on earth. That is to say, environmental protection starts with our mind. When our mind is healthy with compassion and environmental consciousness, we can save our earth. Show concern to environmental issue and protecting the earth because every thing on earth is closely interconnected with us.. Therefore, we need the contribution of each and every one to create a harmonious environmental way life in order to save our planet world.

In 1992 at the yearly Buddha's Light International Association General Conference, Master Hsing Yun gave 12 guidelines to members to start with beautifying inner mind and then extend to outwards environment, namely:

1. Speak quietly - do not disturb others.
2. Keep the ground clean - do not litter.
3. Keep the air clean - do not smoke or pollute.
4. Respect oneself and others - do not commit violent acts.
5. Be polite - do not intrude upon others.
6. Smile - do not face others with an angry expression.
7. Speak kindly - do not utter abusive words.
8. Follow the rules - do not seek exemptions or privileges.
9. Be mindful of your actions - do not act unethically.
10. Consume consciously - do not waste.
11. Be grounded - do not live aimlessly.
12. Practice kindness - do not create malice.

Also, in his teaching, Master Hsing Yun constantly reminds the members on environmental awareness, namely:

1. Consume moderately and not to buy unnecessary to prevent wastage.
2. Maintain your car and follow emission guidelines.
3. Minimize usage of disposable utensils.
4. Take shorter showers.
5. Do not litter and reduce the amount of trash.
6. In home, change spot light to energy-saving light bulbs.
7. Set air conditioner to a higher temperature.
8. Recycle old newspapers and motor oil.
9. Bring shopping bags when shopping
10. Inspect car tires regular, as flat tires wear more quickly and consume higher fuel.
11. Choose durable and fuel efficient tires
12. Minimize the usage of car air-conditioner, as this is one of the main emitters of chlorofluorocarbon.
13. Buy and use more recycled materials.
14. Minimize usage of paper cups.

### **Changing our attitudes and lifestyles**

In Buddhism, craving is the root of all suffering. In contrast, lives in simplicity and be contented will enjoy peace and freedom of mind. Master Hsing Yun says, “We should train “to tap into new resources and reduce expenses.” “Tapping new resources” does not necessarily refer to monetary and materials. It is greed, anger and delusion of human - the creator of organisms destruction - the main cause for ecological damage. “Tapping new resources” here means to open up the

resources of Buddha-dharma. Where there is Dharma, there is compassion and wisdom; though one may be shortage of material needs in life, life is still meaningful and enrichment when one is encompassed with compassion and wisdom. We also need to open up our sense of shamefulness, and the beauty of gratitude, joyous and appreciative mind, diligence and truthfulness. “Reducing expenses” means to economize one’s spending and abstain from greed and anger.

In changing our attitudes and lifestyles, below are ten guidelines about one’s Discipline on Nature<sup>10</sup> taught by Venerable Master Hsing Yun:

1. not to cultivate in soil conservation reserve land and excessive cutting of trees, nor to invade national territory and putting up illegal structures.
2. not to indiscriminately abandon pets and conducting incorrect ideals of animals liberation; but protect life in positive manner, especially affiliating good causes and conditions with people, this is the best way in protecting life.
3. not to be cruel to animals or eating protective animals, especially not to eat life animals, namely the various method of eating raw fishes. Simplicity in meals to nurture loving-kindness and compassion.
4. not to kill or catch animals and fishes indiscriminately, causing destruction of ecology and polluting water, which is harmful to humankind and health.
5. prevent wearing leather tailoring or making skin and fur of animals as accessories and for decorations.
6. protect plants and trees and avoid cutting them indiscriminately; put efforts to participate in planting trees and protect the greenery.
7. implement separating kinds of trash and not throwing waste indiscriminately, nor dumping and burning toxic, biomedical waste materials causing air and water pollution, deteriorating more harm to the

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<sup>10</sup> Master Hsing Yun’s *Three Trainings of Humanistic Buddhism*, 2007 Taiwan 《人間佛教的戒定慧》,

natural environment. Leave behind a clean and beautiful earth for our future generations.

8. Saving on daily availability, namely water, electricity and clothing. Be conscious that a drop of water is comparable to gold, and a piece of paper involving cutting down of trees; so cherish our resources and not to spend excessively. Showing concern and care even for public facilities and not to doing random destruction.
9. contentment and cherishing is self environmental protection, namely cherish humankind, cherish affiliation, cherish life, cherish friendship, cherish resources, cherish time, cherish materials, cherish utilities and so forth. Nurturing the habits of cherishing is the wealthiest human life. ]
10. Put effort to get rid off inner trash and transform our mind. In regard to outer trash and pollution, arouses the consciousness of the community and masses that each and every one jointly works towards protecting our environment. Purifying body and mind is in fact a self achievement.

### **Conclusions**

The society we live depends on the contribution from people of all walks of life so as to build a harmonious and commonly owned society. We still have hope in the future, if we start to transform our minds and discipline our actions to show concern and care for one another and our living planet. Every individual behavior is an element of addressing climate change.

While protecting the physical environment, one should always remember to take care of the internal spiritual environment, as mentioned in the *Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra*<sup>11</sup>, it says, “If one wants a Pure Land, one needs first to purify his/her mind; when the mind is purified, it is the Buddha Pure Land.”

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## **Buddhist Approach to the Environmental Crisis: From Kandyan Paintings of Sri Lanka**

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In the modern world large industries produce a large quantity of goods in order to meet the demands of human society. Among them most productions are not suitable for humanity. As a result, modern humans face certain problems concerned with physical and mental destruction. On the other hand it is affected the natural environmental crisis and man has to live with these tragic condenses in present word. According to my topic, I am not going to explain the reasons for the arousal of the above mention problems or how to solve these problems. My purpose is the ancient people and they how managed their natural environment for their necessities and to depict these functions in the Buddhist paintings of Kandyan period. The definition of environment includes fauna and flora, air, water, sun, moon, land, river etc. These natural sources interact with man and his daily life as well as the natural environment. Mental satisfaction is helps man to lead a comfortable life.

It is the point of view of Buddhism. It is also consolidated by the archaeological remains and historical documents of ancient civilization. Pre-historical and historical humanity lived in natural environments with happiness. They utilized natural sources for settlement, production, transportation, communication and their other achievements. Therefore, they didn't face an environmental crisis and social problems like loneliness, family disruption, and stress, etc. This peaceful and fertile society is depicted in paintings of the Kandyan period in Sri Lanka and as give an answer to environmental crisis.

Modern humanity likes to live in the urban area for a comfortable life. But Kandyan Buddhist paintings shows that a comfortable life can be lived in the village. On the contrary, the features of the two locations are overlapped. It means urbanization and, increasing modern technology and science are giving more advantages to society. But it is increasing without limitation and by destroying natural sources. Consequently, most of the industrial production results in the destruction of human morality and natural environment. Paintings represent that the life village is gifted with satisfaction and it is similar to the approach of middle path (majjhimapatipada) in Buddhism. If we are able to follow the middle path in our life we will be able to realize the good and bad morals. It is results in the reduction of the

environmental crisis as much as possible. This result clearly represented in Kandyan paintings.

The Kandyan paintings appeared in Sri Lanka during 18th and 19th centuries. They are found in most of the Buddhist temples in the Kandy area as well as the down South of Sri Lanka. There are two painting traditions in Sri Lanka namely, classical and folk. Kandyan paintings are manifested as 'folk art' and they were created by craftsmen. They come from villagers with Buddhist mentality and Buddhist origins. They were able to illustrate some exemplary pictures or lessons to the devotee's mind for realizing the value as well as for constructing the natural environment through paintings. They showed how to protect the environment and its benefit to society.

From the first decade of 18th century the earliest Kandyan paintings are depicted at Madewala Vihara near Kandy. I have selected some temples such as Degaldoruwa, Lankatilaka, Gadaladeniya from Kandy district and Dambulla cave temple from Matale district in central province in Sri Lanka to support my argument. Consideration of the composition of this tradition revealed that the craftsman have given priority for natural scenery.

Similar to the general rule of Pali sutras, it appears that there is a close relationship between human morality and natural environment. This term has been similarly explained on the Oxford Dictionary 20th century Art.<sup>1</sup> According to the explanation in that book if we consider the term environment as an art form it fills the entire room (or outside space) surrounding the visitor and consisting of any materials what so ever including lights, sounds and color. Generally, Kandyan Buddhist paintings emphasize environmental art and always prove interaction between humanity and nature.

When we carefully analyze these paintings, it is revealed that they depict symbolic designs such as trees, flowers, rivers, branch of leaves from natural environment. Sometimes these motifs are used to keep the balance and rhythm of composition and the flow of the narrative.

In paintings which are depicted on the wall or roof of the Buddhist temple, craftsmen had selected natural screen. In addition, when they depict Jatakas related to the Buddha's enlightenment: Satsatiya, Suvisi-vivarana, Maraparajaya – the artist used natural surface and decorated it with natural ornaments and natural colors. The architect also contributed to the preparation of the beautiful surrounding of the sacred land. Most of them have used the natural location for architectural representations of the temple. On the contrary the objects, the technique of the composition, making color, architectural representations, depicted human figures, and decorations have

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<sup>1</sup> Oxford Dictionary 20<sup>th</sup> century Art, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 194

emphasized the interrelationship with human and nature on the Kandyan paintings other than Sri Lankan classical paintings.

During 18th and 19th centuries Kandyan paintings have depicted a major part of the religious life of Buddhist people as visual media. In my opinion, it teaches us the value of natural environment for ancient Buddhist people and modern people as well. However, the combination/harmonization of humans and nature on the Kandyan paintings is linked in the theory of five cosmic laws. The five cosmic laws can explain pañca-niyamadhamma<sup>2</sup>, as follows:

- Physical law (utuniyāma) = season law
- Biological law (bījaniyāma) = seed law
- Psychological laws (cittaniyāma) = mind law
- Moral laws (kammaniyāma) = action law
- Causal laws (dhammaniyāma) = reality law

According to the above cosmic laws the physical environment produces condition of the area. It influences to change human mind, intellectually and well and keep it balanced. For instance, most of Buddhist temples or monasteries were built on a natural rock, forest or mountain. Degaldoruwa, Lankatilaka, Dambulla have been built on natural rock. My argument is that the Buddhist people always selected natural landscape to establish their Buddhist monasteries or temples. They didn't destroy their natural environment to build religious building. The architect created the building plan without destroying natural things and nature is applied as an architectural design e.g. Dambulla temple. There are five cave temples at Dambulla cycle and the partition created a number of separate chambers. These kinds of architectural designs declare their spiritual significance, peace and prosperity of environment. It has the affect to change humanity's stress and attitude - as feedback to society.

The architect designed his plan while the craftsman decorated the temple or monastery with paintings, statues or carvings in the inside as well as outside. When the visitor enters of the boundary of temple he becomes quiet person and he fall in love with the natural beauty of the temple. As a result of his sensible way he can be relaxed in the noisy world and can release his stresses felt. This type of physical arrangement is included in physical laws on Buddhism.

According to Buddhist philosophy, walking in the open environment is the best therapy to release our tension. For achieving this goal a suitable environment should be created. When a visitor walks on the path of a rock, forest or mountain his negative emotions of inner feelings are more accessible.

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<sup>2</sup> Lily De Silva, *Essays on Buddhism Culture and Ecology: for Peace and Survival*, 2001, p. 74-75

The rock temple of Degaldoruwa is another example to prove the above mentioned sacred surrounding in Sri Lanka. The temple consists of a rock-cut chamber with two roofs with the paintings depicted on the inner chamber. When a visitor enters the shrine, they can see the paintings have been painted with bright colors by the artist. We know the color has been made by natural organics in Kandyan paintings and it is made by craftsman himself.<sup>3</sup> These natural things could be available from the environment very easily. The artist could have been satisfied with the job; because there were no barriers to find the colors and had job satisfaction with making colors, alone. When the artist makes the color, he, perhaps, could think he was the creator not the laborer in his society and he felt his equality within humanity. This mental satisfaction can be applied to other Buddhists – as a lesson from Buddhism to have job-satisfaction.

In addition, the craftsman and the devotee realized the value of natural-organic and the capacity of them. Both of them exchange their knowledge about natural the environment and communicate through paintings. They were sharing his ideas with aesthetic concept and then they grow their sentiment, mood and emotion. Now he became relaxed mentally and physically. Because of the beautiful sacred landscape which was gifted by the nature and the contribution of the craftsman.

The second law is biological law (*bījaniyāma*) lit. seed-law. The fauna and flora consists of biological environment. The physical and biological environment influenced to make up morals of humans. According to Buddhist philosophy those morals of human has interconnected with fauna and flora in the external world. This theory has been used on Kandyan paintings as symbolic representation. The patterns of biological things of Kandyan paintings have been used for pleasing visual effects<sup>4</sup> and craftsmen determined to present the religious instructions through biological laws.

Firstly, they produce pleasing visuals with eye contact on illustration and then devotee will be able to realize or communicate with the story which is depicted on the wall or ceiling. The paintings proved that the natural environment is the most influential material to human and craftsman has represented faithfulness and reality of the natural environment on human life through the motif of Kandyan painting.

For instance, it depicts many lotus flowers in wall paintings. Sometimes it is not applicable for certain compositions (i.e. Jataka story) but the craftsman created it for keeping the balance of composition. However, we know that the Buddhist

<sup>3</sup> White- prepared from hydrous magnesite (*makul or kova makul*). Red- prepared from cinnabar (*sādilungam*), Yellow- garcinia morella (*gambege from gokatu tree*), Black-prepared by lamp-black to make which, jak- milk (*kos kiri* ), Blue- prepared from leaf of the indigo plant, Green made by mixing blue with yellow (Ananda Kumaraswami, *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1956, p.64)

<sup>4</sup> D.B Danapala, *Buddhist Paintings from Shrines and Temples in Ceylon*, 1964, p. 21

interpretation reminds us that the lotus flower symbolizes the purity in Buddha's society as well as it represents Buddha's life, the source of life, and it is the seat of the Buddha. The craftsman used most decorative lotus flowers for filling the spaces and expressing the purity of the Buddhism and the purity of natural fresh flowers. It is evident that he used fully bloomed flower as the center piece of the ceiling decoration. According to universal fact an artwork represented the artist's mind. The fully bloomed lotus flower also revealed his purity of mind like purity of lotus flower. This message can quickly be received by devotee when he enters the shrine. The center of the ceiling is a very important location on the roof. According to the philosophical analysis on Kandyan Buddhist paintings, it is revealed that the craftsmen have followed their own way to communicate between visitor and biological laws with teaching of the environmental values. There are group of paintings which depicts life of Buddha on the ceiling panel with lotus flower decoration i.e. Dambulla, Degaldoruwa etc, shrines. This decoration depicted all Kandyan paintings by teaching the value of natural beauty.

There were depicted various trees on Kandyan paintings and it is very characteristic. The detail of the episode of Vessantara Jātaka at Degaldoruwa is represented by two coconut palms to provide a descriptive background. Jujaka's wife Amittatapa explains to the neighbors about her unsatisfied marriage life with her old man. This composition expresses a tragic moment, but it is happening with the background on fertilized trees.<sup>5</sup> It depicts two coconut trees, full of coconuts. Also the detail of Sutasoma Jātaka at the same temple, has depicted the trees with carefully arranged rows of leaves and branches. Furthermore, it can be manifested as flowers, trees and clouds in a single composition from Uruga Jātaka at Madawala Vihara.<sup>6</sup> These are the collection of the decoration of natural beauty and it reminds that the natural environment is always wishing to sympathetic to the mind of human being.<sup>7</sup> The arrangement of the picture is well balanced such as the trees are decorated in a vertical line while flowers are depicted horizontally. At the same episode there is an illustration of the death of Bodhisattva's son stung by a snake; but the Bodhisattva continued to plough the field and the episode represented the Bodhisattva telling something to his neighbor. According to the Uruga Jātaka we know his discussion is exposes the nature of *anitya*.

The above mentioned examples tell us how to contribute to the natural environment while we are facing some problems in our life. It employs the tree as an ideal form, as well as reminding that the trees and animals are most important elements of biological laws. Therefore, they used trees, birds, animals for their composition again and again.

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<sup>5</sup> D.B Danapala, *Buddhist Paintings from Shrines and Temples in Ceylon*, 1964, p. 68

<sup>6</sup> D.B Danapala, *Buddhist Paintings from Shrines and Temples in Ceylon*, 1964, p. 76, 84

<sup>7</sup> D.B. Danapala, *Buddhist Paintings from Shrines and Temples in Ceylon*, 1964, p. 76

Why did they fill with a repeating pattern in a limited space on the panel? We know if we have to see the same picture again and again, it is a rejected by our mind. But in the decoration of certain figures on the Buddhist paintings in the temple wall, we can read the paintings without tension: because there is a sacred environment prepared by craftsmen and there are a few reasons to accept this repeated pattern in our mind; because the craftsman has created a sacred surrounding and it is integrated with the external environment and human mind; and another reason is the picture has been composed symmetrically and carefully subdivided from the beginning to the end. In the continuous narration of the Jātaka story trees, flowers, animals and human figures are also repeated. In Vessantara Jātaka the elephant has appeared twice. When the Vessantara Jātaka is depicted, we feel the comfortable life of the forest.

In view of the descriptions it can be seen that the modes of thinking, attitude and ideas change our mind as psychological laws (*cittaniyāma*) lit., mind-law. However we see that the painting will relax our mind. There are many exemplary characteristics of Buddha and they are discussed in the Maraparaja of Kandyan paintings. They are depicted in the inner shrines of most temples. During the Buddha's attainment of Enlightenment, he had to face a battle with Mara. It has illustrated the evil one as Mara and the center of the location depicts Buddha and it has given clear picture at Dambulla. Marayuddha panel depicted in front of the principal image of inner shrine. However, Maraparaja or Marayuddha represents as a symbol of mental struggle of Buddha. Buddha could have defeated the demons, darkness, whirlwinds, storms, rains, floods, rocks, poisons, weapons, flames, burning coals, mud and reptiles. Buddha had to face enemies in the external environment while his mind was stabled. Buddha sat under the tree with determination to reach Enlightenment and Mara challenged his right and demanded his claim to deserve the place. When Buddha touched the earth the goddess gave judgment. This function is also depicted with more colorful pictures and there is the best example at Degaldoruwa. The goddess depicted with filled vase in the left hand as symbolized fertility of the earth. However, the flower of vase or pot is the ancient auspicious decorative symbol in Sri Lankan Buddhist paintings. This, Maraparaja paintings taught to us the value of mental relaxation which was recognized by Buddha. In accordance with Buddhist psychology, there are a few mental disorders in humans such as greed, hatred, jealousy, frustration, distress, and depression and so on. These mentalities always keep the relationship with our environment. In addition, mental purity is born of noble conduct and it is emerges as a clear picture. Maraparaja gave us the exemplary message from Buddha that the stable mentality is desire to eliminate all disorders of others and environmental disorders. Consequently, it cannot increase the environment crisis in the word.

The two of the final cosmic laws can be explained as one category. Moral laws (kammaniyāma) lit. action-law, and Causal laws (dhammaniyāma) lit. reality-law explained the moral realm which is defined as good or bad and causal law describes the spirituality leading to ultimate liberation.<sup>8</sup>

According to Buddhist teachings, there would be no environmental crisis if there was no moral pollution of humanity. Accordingly, we can prove to gain environmental lessons through the Kandyan painting towards resolving environmental crisis through this exemplary material. Kandyan Buddhist paintings reveal that humanity and nature are intertwined; we should protect our environment. Nature supports humanity and assists to develop our mentality and aesthetic values. Consequently, humanity's mentality becomes improved when morality is exercised towards contributing to protect our environment.

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<sup>8</sup> Lily De Silva, *Essays on Buddhism Culture and Ecology: for peace and survival*, 2001, p. 75

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## The Approach To Repay The Earth:

### A Positive Expression Of “Three Cumulative Pure Precepts” via Ash-Burial

*Bhikkhu Chang Sui*

In Chinese tradition, after passing one’s body returning to the earth is regarded as a retreat in everlasting peace and it is as natural as leaves fallen to the ground. It is in accordance with the fundamental Buddhist teaching of **dependent extinction**, discovered by *Śākyamuni* Buddha, that things perish when **causes and conditions** fall apart. On the other hand, things come into form from the coming together of **causes and conditions** (S. *hetu-pratyaya*; yīnyuán 因緣). Taking this Vesak Celebration as an example, the organizer invites participant’s organizations and helps the participant share their views, the sequential occurrence of causes and conditions may appear simple but is actually exceedingly complex. First, a writing system must be developed and the delegate must master it. The delegate must have absorbed and accumulated knowledge. Then the delegate has to be in good health, with enthusiasm and understanding. Other indispensable factors include proofing, typesetting, and printing of essays; handling and delivery of the mail; and all efforts made by the host department and various organizations. Finally, to satisfy the delegate’s purpose in writing the essay, the panelists need to be interested, intelligent, and motivated to read. Such interdependency among all incidents, which are inter-related is the principle of “causes and conditions.” Things arise when causes and conditions come together, and things pass away when causes and conditions disperse. This is the doctrine of dependent origination (S. *pratītya-samutpāda*; yuánqǐ 緣起 or yuánshēng 緣生) and extinction.

It is because everything in the universe arises and perishes according to the law of causes and conditions; therefore, everything is impermanent. Hence, Buddhists consider all phenomena provisional, temporary, and illusory. From a tiny bubble on the grass to the whole universe around us, nothing lasts forever including human beings. If nothing is permanent and substantial, this proves that the essence of everything is empty (S. *śūnya*; kōng 空). Emptiness (S. *śūnyatā*; kōngxìng 空性) means that nothing is fixed or unchanging. It means non-substantiality rather than non-existence. Buddhists use the concept of conditioned dispersing to analyze things and to demonstrate their lack of substance. Perceiving emptiness in this view, it tells us that we are living in a world of non-substantiality and illusion, and therefore had better not become captive to illusory fame, wealth, or desire for objects. With this understanding of the illusory nature of all phenomena (or extinguishing the endless greed for fame, wealth, and objects), Buddha’s teachings direct people to liberate themselves from their unsatisfactory spiritual and physical environments to gain a peace of mind.

So if one thoroughly perceives the emptiness and the working of “causes and conditions” with a peaceful or pure mind, one will not be lured and vexed by illusory phenomena, or become their slaves. Meanwhile, through the practice of meditation I

in depth and study of Buddhist teaching, each individual has the potential to discover his or her personal “vow” (yuàn 願), which is beyond the differences in nations, races, genders, or sects. Continuously, learning Buddha Dharma leads one to live reflective lives by enhancing awareness of oneself and environments; contemplative practice imprints one’s understanding of teaching deeply in the heart, so that our words and actions are in accord. Practicing in such a manner, we find a path that connects to the world and interacts to others in a responsible and intelligent manner. Furthermore, one will be at ease and free from afflictions and delusions. Through practice this fulfillment of liberation from the cycle of birth and death *samsāra* (lúnhuí 輪回 or shēngsǐ 生死) can be reached, and one can enter into Nirvanic Bliss *nirvāṇa* (nièpán 涅槃).

James L. Watson<sup>1</sup>, an anthropologist, stated, “If anything that is central to the creation and maintenance of a unified Chinese culture, it is the customization of ritual ceremonies. Chinese understand and accept the view that there is a correct way to perform rites associated with the life-cycle, the most important being weddings and funerals.”<sup>2</sup> What is the meaning of the Ashe Burial ceremony after people’s passing? Ash Burial, what is the fulfillment taught by DDM and how is that related to innumerable people around the world?

### **Ash Burial and Last Will**

Venerable Master Sheng Yen of **Dharma Drum Mountain** in Taiwan passed into *parinirvāṇa* (yuánjì 圓寂) in Taipei at 4pm on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2009 at National Taiwan University Hospital at age of 79. Venerable Master Sheng Yen (1931-2009) was one of the most renowned teachers of Chan (Japanese: Zen) Buddhism in the world. In Taiwan Venerable Master Sheng Yen was chosen as one of the fifty most influential people in the past four hundred years by Common Wealth Magazine in 1998. Venerable Master Sheng Yen was regarded as an eminent monk, a prominent Buddhist educator, a great advocate and exponent of humanitarianism and environmentalism<sup>3</sup>, a scholar and author<sup>4</sup>, and the founder of Dharma Drum Mountain World Center for Buddhist Education. Venerable Master had put in tremendous efforts throughout his life in building this center, which is to fulfill his vow to “uplift the human beings, revive Chinese Buddhism and promote world peace”.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~anthro/social\\_faculty\\_pages/social\\_pages\\_watson\\_w.html](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~anthro/social_faculty_pages/social_pages_watson_w.html), 2009/4/22

<sup>2</sup> Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China, University of California, 1988

<sup>3</sup> The Spiritual Environmentalism announced by Venerable Master Shen Yen, is a strong relationship between the claim of “When the mind is pure, the Buddha land is pure.” depicted in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* (S. *vimalakīrti-nirdeśa*; Wéimójié suǒshuō jīng 維摩詰所說經, T 475: 14.537–557).

<sup>4</sup> The collections wrote by Venerable Master Sheng Yen, called Fāgǔ Chuánjī 法鼓全集, amounts to over 100 volumes, covering topics as diverse as Tīāntái and Huáyán philosophies, *vinaya*, Buddhist scriptural commentaries, Indo-Tibetan and East Asian Buddhist histories, Chan Buddhist studies, and comparative religions.

From February 3<sup>rd</sup> to February 15<sup>th</sup>, the **Ritual of Buddha Name Recitation Service** was held daily at DDM and other branches, as gratitude and repayment to the benevolence of the Venerable Master. For 12 days, an audio recording of the Venerable Master chanting in the name of *Amitabha* Buddha was replayed all day long. Devotees came and went throughout those days: donning robes, they sat or walked slowly with joined palms in the Grand Buddha Hall and chanted along with the recorded recitation. Outside the Grand Buddha Hall, people sipped tea to soothe sore throats from chanting, and spoke quietly, comforting each other and sharing memories. For the first three days there is the **Wake Service**; Venerable Master Sheng Yen's body lying in state in the Grand Buddha Hall, while devotees came to pay farewell to the Master. The **En-coffining and Sealing the coffin Ceremony**, when the Master's remains was moved from a transparent acrylic viewing coffin to wooden coffin and sealed, was held in the Grand Buddha Hall in the morning of February 6<sup>th</sup>. On the **Cremation Ceremony**, devotees gathered shoulders to shoulders along the road, saluted in kneeling posture for long, and prostrated to the Venerable Master while his coffin or hearse passing by at Dharma Drum Mountain and Lion's Head Mountain crematory on February 8<sup>th</sup>. After cremation and pulverization, the Master's attendants divided the ash into 5 packages and put in ash container sitting in the chair which the Venerable Master used to sit from February 8 to February 15.

Approximately 30'000 people came to pay their respects for the **Reflection and Commemoration and Ash-Burial Ceremony** at DDM on February 15<sup>th</sup>. In order to transform the devotees' sorrow into strong determination, all of the participants were asked to write a vow on a paper *bodhi* leaf; these paper leaves were then collected and thung on the *bodhi* tree in Founding History Memorial Hall to honor Shifu's spirit: **"The Universe may one day perish, yet my vows are eternal; What I am unable to accomplish in this life, I vow to continue my efforts through countless future lives. What I am unable to accomplish in person, I exhort everyone to undertake together."** With the modern program of "Make Prayers/ Generate Vows/ Fulfill Vows," the **Reflection and Commemoration Ceremony** proceeded as a solemn Buddhist ritual as requested in Venerable Master Sheng Yen's will<sup>5</sup>.

According to Venerable Master Sheng Yen's testament, he stated "After my passing, do not issue the obituary notice, make offerings, build the grave, stupa, or monument, erect my statues, or collect my relics, if any...cremation, ash burial, and so forth."<sup>6</sup> On the **Ash-Burial Ceremony**, at the DDM Memorial Garden the five packages of ash were put in different holes in the ground, with one flower and a shovel of soil from five groups of followers. With the sound of Lotus Bell ringing around, all the faithful followers stately convened and walked around this garden to express their deep gratitude and feeling to the Venerable Master. Afterwards, all who

<sup>5</sup> <Last Will and Testament>Chan Magazine, Spring 2009, p.7 (written in 2004, translated into Eng.)

"7. DDM's Sangha is entrusted to carry out the instructions in my will. Please perform the ceremony for my death not as a funeral, but as a solemn Buddhist ritual."

<sup>6</sup> <Last Will and Testament>Chan Magazine, Spring 2009, p.6 (written in 2004, translated into Eng.)

attended were given a gift, a copy of the Venerable Master's calligraphy of Heart Sutra.

French historian Philippe Ariès stated in the book of *The Hour of Our Death*,<sup>7</sup> “The ritualization of death is a special aspect of the total strategy of man against nature, a strategy of prohibitions and concessions. This is why death has not been permitted its natural extravagance but has been imprisoned in ceremony, transformed into spectacle. This is also why it could not be a solitary adventure but had to be a public phenomenon involving the whole community.” Some might ask, “Why do the environmentalism have to do with Ash Burial and Bodhisattva Precepts?”

### **Environmentalism and Bodhisattva Precepts**

The concept of a Pure Land on Earth is similar to the idea of environmentalism nowadays, but how shall we accomplish it? In 1994 Venerable Master Sheng Yen advocated an environmentalism movement which is called the four kinds of environmentalism, and it consists of the protection of the spiritual environment, the social environment, living environment, and the nature environment.

Actually the “spirit” in **the protection of the spiritual environment** refers to the mind, and the spiritual environment protection is the essential teaching of the Buddha Dharma and it was proposed in 1992. There is a strong relationship between the claim that “When the mind is pure, the Buddha land is pure.” depicted in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* and the claim of “A Pure Land on Earth” in contemporary world. Based on this concept, Dharma Drum Mountain was founded and has advocated this vision in two verses “Uplift the character of humanity, and build a pure land on earth.” As for **the protection of the social environment**, Buddhism places great emphasis on etiquette, including observing the *vinaya*, maintaining deportment, and keeping precepts. In other words, observing rules and having etiquette are the fundamental practice of Buddhism. **Protecting the living environment** is part of actualizing Buddhism in daily life. Turning to **protection of the natural environment**, a person's body and mind are the result of direct karmic retribution and the environment he/she lives in is the circumstantial retribution. Direct and circumstantial retribution make up one's place of practice. Every person practices under the influence of his/her direct retribution within the result of his/her circumstantial retribution. Thus one must care for the environment just as one would for his/her own body. Thus the essential teaching of each of the four kinds of environmentalism is rooted in Buddhism.

Fortunately, during the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders held in 2000, Steven C. Rockefeller, who coordinated the draft of the Earth Charter for the Earth Charter Commission and Earth Council, invited

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<sup>7</sup> Translated by Helen Weaver, Oxford University Press, 1981

Venerable Master Sheng Yen to a meeting in recognition of his efforts and accomplishments in environmental protection. Master Sheng Yen committed his endorsement and expressed full support for the values outlined in the Earth Charter.<sup>8</sup> Nowadays, environment issues-such as global warming, energy resource shortage, environment pollution, population policy- make humankind to reflect the life styles to protect the Earth. The way to avoid the argument whether or not we are environmentalists is that we have to recognize the fact that the earth will perish someday like people's death and listen to our heart..

It is said in Buddhism, “If you want to know the past, just see what you are experiencing in this present life. If you want to know the future, just look at what you are doing right now in this present life.” If we do not create causes for continued troubles, we will leave no trace, even if we remain in the midst of the world. As *Mahāyāna*<sup>9</sup> (dàchéng or dàshèng 大乘 “Great Vehicle”) Buddhist practitioners, the purpose of our practice is to attain unsurpassed perfect enlightenment (S. *anuttarā-samyak-sambodhi*; wúsàng zhèngděng zhèngjué 無上正等正覺), or supreme Buddhahood. To achieve this exceedingly lofty goal, practitioners strive to cultivate wisdom (S. *jñāna*; shūohuì 修慧) and accumulate virtues and merits (S. *punya*; shūofú 修福). Through this twofold practice practitioners are able to bring spiritual benefit to themselves and to others. This practice is precisely the task of the bodhisattva practitioner as set forth in the bodhisattva precepts—the “Three Cumulative Pure Precepts” that faithful followers receive in the precept transmission ceremony at DDM. The Three Cumulative Pure Precepts is the well-known character of the Bodhisattva Precepts in Chinese Buddhism. They also enable us to foster an environment that is suitable to our overall wellbeing and spiritual growth.

The Bodhisattva Precept takes the contemplation on emptiness as its focus, the purification of mind as its objective and the arousing of ultimate *bodhi-citta* as basis. Therefore, not only can the Bodhisattva Precept encompass all Buddha dharmas but also conclude complicated matters in simple principles. The Three Cumulative Pure Precepts can be said to have three dimensions: 1. The precept of regulating behaviors, 2. The precept of doing goodness, and 3. The precept of benefiting all sentient beings. In other words, the three Cumulative Pure Precepts have three functions, i.e. not doing evil, doing goodness and benefiting the sentient beings.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/categories/Country/Taiwan/2009-04-22>

<sup>9</sup> Forms of Buddhism in which the ultimate goal is the attainment of Buddhahood and which are characterized by the worship of great bodhisattvas who are not present in non-Mahāyāna Buddhist worship. The origins of the Mahāyāna are the subject of studies and theories too numerous to outline here. It was the Mahāyāna schools of Buddhism that were transmitted most successfully to East Asia (China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan) and to northern South Asia and Inner Asia (Tibet, Mongolia, Nepal, Bhutan, parts of Russia and northern India).

<sup>10</sup> Venerable Master Sheng Yen <On the Adaptation to Time and Space of the Bodhisattva Precept-- from the Perspective of “Three Cumulative Pure Precepts”> Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal, 1993, 07

Similarly, one of the oldest and most venerable statements of the Buddhist path said in the *Dhammapada* “To refrain from engaging in any evil, to undertake to cultivate all that is good, and to pursue the purification of one’s own mind. This is the teaching of all the Buddhas.”<sup>11</sup> There are three aspects of the “Three Cumulative Pure Precepts”: the negative aspect that is designed to put a stop to evil; the positive aspect is that that requires one to undertake to cultivate all that is good; and the most profoundly aspect is to realize or perceive emptiness. In the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* (Fànwǎng jīng 梵網經), it says that the bodhisattva precepts are “the original source of all the Buddhas, the root of the bodhisattva, and the foundation of all children of the Buddha in the grand *saṅgha*.”<sup>12</sup> If one does not walk the bodhisattva path, one will never become a Buddha, even if one believes or has faith in the Buddha. If you want to walk the bodhisattva path, you must receive the bodhisattva precepts. Thus, the bodhisattva precepts are the original root-cause that enables all the Buddhas to realize their Buddhahood. So, The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (Huáyán jīng 華嚴經) says, “The precepts are the foundation of supreme enlightenment.”<sup>13</sup>

### The Approach To Repay The Earth

In the “*Tattvārtha*” chapter of the *Yogācārabhūmi Treatise*<sup>14</sup>, truth is called “reality” (S. *tattva*; C. zhēnshí 真實). Four broad categories of reality are discussed: Reality according to **worldly consent**, Reality accepted according to **logical reasoning**, Reality of cognitive activity purified of the **afflictive hindrances**, and Reality of cognitive activity purified of the **noetic hindrances**.<sup>15</sup> Buddhists accept all four types of reality discussed above as truths: it is just that some truths are more lofty and profound than others.

As Venerable Master Sheng Yen composed the verses in his will: “Busy without attaching, yet aging. Within emptiness, weeping, laughing. Intrinsically, there is no “I.” Life and death, thus cast aside.” The four types of reality are totally involved in his verses. Upon realizing the emptiness of self, one breaks off the afflictive hindrances and is liberated from *samsāra*; upon realizing the emptiness of phenomena, one breaks off the noetic hindrances and will not abide in *nirvāṇa*. In

<sup>11</sup> 「諸惡莫作，諸善奉行，自淨其意，是諸佛教。」 T04, no. 210, p. 567, b1-2

<sup>12</sup> T 1484: 24.997–1010

<sup>13</sup> T 279: 10.1–444, also called the *Flower Ornament Sūtra* or *Flower Adornment Sūtra*

<sup>14</sup> Quote from <1.7 What Are the Truths of Buddhism> Orthodox Chinese Buddhism, 2006, p.28

*Yogācārabhūmi Treatise*; Yúqiéshī dì lùn 瑜伽師地論, T 1579: 30.279–882.

<sup>15</sup> According to the terminology of the Consciousness-only school, two obstacles to spiritual practice, namely: (1) afflictive hindrances (S. *kleśa-āvaraṇa*; fǎnnǎo zhàng 煩惱障), afflictions stemming from clinging to self which hinder one’s realization of *nirvāṇa* and lead to involuntary rebirth within the three realms, and (2) noetic hindrances (S. *jñeyā-āvaraṇa*; suǒzhī zhàng 所知障), misperceptions of reality stemming from clinging to one’s previous understandings of Dharma, which hinder one from achieving full omniscience or Buddha-hood.

accordance with Venerable Master Sheng Yen's vow-"Although the universe may one day perish, yet my vows are eternal. What I am unable to accomplish in this life, I vow to push forward through countless future lives. What I am unable to accomplish personally, I exhort everyone to undertake together,"-we have experienced in the spirit of the "Three Cumulative Pure Precepts," making vows and setting out to spread the Buddha Dharma to benefit all sentient beings.

Via Ash Burial (without grave, stupa, or monument) at the Eco-Friendly Memorial Garden in DDM World Education Center, the fulfillment of the four kinds of environmentalism-consisting of the protection of the spiritual environment, the social environment, living environment, and the nature environment- is conveyed, demonstrated and becomes relevant to innumerable people all over the world, and it transcends the differences of nations, races, genders, or sects. This is one of the best approaches to repay the Earth at the end of life for each human being in the world.

## Healing Ecology

*Professor David Loy  
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*We are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness.* —Thich Nhat Hanh

*I came to realize clearly that mind is no other than mountains and rivers and the great wide earth, the sun and the moon and the stars.* —Dogen

Does Buddhism offer any special perspective on the ecological crisis? Do its teachings imply a different way of understanding the biosphere, and our relationship to it, at this critical time in history when we seem to be doing our utmost to destroy it?

This essay is motivated by the realization that there are important and precise parallels between our individual predicament, according to Buddhism, and the present situation of human civilization. Does this mean that there is also a parallel between the two solutions? Does the Buddhist response to our personal predicament also point the way to resolving our collective one?

If so, perhaps the ecological crisis is as much a spiritual challenge as a technological one.

### **The Individual Predicament**

The four noble truths are all about *dukkha*, for the Buddha emphasized that his only concern was ending *dukkha* (usually translated as “suffering”). To end my *dukkha*, however, I need to experience *anatta* -- my lack of self -- which seen from the other side is also my interdependence with all other things.

Buddhist teachings explain *anatta* in various ways, yet fundamentally it denies our separation from other people and, yes, from the rest of the natural world. Of course, each of us has a *sense* of self, but in contemporary terms that sense of self is a psychological and social construction, without any self-existence (*svabhava*) or reality of its own. The basic problem with this self is its delusive sense of duality. The construction of a separate self *inside* is also the construction of an “other” *outside* – an objective world that is different from me. What is special about the Buddhist perspective is its emphasis on the *dukkha* built into this situation. Basically, such a self *is* *dukkha*.

One way to describe this problem is that, since the sense of self is only a mental construct, it is always insecure. It can never secure itself because there's nothing *real* there that could be secured. The constructed self is better understood as a process – in fact, a work in progress, because it is never completed. Processes are always temporal, necessarily impermanent, but we don't want to be something that's changing all the time, vulnerable to illness, old age and death. We want to be *real*! So we keep trying to secure ourselves, usually in ways that just make our situation worse.

This is the core of the *ignorance* that Buddhism emphasizes. We spend so much of our time and energy attempting to stabilize something that cannot be stabilized – our delusive sense of self. We try to do this mainly by identifying with things “outside” us that (we think) can provide the grounding we crave: money, material possessions, reputation, power, physical attractiveness, and so forth. The tragedy, from a spiritual perspective, is that such attempts to solve the problem usually end up reinforcing the actual problem – the sense that there is a “me” that's separate from others, that *needs* to become more real. This means that, no matter how much money, etc., I may accumulate, I never seem to have enough.

What is the Buddhist solution to this predicament? Not to get rid of the self. That cannot be done, and does not need to be done, because there never was a self. We just need to “wake up” and see through the *illusion* of a separate self. The sense of self needs to be deconstructed and reconstructed. When it “lets go,” we awaken to realize our true nature: I am not *inside*, peering out at the objective world *out there*. Rather, “I” am what the whole world is doing, right here and now, at this particular place and time. Everyone else, too, is such a manifestation of the whole. Taking care of the whole, then, becomes as natural as taking care of my own leg.

This realization doesn't instantaneously solve all our personal problems, but it reveals how the sense of self can become more “permeable” and we relate to others in a less dualistic fashion, with the understanding that our own well-being ultimately cannot be distinguished from their well-being.

(The *bodhisattva* path of Mahayana Buddhism is often presented as a personal sacrifice: a bodhisattva could choose to leave the world and become a Buddha, yet he or she sticks around to help the rest of us. But there's another way to understand it. Following the bodhisattva path is simply a more advanced stage of spiritual practice: if I am not separate from other people, how can I be fully enlightened unless they are too?)

To summarize: the sense of self is not something self-existing and real but a psychological construction, which involves a sense of separation from others. Our deepest *dukkha* is that we *feel* disconnected from the rest of the world, and this

*feeling* is always uncomfortable, because insecure. We do many things that (we hope) will make us feel more real, yet they often have the opposite effect: they reinforce that sense of separation. No matter what we have or do, it's never enough. While we cannot get rid of a self that doesn't exist, we do need to "wake up" and realize it is delusive. This resolves the existential question about the meaning of one's life: realizing my nonduality with the world frees me to live as I choose, but that will naturally be a way that contributes to the well-being of the whole, since I am a manifestation of that whole.

Amazingly, this Buddhist account of the individual's predicament corresponds precisely to our ecological predicament today.

### **Our Collective Situation**

The issue is whether "separate self = *dukkha*" also holds true for our biggest collective sense of self: the duality between us as a species, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, and the rest of the biosphere.

We not only have individual senses of self, we also have group selves. I'm not only David Loy, I am male, American, Caucasian, and so forth. Just as one's individual sense of self tends to be problematic, so collectives senses of self are often problematical, because they too distinguish those of us *inside* from those who are *outside*: men from women, American from Russians (or is it now Chinese?), etc. and, of course, those of us who are inside are better than those outside.

For there to be a parallel between the individual sense of self and humanity's collective sense of self, the following must be true:

1. Human civilization is a construct.
2. This construct has led to a collective sense of alienation from the natural world, which causes *dukkha*.
3. This *dukkha* involves a collective anxiety about what it means to be human – that is, a fundamental confusion about what we as a species should be doing.
4. Our response to that alienation and anxiety – the collective attempt to secure or "self-ground" ourselves technologically and economically – is making things worse.
5. We cannot "return to nature" because we have never left it, but we need to realize our nonduality with the rest of the biosphere, and what that implies.

6. This will resolve our collective existential problem about what it means to be human. With us the biosphere becomes self-conscious. Our role today is to heal it, and thereby ourselves.

The first claim, that human civilization is something we have constructed, is a truism today, yet it is not something most pre-modern, traditional societies understood. The West owes that insight to classical Greece, which distinguished *nomos* -- the conventions of human society (including culture, technology, etc.) -- from *physis*, the natural patterns of the physical world. The Greeks realized that, unlike the natural world, *whatever is social convention can be changed*: we can reorganize our own societies and in that way (attempt to) determine our own destiny. Plato, for example, offered detailed plans to restructure the Greek city-state in two of his dialogues, the *Republic* and the *Laws*.

Today it is difficult for us to understand that traditional societies didn't realize this distinction between nature and social convention. Without our sense of historical development, and therefore future possibility, most premodern peoples accepted their own social conventions as inevitable, because just as natural as their local ecosystems. Rulers might be overthrown, but new rulers took their place at the top of the social pyramid, which was also a religious pyramid: kings were gods or godlike because they had a special role to play in placating the transcendent powers that supervised the created world. Often humans served an important function in keeping the cosmos going: the Aztecs, for example, required mass human sacrifice because blood was needed to keep the sun-god on his correct course through the heavens.

Understanding one's own society as natural justified social arrangements that we now view as unacceptable. But there was nevertheless a psychological benefit in thinking that way: such cultures shared a collective sense of *meaning* that we have lost today. For them, the meaning of their lives was built into the cosmos and revealed by their religion, both of which they took for granted. For us, in contrast, the meaning of our lives and our societies has become something that we have to determine for ourselves in a universe whose meaningfulness (if any) is no longer obvious. Even if we choose to be religious, we must decide between various possibilities, which diminishes the spiritual security that exclusive religious affiliation traditionally provided. While we enjoy freedoms that pre-modern societies did not provide, the price of that freedom is losing their kind of "social security": the basic psychological comfort that comes from knowing one's place and role in society and in the world.

In other words, part of the rich cultural legacy that the Greeks bequeathed the West—for better and worse—is an increasing anxiety about who we are and what it means to be human. Loss of faith in God has left us rudderless, collectively as well as

individually. Thanks to ever more powerful technologies, it seems like we can accomplish almost anything we want to do—yet we don't know what our role is, what we *should* do. What sort of world do we want to live in? What kind of society should we have? If we cannot depend on God or godlike rulers to tell us, we are thrown back upon ourselves, and our lack of any grounding greater than ourselves is a profound source of *dukkha*.

To sum up, our collective sense of separation from the natural world has become an ongoing source of frustration. The stronger our alienation from nature, the greater our anxiety. What has been our collective response to this predicament?

Remember how we usually react to our individual predicament. I try to make my anxious sense of self “inside” more real by becoming attached to things in the “outside” world, such as money, fame, and power. But no matter how much of them I may acquire, I never seem to have enough, because they cannot allay the basic anxiety, which stems from the inherent insecurity of the sense of self. Such “solutions” reinforce the problem, which is the sense of separation or distance between myself and others . . . Is there a collective parallel to these sorts of compulsions?

When we ask the question in this way, the answer becomes obvious. What motivates our attitude towards economic growth and technological development? When will we consume *enough*? When will our mega-corporations be profitable enough? When will our Gross National Product be large enough? When will we have all the technology we need? Why is *more* always *better* if it is never *enough*?

The point is that technology and economic growth in themselves cannot resolve the basic human problem about the meaning of our lives. Since we are not sure how else to solve that problem, however, they have become a collective substitute, forms of secular salvation that we seek but never quite attain, because *means* have become *ends*. Since we don't really know where we want to go, or what we should value, we have become obsessed with ever-increasing control.

Lacking the security that comes from knowing one's place and role in the cosmos, we have been trying to create our own security. Modern technology, in particular, has become our collective attempt to dominate the conditions of our existence. In effect, we have been trying to remold the earth so that it is completely adapted to serve our purposes, until everything becomes subject to our will, a “resource” that we can use. Ironically, though, this has not been providing the sense of security and meaning that we seek. We are becoming more anxious, not less.

If these parallels are valid – an accurate description of our collective situation -- something like the ecological crisis is inevitable. Sooner or later we must bump up against the limits of this compulsive but doomed project of endless growth and never-

enough control. And if our increasing reliance on technology as the solution to such problems is itself a symptom of this larger problem, the ecological crisis requires more than a technological response (although technological changes are certainly necessary, of course). Increasing dependence on sophisticated, ever more powerful technologies tends to aggravate our sense of separation from the natural world, whereas any successful solution (if the parallel still holds) must involve recognizing that we are an integral part of the natural world. That also means embracing our responsibility for the welfare of the biosphere, because its well-being ultimately cannot be distinguished from our own well-being. Understood properly, humanity's taking care of the earth's rainforests is like me taking care of my own leg. Sound familiar?

Does this solution involve "returning to nature"? That would be like getting rid of the self: something neither possible nor desirable. We cannot return to nature because we have never left it. The environment is not merely an "environment" – that is, the place where we happen to live. Rather, the biosphere is the ground from which and within which we arise. In us and as us, nature becomes self-conscious. The earth is not only our home, it is our mother. In fact, our relationship is even more intimate, because we can never cut the umbilical cord. Individually, the air in my lungs, like the water and food that enter my mouth and pass through my digestive system, is part of a greater system that circulates through me. My life is a dissipative process that depends upon and contributes to that never-ending circulation. The same is true collectively. Our waste products do not disappear when we find somewhere else to dump them. The world is big enough that we may be able to ignore such problems for a while, but what goes around eventually comes around. If we befoul our own nest, there is nowhere else to go.

According to this understanding, our problem is not technology itself but the obsessive ways that we have been motivated to exploit it. Without those motivations, we would be able to evaluate our technologies better, in light of the ecological problems they have contributed to, as well as the ecological solutions they might contribute to. Given all the long-term risks associated with nuclear power, for example, I cannot see that as anything but a short-sighted solution to our energy needs. In place of fossil fuels, the answer will have to be renewable sources of natural power (solar, wind, etc.), along with a radically reduced need for energy. As long as we assume the necessity for continuous economic and technological expansion, the prospect of such a steep reduction in our energy needs is absurd. A new understanding of our basic situation opens up other possibilities.

How does this resolve the basic anxiety that haunts us today, because we must create our own meaning in a world where God has died? Like it or not, individual and collective self-consciousness distances us from pre-modern

worldviews and the “natural” meaning-of-life they provided. Nor would we want to return to such constrictive worldviews—often maintained by force—even if we could. But what other alternatives are possible for us?

Remember that following the Buddhist path frees us from the individual compulsion to secure ourselves *within* the world. One does not need to become more real by becoming wealthy, or famous, or powerful, or beautiful. That is not because one identifies with some other spiritual realm. Rather, we realize our nonduality with this world when we are able to let go of such attachments.

How does that affect the meaning of one’s life? The bodhisattva’s vow: “Although living beings are numberless, I vow to save them all.” He or she assumes the grandest possible role, one that can never come to an end. Such a commitment is not compulsory, yet it flows naturally from realizing that none of those beings is separate from oneself.

This suggests a final parallel between the personal and the collective. Given the ecological crises that have already begun, our species needs to become the collective bodhisattva of the biosphere. Humanity will discover the meaning it seeks in the ongoing, long-term task of repairing the rupture between mother earth and us. That healing will transform us as much as the biosphere.

**A Study of the Integrated Relief Strategy Adopted by Buddhist Organizations  
after Wenchuan Earthquake and Its Social Effects**  
**- With a Case Study of Chongqing Huayan Monastery**

*Li Hujiang & Wang Hongmei<sup>1</sup>*

**Introduction:**

The 8-magnitude earthquake that devastated Wenchuan in China's Sichuan province on May 12, 2008 was a great disaster, which caused heavy losses both in human lives and property. The death toll has exceeded 100,000; more than 20,000,000 people have been affected and the direct economic loss hits as high as 843.7 billion RMB. <sup>2</sup>So far, there are still numerous people suffering from the aftermath of the earthquake--physical wounds and psychological trauma, which go even beyond material losses. How to solve this crisis? What roles have Buddhist groups played after the quake? In what ways are they different from other relief organizations? Is their social relief effective? In many people's eyes, Buddhist ideas are negative and passive and lack support to social development. However, in the earthquake relief, the Buddhist organizations have made a large amount of donations and volunteered a lot to assist in the quake-struck areas, which reveals an active approach of being involved in worldly affairs. With the Buddhist spirit of tolerance and enduring hardships, the Buddhist organizations have conducted successfully an integrated relief strategy and practiced the way of the bodhisattva as taught in Buddhism, which brings in positive influence to society both materially and spiritually.

The integrated relief strategy conducted by Buddhist organizations is multi-leveled and all-dimensional. It comes from rich experiences accumulated in social relief by Buddhist organizations, especially Taiwan Tzu Chi Compassionate Relief Foundation<sup>3</sup>. Based on its advanced and comprehensive guidelines for international emergent relief, and the relief experiences in Taiwan 9.21 earthquake, Tzu Chi divides the relief work of Wenchuan earthquake into three stages: first, emergent relief, i.e., material assistance and medical treatment; second, mid-term relief, mainly

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<sup>2</sup> Yang Boming, "Experiences and Lessons in Wenchuan Earthquake Relief of Sichuan Religious Circles," speech in Disasters, Crises and Buddhist Charity & the 2nd Forum on Religion and Charity, 25 Nov, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Buddhist organization set up by Master Zhengyan in 1966 in Taiwan, worldly renowned for its charity work.

psychological aid; and third, long-term relief, i.e., rebuilding and arrangement for future life. The integrated relief strategy for the earthquake conducted by Buddhist organizations refers to the three-leveled relief as discussed above.

The paper will discuss the integrated relief strategy conducted by Buddhist organizations after Wenchuan earthquake from the three aspects and its effectiveness, with a case study of Huayan Monastery. Huayan Monastery is the largest monastery in Chongqing Municipal, southwest of China. Master Daojian took the position of abbot in Mar., 2005; and since then has conducted effective management and resources integration methods, carried on social interactions actively and made a lot of beneficial contributions. He was awarded for his deeds in charity by International Charity Forum in Jan., 2008.

### **Part I. Material Assistance**

1. To collect social resources and provide material aid to the quake-struck areas.

This is to help directly with the immediate difficulties faced by the victims and shows the spirit of Buddhist compassion and the practices of the paramita of giving (*dana*).

When the earthquake occurred, many towns and villages were razed to the ground just in a second; a lot of roads were blocked and the communications were knocked out. As many buildings toppled down, a large number of people under the ruins were anxiously awaiting rescue, while the survivors were badly in need of medicine, treatment and shelters. At this moment, what the earthquake victims needed most was a great deal of material assistance: warm food, clean drinking water, tents as well as a large amount of medicine. As an old Chinese saying goes, “when disaster struck, help came from all sides”; people from all walks of life responded quickly to the news of the earthquake and provided strong support and relief. Among them, there is a unique community—the Buddhists.

As *Chongqing Business News* reports, “Soon after the Wenchuan earthquake occurred, Master Daojian, who was just going to another city to teach Buddhist Dharma, on hearing of the news, got up in the midnight to write an article entitled *A Violent Earthquake Took Place in Wenchuan; Tens of Thousands of Fellows Killed* in his blog. He called for donations from Buddhist organizations at home and abroad. Donglin Monastery in Jiangxi Province decided to donate goods worth of 500,000 RMB just on the same day. Through proposing in his blog and other means, he raised funds and goods worth of over 4,000,000 RMB for the quake-struck areas.”<sup>4</sup> The

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<sup>4</sup> Chongqing Business News, p. 17, 13 Feb, 2009.

major monasteries around China were also actively involved. Buddhist monks and nuns called on the adherents for fund raising. “Friends from Buddhist circles in mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan donated totally about 200,000,000 RMB<sup>5</sup> to the quake-hit areas.” The donations were used promptly to purchase urgently needed goods, which were transferred to the quake-struck areas and handed out to the victims timely.

Religion has strong function in social integration, which refers to the collection and integration of various elements in social existence and development. Religion is able to integrate different individuals, groups and social forces and therefore be beneficial to social development.<sup>6</sup> In Buddhism, although in observance of Buddhist monastic laws, monks and nuns don't possess private properties; the Buddhist sangha still has great strength for integrating and calling on the public owing to their unworldly approach and diligent religious practice. After the earthquake occurred, Huayan Monastery called on various social circles to either make donations or volunteer to help. Just to set a few examples, Hong Kong film star Yung Ewong donated to the quake-hit areas through Huayan Cultural and Educational Foundation; Yang Zhao, president of Hong Kong Xuri Group donated to Huayan Monastery for earthquake relief; besides, Master Daojian invited the eminent Buddhist Master Haitao in Taiwan to a large Buddhist assembly for donation-raising. These examples show the great social integration function of Buddhist organizations.

These humanistic assistances to the earthquake victims are well in accordance with Buddhist compassion. There are six paramitas in Buddhism, i.e. the ways of practicing; they are *dana*, charity or giving; *shila*, keeping the commandments; *ksanti*, patience under insult; *virya*, zeal and progress; *dhyana*, meditation or contemplation; *prajna*, wisdom. Among them, the paramita of giving or charity is at the first place. In fact, the practice of being willing to give is well emphasized in Chinese Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism. The idea of giving well reveals the spirit of Buddhist compassion, which could lead people get rid of greed and make contributions to society; through this way, the Buddhist practitioners also transform from mere self-delivering to salvation of others.

2. To take part in the relief work in person. This is to offer direct helps and boost morale; it shows the spirit of the bodhisattva way in Mahayana Buddhism.

It is said that of the relief workers in the earthquake-struck areas, there were three kinds especially noticeable, who wore different uniforms. They were the PLA (People's Liberation Army) soldiers wearing green, medical and nursing staff in

<sup>5</sup> Zhang Shijiang, “Religious Approach to Disasters and Crises,” in Anthology in Disasters, Crises and Buddhist Charity, Xiamen(Nan Putuo Monastery, Nov., 2008), 1st edition.

<sup>6</sup> Wang Xiaozhao, 15 Fundamental Lectures on Religious Studies, (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2003), 1st edition, p. 223.

white gowns, and Buddhist monks in yellow. For the Buddhist monks, it is especially worth mentioning of the Sangha Rescue Team of Huayan Monastery. During the course of earthquake rescue and relief, they fought in the front line to save the lives and properties of the victims regardless of their own safety. There was once a team in history named Chongqing Sangha Rescue Team during the period of China's anti-Japanese war (in 1930's and 40's), which was set up to support the war in answer to the call of the then eminent Buddhist Master Taixu. At that time, more than 30 students of Chongqing Huayan Buddhist Academy and over 10 monks from Huayan Monastery joined the Rescue Team. They made their contribution to help ordinary people who suffered a lot in the war. In the present day of peace, the Sangha Rescue Team led by Master Daojian appeared in the time most needed by the country and people when natural disaster befell. *Bodhi Monthly (Vol. 4)*<sup>7</sup> had a report on this entitled *Modern "Sangha Rescue Team" in Earthquake Relief*. It says, "At the time of this report is published, Master Daojian has led his relief team doing assistance work in Beichuan County, Dabu Village in Pingwu County, which were most severely struck. This is the first Buddhist relief team entering the core disaster areas after Sichuan earthquake. It is rare for a non-government relief team to assist in such a huge area and help so many victims. They are kindly called the Modern Sangha Rescue Team." At the time of danger and crisis, Buddhists endeavor to work in the forefront--this reflects Buddhist spirit to benefit all sentient beings and practice the way of the bodhisattva.

It is propagated in the Mahayana Buddhism that the adherents should cultivate compassion as well as wisdom and practice in real life besides studying the Dharma. However, the idea is more said than really practiced. No matter how nice the theory is, without putting it into practice, the fundamental concern of the Mahayana school, i.e., universal salvation cannot really be promoted; therefore, the basis of the Mahayana Buddhism should be real practice in life with compassion. In fact, recognition of Buddhism from the public is largely decided by the approach of Buddhist adherents to care for society and solve crisis. In solving social crisis, the key point is how much and in what way Buddhism is involved, which is also the basic way to shorten the distance between Buddhism and society. Humanistic Buddhism has been propagating active involvement in social affairs; which intends to show the social values of Mahayana Buddhism. The various actions of Buddhist organizations in the relief could be viewed as a way of such active participation, which is both practice of Mahayana Buddhism and a way to shorten the distance between Buddhism and society; in this way, Buddhism reveals its social values in concrete actions during the participation of disaster relief.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Bodhi Monthly*, Vol. 4, Special Edition on Wenchuan Earthquake, 1 Jun., 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Interview on Pro. Duan Yuming of Institute on Daoism and Religious Culture in Sichuan University by Li Huijiang, 2 Mar., 2009.

## Part II. Psychological and Spiritual Aid

Because of the religious holiness represented by Buddhist monks and nuns, they are prone to offer spiritual comfort to the victims in great disasters. The various Buddhist rites such as *Xizai* (Buddhist rites to reduce calamities) and *Qifu* (Buddhist rites to pray for blessings) can bring peace to people's mind and have good effects in psychological healing.

When answering the question of a reporter from ifeng.com that "where to start the relief work", Master Daojian put special emphasis on psychological caring. He said, "Firstly, initiated by Yang Zhao from Hong Kong Xuri Group, Huayan Monastery held a 3-day *Xizai* assembly and a 7-day *Chaodu* assembly (Buddhist rites to release the deceased from suffering). More than 170 monks from Chongqing including Chongqing Buddhist Academy came to join the assemblies. They concentrated all their minds on the rites of *Chaodu* for the people killed in Wenchuan earthquake and prayed for blessings for the survivors. The activities actually have very strong effects of psychological solace for the victims. Secondly, we went to the frontline to do *Chaodu* for the dead; we set our feet on almost all the most severely struck areas, including Beichuan Middle School (the school severely hit with two buildings collapsed and over 1,000 students and teachers killed). We did *Chaodu* and *Fang Yankou* (Buddhist rites to feed hungry ghosts) especially for them. We used these simplest but most sincere Buddhist ways to comfort the victims. Lastly, we also organized some psychology professionals to go to the quake-hit areas and do counseling for those victims with psychological problems."

According to the researches on the psychology of religion, religion has the function of psychological adjustment. "The psychological adjustment function of religion refers to the function of a religious belief to change the adherents' mental state from unbalancing to comparative equilibrium; and subsequently to achieve a state of harmony in their psychology, physiology and actions.....The universal spirit of religion and sense of holiness of human beings is an important level of human spiritual existence and an important part of humanity. This is the source of the psychological adjustment function of religion."<sup>9</sup> M. J. Meadow and R. D Kahoe, in their *Psychology of Religion*, compare religion to a *refuge*, where people could search for spiritual solace in the holy field and eliminate pains in their mind at the time of their mental and physical imbalance.<sup>10</sup>

The ultimate concern of religious belief is of special significance for the survivors after great disasters. As points out by Zhang Shijiang in *Religious*

<sup>9</sup> Wang Xiaozhao, 15 Fundamental Lectures on Religious Studies, (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2003), 1st edition, p. 227.

<sup>10</sup> M. J. Meadow and R. D Kahoe, trans. Chen Linshu et al., *Psychology of Religion*, (Chengdu: Sichuan People's Press, 1990), p.523

*Approach to Disasters and Crises*, “Facing natural and man-made disasters and crises, especially natural disasters, it requires the participation of various social circles for emergent assistance and relief. Religion and its charity organizations cannot only be able to offer material assistances, but also make full use of their advantage to provide efficient psychological solace and healing; and thus play an active role in carrying on psychological caring and maintaining stability and harmonious development of the local society after the disaster. In any disasters and crises, when facing death and healing of trauma for survivors, it is far from enough only to offer material assistances; and there is no manpower, material resources nor any other organizations, no matter how strong they may be, could substitute the ultimate concern of religious belief and the hope it brings to survivors.”

Besides, Zhang Shijiang points out that after Tangshan earthquake and Taiwan 9.21 earthquake, the rates of suicide and depression were high; he also mentioned the suicide case of Dong Yufei<sup>11</sup>, a government official of Beichuan and the high depression rate among those who lost their relatives to highlight the importance and necessity of psychological rebuilding (including psychological assistance, guidance and intervention) after great disasters. “The force of the spiritual, compassion and great love as well as the ultimate concern of religious belief can be of effective healing function for the victims and their families, and also bring hope to them and rebuild their confidence.”<sup>12</sup>

The example of Master Daojian, abbot of Huayan Monastery, is very typical. His birth place, Siping village in Chenjiaba, Beichuan County is one of the most severely hit areas. After the earthquake, he lost 5 close relatives, namely, his sister, brother-in-law, a niece, an aunt and a nephew. In his whole kin, 26 relatives were killed. In the whole village of Siping, there were only 4 survivors except those who had gone working outside. When interviewed by a reporter, Master Daojian held back his grief and said, “The earthquake has destroyed my hometown. 26 of my relatives were lost. The village is in ruins. Even my parents’ tombs were buries. Although I lost my relatives, people in the quake-struck areas are also my brothers and sisters; the victims are my families and folks! It is incumbent on me to help them,

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<sup>11</sup> Dong Yufei, director of the agricultural office and earthquake relief office of Beichuan government, committed suicide in his temporary residence on 3 Oct, 2008. Dong, a survivor in the earthquake, is the first government officer committed suicide after the earthquake. He lost his son, nephew and sister-in-law in the earthquake. As analyzed by Beichuan government, there are three main causes to his suicide: “the only son killed in the earthquake, high stress in work and depression.” Referred in: Zhang Shijiang, *Religious Approach to Disasters and Crises*. The letter left by Dong to his younger brother Dong Zhuokai is as follows: “Brother Zhuokai, I feel too much stress in work and life every day from earthquake relief to victim settlement and rebuilding. I cannot bear anymore. I wish to have a good rest. I am sorry to leave our parents and your sister-in-law (Dong Yufei’s wife) to you alone to take care of after I leave. Goodbye to my parents and my parents-in-law on my knees.” Referred in: Wuwei, “Suicide of Dong Yufei in Beichuan,” in *New Century weekly*, Vol, 30 (2008).

<sup>12</sup> Zhang Shijiang, “Religious Approach to Disasters and Crises,” in *Anthology in Disasters, Crises and Buddhist Charity*, Xiamen(Nan Putuo Monastery, Nov., 2008), 1st edition.

which also makes me feel some happiness in the grief. I sincerely wish my folks could get through the difficulties as soon as possible.”<sup>13</sup> “If my death could relieve the pains of the victims, I would rather die without any regret.” These words come from his heart and express the compassion of the master. He has to bear, as others, deep grief on the loss of so many relatives; however, his profound Buddhist cultivation and a broad mind makes him sublimate his own grief: he hold back the grief for the sake of the masses and do whatever he could for the victims as if they were his own families. Through Buddhist ideas of compassion and great love, Master Daojian transforms his grief into great force to benefit society. In Buddhism, there is a teaching to the disciples of repaying the four kindnesses, namely, first, the kindness of one’s country, who provides protection and shields him/her from dangers; second, the kindness of one’s fellow people, who provides him/her with material necessities for physical existence; third, the kindness of one’s parents, who give birth to him/her and raised him/her up; four, the kindness of the Buddha, who converts him/her and teaches him/her the great Dharma. When a great disaster befalls, it is the right time for the Buddhists to repay the kindnesses. Master Daojian, through his own actions, gives these Buddhist ideas an interpretation in real life. The idea of repaying the kindnesses also becomes a theoretical basis for the interaction between Buddhism and society.

Therefore, during the Chinese Spring festival vocation in 2009, the Buddhist Association of Mianyang city, Sichuan Province set up a temporary Buddhist life caring station in Renjiaping, Beichuan County to provide psychological caring for those who came to mourn and hold memorial ceremonies for their dead relatives during the vocation. The deeds were strongly supported and warmly advised by the Nationalities and Religion Bureaus of both Mianyang and Beichuan. After the station was established, “people paid a lot of attention on it. Those who came for mourning came to pray for *Chaodu* of the dead and blessings for the survivors before the solemn and compassionate-looking images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. They also asked for Buddhist teachings from the monks at the station and confided to them the pains deep in their hearts. The monks comforted and advised them kindly and provided them for free the incense and candles for memorial ceremonies, small recorders reciting Buddhas’ names, Buddhist rosaries and books, etc. The monks also conducted a questionnaire survey in order to know the demand on religious belief of the public, which is to provide some foundation for the reconstruction of religious culture in Beichuan.”<sup>14</sup> These measures in psychological caring have achieved good results, “Through patient advice, kind comforts and words of wisdom by the

<sup>13</sup> Zhang Xiaoling, “Boundless Great Love—for My Beloved Families and Fellows,” in Wen Wei Po, Hong Kong, 12 Jun., 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Mourning for Dead Relatives in Beichuan in the Spring Festival: Buddhist Ideas come to the Earthquake-Struck Areas, ifeng.com, 2 Feb., 2009.

Buddhist monks in the life caring station, a lot of victims in Beichuan have had some expectations and hopes for the new life.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Part III. Long-Term Assistance**

Long-term assistance refers to rebuilding and long-term development of the quake-hit areas. The effects of such a great disaster as the Wenchuan earthquake would be long-term. The emergent assistances can solve immediate difficulties, but when the survivors are confronted with the bleak prospects, they would easily lose their courage for life or even choose suicide. Therefore, effective long-term assistant plans are indispensable such as sustaining relief, rebuilding production and life facilities, which are to make the survivors see the good prospects of the future.

As long-term assistance is a key link in earthquake relief, Buddhist organizations like Huayan Monastery have been carrying on sustaining relief work in cooperation with the government after many relief groups have left the quake-struck areas. There are totally 6 relief teams sent by Huayan Monastery, i.e., immediate relief team, medical and nursing team, epidemic and disease prevention team, psychological relief team, material relief team and education aid team. The first three teams played important roles in emergent relief period; while the last three have the function of sustaining relief in mid-term and long-term periods. To take material relief for example, after the earthquake, Huayan Monastery has started a long-term plan for material relief and sent goods and materials to the quake-struck areas for tens of times. The nearest time is in 17 and 18 Jan., 2009, when Chongqing Huanyan Cultural and Educational Foundation, in cooperation with Taiwan Life TV (a TV station set up by eminent Buddhist Master Haitao) sent goods worth of 100,000 RMB they had raised to Qushan Town, Chenjiaba Village of Beichuan County, Chaping Village of An County, and the orphans' school of Dafo Monastery in Santai County. For education aid, the teacher aid team of Huanyan Cultural and Educational Foundation has been to Chenjiaba and warmly welcomed by the teachers, students as well as the whole public.<sup>16</sup>

In conclusion, during the earthquake relief, Buddhist organizations have played an active role in various fields including immediate relief, holding religious rituals, as well as sustaining relief and long-term caring.

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<sup>15</sup> Same as above.

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.fowg.cn/hyzz/HTML/hyzz\\_34300.html](http://www.fowg.cn/hyzz/HTML/hyzz_34300.html)

## Conclusion

The disastrous consequences brought by the Wenchuan earthquake are of several levels. In general, there are 3 levels: first, material losses, such as buildings collapsed and economy-supportive industries destroyed; second, life losses, injury and disability of the survivors; third, long-term psychological trauma, pessimism in future life and rebuilding, and even loss of courage for life.

The corresponding relief strategies are: first, material relief. After the news of the earthquake was broadcast, various social groups, individuals, including Buddhist organizations and adherents have been providing timely material assistances and relief to the victims. All governmental and non-governmental organizations are able to provide this relief and achieve fine results. Second, for physical harms, including injuries, diseases and possible epidemics, medical staff offer their assistances. Those two aspects belong to the stage of emergent assistance. Third, however, psychological trauma and pessimism will be lingering for a very long time and cannot be cured radically within a short time. Without effective prevention, there might be some bad outcomes. For example, for one luckily survived the earthquake, he/she might be unable to survive the later life and even choose suicide when he/she knows many relatives and friends have died; recalls the frightful experiences in the earthquake and sees the despairing future prospects. Dong Yufei as discussed above is such a case. This aspect belongs to the mid-term and long-term stages for psychological aid and long-term assistance. Material assistance and physical treatment are indispensable but not enough for the earthquake relief. The thoroughly effective way is to help the victims get out of the shadow and trauma of the disaster, and see hope of life and good prospects of the future.

The relief from a certain organization is usually single-dimensional, for example, the PLA soldiers are responsible for saving lives from the ruins and repairing roads and bridges; the medical staff are in charge of treating the wounded; the Red Cross directs the raising and allocation of relief funds, etc. Different organizations are responsible for different aspects of earthquake relief based on the responsibilities of their own. As every organization has its own responsibility and ideas, the assistance it offers is only single-dimensional, which is indispensable but insufficient to the whole relief.

Meanwhile, the participation of Buddhist organizations into the relief could be all-dimensional and integrated in all the three levels; supported by Buddhist ideas and credos. This integrated relief strategy has the unique advantages of Buddhist communities, which other social organizations can hardly achieve. Firstly, the Buddhist organization can collect social resources effectively through its social influence to provide material aid to the disaster-struck areas. It can also participate in relief work in person. Secondly, it is able to bring comfort and peace to the victims'

mind and offers psychological aid by means of Buddhist teachings and Buddhist assemblies and rites. Last but not the least, it provides sustaining assistance and long-term caring. This integrated social relief strategy of Buddhist organizations are proved effective by the practices in Weichuan earthquake relief.

## **Integration of Dharma Principles towards Enhancing Environmental Quality and Community Development**

*Suryo W. Prawiroatmodjo*

### **Background:**

Conditions of the environment are at critical stages with various threats: global warming, acid rain, drought, flood, typhoons, land slides/erosions, tsunamis and many other kinds of environmental devastation. It creates and links to further problems and disasters: hunger, diseases, poverty, violence; all lead towards bad conditions. It happens at all around the globe. There should be serious action taken to overcome, if human wants to stop all these sufferings.

The Great Dharma Guru, Buddha has given guidelines since 2500 years ago, on how and what should be done to overcome the sufferings. But, in fact development and modernity makes people turn into *lobha*, *moha* and *dosa*, which are the main cause of environment destruction. From things that are considered as “simple and small”, such as: throwing garbage and waste without any consideration, to more serious things: wasting energy, excessive use of chemicals and poisonous matters (pesticide, drugs etc.), exploitation of nature and natural resources.

Almost every ecosystem exists on earth faces the threat from human actions which have caused serious environmental problems, such as:

*Natural ecosystems* - tropical forests are extensively exploited. Deforestation already reach alarming situation causing desertification, climate change and global warming. Wild life turns into extinction, already thousand are gone for ever according to the IUCN – Red Data Book. Desertification, illegal logging, excessive mining are of the biggest problems.

*Agricultural systems* using pesticide, chemical fertilizers, hormones and other unhealthy ways already proven make serious illnesses and deformation on human and animals.

*Urban environment* has the most serious threats from almost all sectors; from inside the house: at the kitchen, food preparation using chemical spices, coloring; bath room and other rooms all containing chemical that might be poisonous, particularly for youngsters. Outside the house, the air is full with pollutants, creating hazardous air to threaten health. Also with water, from up the springs, water is already polluted with various substances, both chemically and biologically.

*Industries:* have no proper treatment yet, produce waste water, dumping hazardous and poisonous waste, also polluting the air.

All of these matters bring difficulties into social life, causing misery - many people suffer.

### **Basic principles and problems of the environment:**

There are several basic elements within the environment: abiotic factors, such as air, water, soil and energy; and biotic factors (living organism), such as plants, animals and humans.

The whole elements inter mixed in complex and complicated interactions created life on earth. All depends on two fundamental processes: matter cycling and the one flow of high quality energy from the sun, through materials and living things on or near the earth's surface and into space as low quality heat.

All forms of life depend for that existence on the multitude on materials that compose the:

1. solid lithosphere, consisting of the upper surface or crust on the earth, containing soil and deposits of matter and energy resources, and an inner mantle and core,
2. gaseous atmosphere extending above the earth's surface
3. hydrosphere, containing all of the earth's moisture as liquid water, ice and small amounts of water vapor in the atmosphere
4. biosphere, consisting of parts of the lithosphere, atmosphere, and hydrosphere in which living organisms can be found.

Human life and other forms of life whose existence we can threaten also depend on the culture-sphere: the use of human ingenuity and knowledge based on past experiences to extract, produce and manage the use of matter, energy and biological resources to enhance human survival and life quality. A major input of ecology into the culture-sphere is that all forms of life are directly or indirectly inter connected. This means that to enhance long term human survival and life quality, we must not blindly destroy other forms of plant and animal life – we must learn to work with, not against nature.

(Miller pp. 68 – 69)

### **Growth/development of environmental problems:**

Human have been able to gain increasing control over nature through a series of major *culture changes*. For several million years a small number of people lived in small, scattered groups of *hunters gatherers*. Their environmental impact was small and localized because of their small numbers, dependence on their own muscle power, and limited technology. They were examples of *human in nature* who learned to survive by cooperating with nature and with one another.

About 10.000 years ago people in various parts of the world began learning how to domesticate wild animals and cultivate wild plant. The gradual spread of this major, cultural change, known as the *Agriculture Revolution*, resulted in significant population growth, urbanization, trade between farmers and city dwellers, the rise of armies and war leaders as ownership of land and water rights became valuable economic resources, and the rise of a new class of powerless slaves, minorities, and landless peasants who were forced to do hard, disagreeable work.

The rise and spread of these *agriculture-based urban societies* led to massive clearing of forests, plowing of grassland, soil erosion, and diversion of surface waters for irrigation and urban water supplies, and to a growing number of people who viewed themselves as *humans against nature* distinct from and apart from the rest of nature with the goal of conquering and subduing nature for their purposes.

The next major cultural change, known as the *Industrial Revolution*, began in England around 1760, when people invented machines that could harness large amounts of energy derived from the burning of coal and later oil, natural gas, and uranium. Since then, the gradual transformation of *early industrialized societies* to the *advanced industrialized societies* in today's MDCs (more developed countries) has led to significant increases in average energy use, agricultural productivity, life expectancy, GNP per person, and urbanization, and to a decline in the rate of population growth. As humans have gained increasing control over nature, they have had a greatly increased environmental impact. (Miller pp. 42)

### **Awareness to maintain life:**

Some Basic Belief Most people in industrialized countries hold an attitude toward nature that can be expressed in eight basic beliefs:

- Humans are the source of all value (anthropocentric). We are apart from and above nature.
- Nature exists only for our use. Our role is to conquer and subdue wild nature so it can be used to further human goals.

- Our primary purpose is to produce and consume material goods. Material wealth is the best measure of success.
- Matter and energy resources are unlimited because of human ingenuity in making them available.
- Production and consumption of goods must rise endlessly because we have right to an ever increasing material standard of living.
- We need not adapt ourselves to the natural environment because we can remake it to suit our own needs by means of science and technology.
- a major function of the state is so help individuals and corporations exploit the environment to increase wealth and power. The most important nation-state is the one that can command and use the largest fraction of the world's resources.
- the ideal person is the self-made individualist who does his or her own thing and hurts no one.

Although we may not accept these statements, most of us individually, corporately, and politically as if we did. (Miller pp. 591)

Mahatma Gandhi stated that the earth provides enough for humans' need not for humans' greed. But humans on the contrary acts as if for their survival, for their self-preservation., does not mean self-centeredness, where individuals concentrate primarily on satisfying their present “wants” ( a now-oriented society)instead of their own present and future needs and the needs of future generations, as well as of other forms of life on earth.

Most of the philosophy-beliefs above are human centered (anthropocentric), which believes that people are in charge of – not merely a part – of nature. These attitudes are ruling almost all over the world , also in the countries with Eastern beliefs and ethics. Many modern scholars and experts now believe that the answer might lie on eastern philosophy; for example Buddhism, Zen, Taoism and Hinduism (Miller pp. 592).

The key to transforming the culture-sphere so that it is more in harmony with the biosphere is to combine sustainable-earth ethical beliefs with realistic optimism based on balanced view on how much has been done so far and how much more to be done. To accomplish this each of us can become sensitized to the way the world works, become ecologically well informed, and become emotionally involved in caring for the earth by experiencing nature directly. We can also choose a simpler lifestyle to reduce resource consumption and waste and pollution production, become more self-reliant, avoid do-nothing rationalizations, become politically involved on

local and national levels, do the little things based on thinking globally and acting locally, work on big problems and big polluters through political action, and not make people feel guilty. Cooperation, honesty, humility and love must be the guidelines for our behavior towards one another and the earth. (Miller pp. 602)

### **Possible ways of Dhamma implementation:**

As mentioned above, environment experts and activists believe that the answers to the rising serious global environmental problems could lay at Eastern philosophies; i.e. the Buddhist Dhamma. As in fact most of the world inhabitants have little knowledge on Buddhism and Dhamma, introducing the Dhamma to the people is a part of solving global environmental problems. *Dhamma-chakra* (Indonesian lectures on Dhamma) are quite common at present, done regularly and also on special occasions, through direct discourses and through other media: the modern multi media, books, television shows etc.

Kertarajasa Buddhist College (STAB) in Batu – Malang, East Java – Indonesia, prepares youngsters as Dhamma-ambassadors through out the country. With the participation of many experts as lecturers, we can be sure that the alumni will have enough knowledge to serve the *Triratana: Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha*, and also serve communities in need. The knowledge of Dhamma would become perfected, if combined with applied skills, integrated knowledge and applied science. (Narada)

The expressions of *metta*, and care for other beings are better and important with implementation of applied skills as they are the real living proof of Dhamma teachings. Certainly Dhamma could be integrated into all aspect of humanity, even towards nature and other forms of life. Therefore, during academic-study, it is important to do interdisciplinary studies, across different disciplines, listen to various integrated lectures, and have practical field experiences. (Narada)

Based on local social–environmental problems with a global overview or understanding, lots of practical field exercises should be undertaken. From the humanity’s social-problems, as the basic cause to environmental problems, Dhamma-in-practice could be in the form of community-development, public-empowerment in economics, social life: awareness of humanity’s impact upon other people and on the environment and other beings. Also from the positive side: how Dhamma could lift the sufferings with direct actions. (Wowor, Narada)

While at the global level, debates, discussions and meetings among governments, multinational industrialists are still on the way, there is no hope that these would be settled in a short period. Every government and country is log-heads

over their own needs, ignoring the threats faced by humanity. Therefore, at the root-level, ambassadors of Dhamma could do lot things to overcome environment crisis with direct, face to face, practical actions. Surely these will have direct positive impacts, both as Dhamma guidelines and solutions - enhancing quality of life.

### **Practical knowledge and skills on environmental science:**

It is expected from these young intellectuals' to deepen, enhance and improve their knowledge and skills; both at the philosophical theory of Dhamma, and also on the practical side, the implementation on real daily life, on how the environment – socio – economic problems could be done. Still, as human are self-centered, focus on humanity is important. Learning further on environment problems, the cause and the(simple) possible solutions, would help humans and other beings from sufferings; at least physically. Afterwards it could lead into the soul liberation.

Surely as a *Dhammaduta* (ambassadors of Dhamma), there no expectations that they should become environment experts. Nevertheless, basic knowledge and skills on practical applied actions on solutions to environmental problems are needed. It is expected that young intellectuals would study and learn environmental sciences: about the cause and effect or impacts upon people and other living and non-living entities. This is according to Dhamma teachings in a form of real, tangible form as it is applied directly on daily life.

Vision, knowledge and horizon of the global environmental problems should be known and understood by the young Dhamma intellectuals. Various global issues: desertification, climate change, global warming, hazardous waste trade etc., should be learned by the young intellectuals. By it, they would know the roots of the difficulties, and take them into local issues. In Indonesia various high scale disasters occurs: tsunami, typhoons, landslide, mass scale flood, drought, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and more lead humanity towards disaster and miseries: diseases, hunger, poverty, malnutrition, social unrest. Although all of these came in big scale, it should not make us become ignorance as we might feel and think they are too large burden to solve.

As known: think globally, act locally, it is very true for the *Dhammaduta* ambassadors. Again, the basic root of these environment and humanity problems lay on humans themselves, which according to Dhamma: *lobha*, *moha* and *dosa* leads humanity into ignorance, delusion, greed and excessive passions. These are the main things to be remembered when walking on the true path of Dhamma. Wrong attitudes exploit nature, other humans, beings and the various elements of nature. The practical Dhamma applications implemented by everyone should be:

- *Individual actions:* whether one is a child, adult, leader, employer etc, as a person every one has same tasks and responsibility for others and the environment. Reducing the use of unnecessary things, conserve energy resources and water, etc.
- *Profession:* Different roles have different responsibilities. A teacher has wider environmental responsibility than the students. A governor has more possible tasks to do compare to a taxi driver, and so on...
- *Social position:* a child will have different tasks and responsibility than parents. A community leader could do more than average citizen.
- *Belief and ideology:* as already discussed above, one's belief and ideology will be reflected by the actions. Therefore *Dhammadutas* should be careful with every action performed – prevent any harm to other beings or nature.

On the implementation of solutions for local environmental problems, we can focus to the target groups by knowing their background. The depths of the practical applied actions rely upon the education, economy and social backgrounds, and put into the four criteria above. To be effective and practical, the basic environmental principles of: reduce, reuse and recycling - would be the best and easiest implementation. Some of the many possible practical methods of applied actions are:

1. composting and waste issues
2. water issues
3. energy issues
4. health, hygiene and sanitation
5. food and nutrition
6. balance agriculture
7. house care
8. further larger issues: nature conservation, forest and natural resources management, economical issues, social issues, global issues (global warming, climate change, fair trade, green consumerism etc.)

### **Compost and waste issues:**

Humans are the only creature on earth that make/produce waste, as waste means matter. Nature cannot biodegrade or decompose many of our synthetic or non-natural compounds. Therefore it becomes poisonous and disturbing to human itself and other living things.

Practical ways are to separate the organic and inorganic matters. The organic matters can be process to become fertilizers or compost – to balance natural and

healthy agricultural systems such as permaculture (Mollison). While the inorganic can be use in recycle or reuse (some of it); some handicrafts of recycled natters can also become as additional income. Artistic recycled paper, glass, metal could become useful items with economical values. This is not difficult to do. While hazardous and poisonous waste should be treated carefully by experts. (Elkington, Campolo, Bader)

### **Water issues:**

Water is a basic need for all living things, not just human beings. Excessive use and to waste water, polluting the water from individual level up to high scale polluters caused so much misery. Practical individual actions and personal responsibility can be done by every one for example by saving the water, simple easy and natural methods of water purification can be demonstrated and implemented.

Implementing this activity, water can be saved and reuse after proper and simple treatments, beneficial for people in poverty and slums to obtained good drinking water. Also for small scale fishery farming. Proper small scale sewage system is easy to set and appropriate for general public. The simple process will provide reuse water for fish farm and the solid matter for organic fertilizers. (Neiss, Grant, PPLH, Tillman, Untung)

### **Energy issues:**

At the local issue, energy is more about heat to cook. With about 70-80 % people lives in the rural areas, it is about firewood we are talking about. The extensive use of firewood has proven to lead into deforestation and at the end into desertification.. It causes poverty and poor health. Simple alternative appropriate technology on renewable which is simple and easy to use are possible. Motivating people to always plant and care for new fire wood trees is not difficult. The use of just twigs and straws for charcoal is easy to do, as well as other possible methods: animals dung could produce bio-gas, also dried dung will make excellent coal fire; also instead of just burning rice husks and wood saw dust, they make good fire for simple stoves. (Umboh, Suryo)

Other renewable energy possibilities with higher technology include: micro hydro power, solar energy, mini electric with steam power energy and wind energy. These small-scale machines are available, and they are environmentally friendly (Grant, Tillman). Saving energy in daily life, such as effective use of electric equipments also has significant positive impact (Campolo).

### **Health, Hygiene and Sanitation:**

All environmental problems will lead into health hazards. Unfortunately for majority of local people in Indonesia, who live in poverty, slums and poor clusters, there is no choice to live with bad environment. They have to live with polluted water, dirty surroundings and also bad air around. Usually, poverty is suggested as the main reason that they live in such bad conditions. However, actually poverty is not good reason to justify living in bad or polluted environments. On the contrary, even living in slums and poor clusters, good sanitation and hygiene could be organized properly. There are several methods to create proper surroundings, such as with agriculture system for urban household without land/garden and the *polybag-system*, etc. (Setiawan, Pranolo) For the cleanliness, slum water management and waste could be treated in communal-practical system, the end-result being compost, recycled-water and biogas. (Grant, Mubandono, Neiss)

The production of urban agriculture without land / garden system could provide additional healthy vegetables and fruits. They might not be enough to replace the whole daily food consumption, but at least it would reduce expenditure to buy meals. The proper re greening system done this way, also makes better proper surrounding among the neighborhood, thus make it healthy sanitation (Setiawan).

Also the use of medicines should be taken into account. As a less develop – still developing country, people of Indonesia has minimum knowledge on medicine and the side effects - some medicine is dangerous enough to consume without assistance of medical experts. At least students of our Buddhist College should have basic knowledge about it.

### **Food and Nutrition:**

Food is the basic need for human and living things to live. Anyhow, only good nutritious food is needed for good health. The food might look as if it is delicious and rich, but we have to take care of the nutrition contents. In urban and city communities, lots of junk food are consumed, with various artificial chemical substances that will harm the health. Therefore it is important to be aware and take care carefully of all the food eaten. (Campolo, Bader)

While for the poor, it is even difficult to find proper meal. They tend to consume any food, without any consideration on the quality, sterility, even taste or nutrition. They just do not care whether the food will be bad for health in the short and long future. Recent news in the newspaper and other media in Indonesia shows that expired or processed food are still consumed as these are cheap and affordable; and in Thailand, recently, expired/sour milk was given out free to Thai school-

children. There are still many malnutrition cases with children as victims. We should really take this seriously as big problem with humanity – eliminate these issues through direct actions; both preventive and curative. *Dhammaduta* shall take role seriously to overcome this problem. Integrated actions to be performed, include: improvement of income, better knowledge of health, food and nutrition should be safe, and communities should be well informed and educated.

Organic food (produced only naturally) is easy to do. The lack of toxic substances gives organically grown food an advantage over commercially-grown produce. With the continuing sagas of food-contamination, organically grown produce, if not more nutritious, is less risky than other produce. (Elkington) Students at Buddhist colleges should learn more about these issues – to be more useful with communities they are working with. They could assist the people's health.

### **Balance agriculture:**

Good food would not be healthy if the ingredients are not good for health. Vegetables grow with various chemical fertilizers and pesticides, will bring big problems for the consumers. Full attention should be taken care to his topic. Although students at the Buddhist college may not study to become expert on agriculture, at least some knowledge on simple easy methods to do organic farming will help them to reach the goal of better life and environment.

At the conventional agricultural system, much chemical used as fertilizers and pest control, not only harm humans' health but also killing many creatures. This should be known by the students to avoid much killing and suffering of living things (Narada, Wowor).

Creation of a balance – organic agriculture, whether at the mass rural areas or at the urban homes with limited or even without any space, is possible and good for human and other living things. The re-creation of natural system at growing plants, vegetables and trees will become a long term process of self yielding agriculture. Various simple systems have been developed; among some: permaculture, limited-space gardening, hanging garden, vertical garden etc. (Mollison, Setiawan).

### **House-care:**

This is about daily life activities. As it is considered as “ habits”, many people does not aware about the impact of what have been done. As Karma stated the cause and effect law, often people regrets after they go difficulties; as example :

getting cancer because of too much exposure to carcinogenic chemical substances. Therefore, some knowledge about these matters are very useful.

The average home today contains more chemicals than the average chemical laboratory of 100 years ago. Consumers have little knowledge of the ingredients in most of the products they use. Many of the product ingredients are potentially hazardous. The explosion of the chemical age after World War II provided us with plenty (too many) new products to replace all the simple ingredient products of our parents' generations used for hundreds of years. Along with these chemical products came an increase in a number of chemical-related illnesses that were not as prevalent in the communities until then, the worst is cancer.

When many of these new products are used commercially, they are subjected to various health and safety standards; yet the same substances are used freely and in many instances, carelessly in our homes. As a result, illness and injuries occur that may have been prevented if consumers had more knowledge about the products they use and disposed of safely. Knowledge of these matters will help students to help others and their own health. (Bader)

### **Further larger issues:**

nature conservation, forest and natural resources management, economical issues, social issues, global issues (global warming, climate change, acid rain, industry, fair trade, green consumerism etc.)

Knowledge of further larger issues on nature and environment problems is important for students to be able to lead for a better happy balance life. The ultimate aim of Buddha teaching is liberation of all beings from suffering, both physical and spiritual. Knowledge of bigger issues ( nature conservation, forest and natural resources management, economical issues, social issues, global warming, climate change, acid rain, industry, fair trade, green consumerism etc.), at least will make students to participate and become leaders in the prevention of life's problems. Further, they can also participate in larger forums, directing policy and regulations to lead people to better life and reach the ultimate goal : reduce, minimizing and avoid suffering.

For detailed practical ways to implement these topics on field, please refer to the references below.

### **Suggestions:**

The global environmental crisis is a complex multidimensional problem. All are interlinked and mingled one to the others of various aspects : ideologies – beliefs, socio – economical sectors, industry, policy – law – international conventions, politics up to personal problems: pride, egocentric, selfishness attitudes of human, *lobha*, *dosa* and *moha*, Certainly there are no instant easy way to find the solutions as easy as to turn one's palm.

Taken the global perspective into local action, there are lots of possibilities. As one might not able to work at the global level to take part in multi national agreements, world policy, inter government discussions, yet as mentioned above, one could start at the personal basis. As an individual, there are things to do, and even further with one's social position and profession.

It is expected that every young Buddhist intellectual could start from the basic of these practical environmental actions. If implemented, surely it will bring better life, not just for humans but also other beings. If I is done by others in other parts of the world the result will be real and tangible, and have global positive impacts. There fore it s suggested to develop these extra curricula programs even wider, to be effective at the global level, to show that Dhamma in practice is solution to global crisis, particularly on environment problems.

Most of STAB Kertarajasa Buddhist College alumni will have the profession as a *Dhamma guru*, teaching Dhamma in formal, non formal and public education. Expose to public, whether in formal or non formal ways needs exceptional personality and skills. Knowing well target groups, good communication skill and hard working are among the keys to success. With additional knowledge of global and local environmental problems, particularly focused to daily social life (as part of environmental problems), will make the *Dhammaduta* tasks reach its goals even better. After reaching maturity on field experiences, they can go further to the national and international levels.

### **Summary:**

A thousand miles trip stars with a single step. The global environmental problems issues: climate change, global warming, water difficulties should be overcome also through the basic; simple, easy, economical and attractive from individual level. *Dhammaduta* ambassadors could spread the Dhamma messages of the Eight Noble Paths and spreading *metta* by integration of Dharma teachings with practical applied actions.

By doing it, tangible, realistic and direct positive impacts of Dharma teaching are put into alive. Even though in STAB Kertarajasa Buddhist College, Batu – East Java, Indonesia, these study programs are included at the extra curricula, the importances of them are more when the *Dharmadutas* ready to set themselves among the people in the communities. By then it will prove whether Dharma teaching will have positive impact to human and other beings life.

Because by the implementation of the integrated Dharma messages with real applied actions, it can lead to change to the better people's view and attitude towards others and also to nature and other living beings. Caring for all nature elements, even the non living – a biotic: soil, water, air and energy, even so to other living things; plants and animals, not only will reflects *metta* of Dharma, but will improve the quality of life for all, and reach the goal of:

*Sabbe Satta Bavantu Sukhitatta*

= may all beings have happiness

– Because of the Eight Noble Path.

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## **Approaching an Environmental Problem with Buddhist Teaching: A Case Study of the Jakarta Coast**

Zon Vanel<sup>1</sup>

### **Identifying the Problem**

The Jakarta coast is spreading along 32 kilometers; from Muara Baru to Marunda villages are devastated with environmental problems. The southern part of the Jakarta coast, there is a village called Muara Baru, crowded with houses. Its position is lower than the sea level and just covered by an ordinary verge, made of the combination of concrete and sand sacks. Within the last few years, the verge was broken down for many times because it was not able to hold the flowing of the spring tide water. The flowing of the sea water, corals and trash hit down the village. It was the worst disaster that happened by the end of 2000.

A few kilometers from Muara Baru, there is another environmental issue in Kalibaru area. Clean water is difficult to get. Though there is clean water available to purchase, but the cost is just too irrational for them to afford. More over, spending money for purchasing clean water for bathing is not a sensitive decision. When there is heavy rain, they are simply taking shower under the rain. Near by Kalibaru is located another village namely Marunda. The sea around the Marunda is poisoned by chemical waste; the sea water is covered by white liquid. Many fish died, and even several people died after swimming in the polluted sea. According to Dr. Sobandono Diposaptono's research at the Marine and Fishery Department, there are about two thousand factories and industries throwing away their chemical waste containing of dangerous and toxic material to the river, ended at the Jakarta gulf.<sup>2</sup> Another researcher, Suhana,<sup>3</sup> said that the citizens living and the industries locating at the upper and along the bank of the thirteen rivers in Jakarta that ends at the Jakarta gulf contribute to the accumulating waste and trash to the river. The waste and trash flow to the estuary where the fishermen live.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Diposaptono, Subandono. "*Mengatasi Masalah dengan Masalah*" ("Solving the Problem with the Problem"). National Geographic. July Edition. *Siapa Pembunuh Gorila Pegunungan Virunga?*. 2008. p.93

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<sup>4</sup> Suhana. "*Mengatasi Masalah dengan Masalah.*" *Op. Cit.*, p. 93

The data shows that nowadays about 40% of the Jakarta coast's height is below the sea level from the Center of Coast and Sea Studies of Bogor Agriculture Institute in the spring tide. The effect is that Muara Baru and other areas such as Kamal Muara, Pluit, Cilincing, and Marunda from the Center of Coast and Sea Studies of Bogor Agriculture Institute are often flooded by the flow of spring tide water<sup>5</sup>. Many citizens have to go for refuge. But the most commotion that seizure many people's concern is when the sea water of Kamal Muara flood the freeway to the Soekarno-Hatta International Airport.

Jakarta's flood often naturally happens because of the land is lower than the sea level, the small difference between spring tide and ebb, the less number of mangrove forest at the upper river, also the disappearance of mangrove forest around the Jakarta beaches. At the Jakarta coast there are many complicated problems for the last few years: the rapid growth of the population, the decrease of the environmental support for humans' life (including the disappearance of mangrove area and the water absorbance area), the decrease of the land surface, flood, poverty, pollution, crowded housing, the lack of willingness of local government to revitalize and also maximize the benefits, the potency of injustice, and the lack of warnings and awareness of the increasing of the sea level's effects caused by the global warming. All of these issues are the resume of the polemic of the sea level reclamation at the Jakarta coast by the local government.

Responding to the problems, the local government will start the reclamation process based on the president's verdict number of 52 in 1995 about the Jakarta's north beach reclamation. The area is strategic from the economic view and city development (Jakarta is too dense, it is impossible to develop the east, west, and south beach again).

The local government starts a preparation. The North Beach Reclamation Executive Agency (BP Pantura) was established as the executor. The project was stopped because of the economic crisis, and then it was continued again in the beginning of 2000s. BP Pantura announced that the reclamation will take place at the 32 kilometers along the Jakarta beach. The reclamation begins at the beach line to 1,5 kilometers away with the maximum of 8 meters in depth.

It is hoped that there will be a new land with a high economic value of almost 2.700 hectares square. There will be built facilities such as houses, industries, offices, business centers, transportations, and tourism. In the master plan, the western side of the reclamation area is for elite houses. At the center there will be built apartments, business centers, recreation areas, offices, and industries. The eastern

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<sup>5</sup> National Geographic. "Mengatasi Masalah dengan Masalah." *Ibid.*

area is prepared for the Tanjung Priok harbour's development, warehouse, and shipping.

However, some parties show their objection for the project. Reclamation is not considered to be the whole solution and continual for the problems. In the social context, the Jakarta's disease that has been smelled for a long time is the development area that seems unfair and violating the citizens' rights to have a public space and beach.

One of the parties who objects the project is the Friends of the Earth Indonesia (Walhi). According to Slamet Dayroni, the Jakarta's Walhi director, the only way to handle these Jakarta coast's environmental problems is to return to the original condition and habitat<sup>6</sup>. The reclamation plan actually puts the citizens at danger. There is no relevance to remedy the citizens' rights to have homes. The government does not give enough space and respect to the fishermen and poor citizens. The country structure reflects that the local government does not have a commitment to protect the fishermen as the reclamation for mangrove forest is being converted to elite housing. In the Jakarta development's schema it is clearly shown that the fishermen were shoved aside systematically, since they being accused to destroy the environment.

With the government's rule number 27 in 1999 the Minister for Environment also objects the reclamation plan. The reclamation is improper to be done because the profound effects to the environment and the social lives. According to the Minister for Environment's note<sup>7</sup>, with the proposed plan of the reclamation, the sea water level will increase between 12-32 centimeters and flood the land until 3 kilometers away. The reclamation will take 330 million meters cubic soil from Bojong, where the clean water supply comes from. Muara Karang's PLTGU (combined gas and steam powerplant) operation is disturbed since the sea water for cooling temperature is increasing up to 5,7°Celsius. The electricity of Muara Karang's PLTGU supplies the president's residence, government offices, and Soekarno-Hatta International airport. If all the infrastructure is built at the reclamation area, there will be water crisis since 43% of the Jakarta's clean water supply will flow to that area. The under sea's optic cable which is a communication tool between the Australia and ASEAN countries is being threaten. The cable can only hold the reclamation—not the building on it.

What happens at the Jakarta coast is only one description among of the environmental problems in the world. Many countries have similar problems to the Jakarta coast's, so it is not a regional problem specific to Indonesia alone. It is a global environmental problem. This research offers an approach to the problems with the Buddhist teaching. I will apply the concept of interconnectedness to the

<sup>6</sup> Slamet Dayroni. "Mengatasi Masalah dengan Masalah." *Op. Cit.*, p.96.

<sup>7</sup> National Geographic. "Mengatasi Masalah dengan Masalah." *Op. Cit.*, p. 4

problems described above. The local government's policy about the plan should be based on wisdom and the principle of *paṭiccasamuppāda* or interconnectedness between human beings and the environment. The plan should be inspired by compassion that reflects wisdom and understanding of the interconnectedness of all things.

### **Analyzing the Problem with the Buddhist Teaching**

The nature and its life is a unity and interconnected to each other. One action will influence the whole system directly or indirectly and has an important meaning to other lives. The concept of interconnectedness is not easy to understand. Life and everything inside the universe is interconnected like a spider web; it is unknown when it starts and ends. Nothing can exist without the support of others. McMahan says,

... everything depends on everything else, altering the balance of the web of life can be—and has been—catastrophic. Thus the concept entails strong ecological imperatives. The many Buddhists and Buddhist-inspired groups engaged in environmental activism routinely cite interdependence or interconnectedness as the conceptual, rationale for the link between the dharma and environmentalism.<sup>8</sup>

So does human being and the environment; they need each other. Humans need the environment to live in and the environment needs humans to endure. This concept in Buddhism is called *paṭiccasamuppāda*. Capra<sup>9</sup> determines *paṭiccasamuppāda* as the interconnectedness of all the life's process. EEIU (Eco-Ethic International Union) has the same concept with *paṭiccasamuppāda* that there is an interaction between humans and their environment. There is no life including human's life that can live alone. This is because human is a part of the ecosystem. Ecosystem components consist of living components and nonliving components that interconnected to each other in a complicated way.<sup>10</sup> Bhikkhu Sri Paññavaro said that human is not the one who holds the mandate to master the nature, but only a part of nature.<sup>11</sup>

The environmental problems above are the perfect example of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* (interconnectedness) concept. All problems do not exist by themselves. There are conditions that cause these environmental problems become complex: the climate change because of the global warming, the increase of the use

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<sup>8</sup> McMahan, David L. *The Making of Buddhist Modernism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 151-152.

<sup>9</sup> Capra, Fritjof. *Jaring-Jaring Kehidupan: Visi Baru Epistemologi dan Kehidupan* (The Web of Life: The New Vision of Epistemology and Life). Yogyakarta: Fajar Pustaka Baru. 2002, p. 434.

<sup>10</sup> (<http://www.eubios.info/EJ115/EJ51.html>).

<sup>11</sup> Bhikkhu Sri Paññavaro Mahathera. "Menengok Peradaban Silam, Menuju Masa Depan" (Visiting the Old Civilization, Toward the Future). Talk Show. Surakarta, Indonesia. March 17<sup>th</sup> 2009.

of energy resources makes the unregenerated natural resources getting less, poverty because of the dense population, the high population causes the emergence of many industries (home industries and big industries which contributes to pollution). Homes' and industries' waste are polluting the sea and all living and nonliving beings inside it, polluting the air that all beings need to live, polluting the soil so that it becomes unfertile and killing many living beings within it. The climate change causes dryness. The dissipation of productive land (such as forest) is because of dense population and development. In the light of interconnectedness law, we can apply a solution for one problem to solve other problems. This principle is matched with the teaching of *patticasamupada* (interconnectedness), that is, the solution should always consider the interconnectedness of all things in the universe.

The aforementioned reclamation plan should be inspired by compassion that reflects wisdom and the understanding of interconnectedness. Consciousness is needed to understand the interconnectedness between humans and their environment. Bhikkhu Sri Paññavaro said, "If there is no consciousness so there will be no life."<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, not all human beings have consciousness of the environmental problems. Consciousness that the environment where we live in needs our compassion. Ven. Narada declares, "It is compassion that compels one to serve others with altruistic motives. A truly compassionate person lives not for himself but for others. He seeks opportunities to serve others expecting nothing in return, not even gratitude."<sup>13</sup> Besides compassion, our policy about the environmental problems should be based on the wisdom principle. Wisdom (*pañña*) is the right understanding of the nature of the world in the light of transient (*anicca*), sorrowfulness (*dukkha*), and soullessness (*anattā*).<sup>14</sup>

The environmental problem is not only one human's problem, not a regional's problem, but it is all humans' problem and a global problem. Understanding that everything are interconnected, it is hoped that human beings begin to be aware of their actions can have impacts to others or even the rest of the universe. Spreading the compassion to our surrounding nature and starting to think wisely according to our understanding of *paṭiccasamupāda* will create a better future.

We can take an example of *paṭiccasamupāda* from the description given above, that all environmental problems at the Jakarta coast and at any coasts cannot be separated from human activities. According to UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), human activities make significant changes to the atmosphere composition at the global level, and to the natural climate

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Ven. Narada. *The Buddha and His Teaching*. Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1988, p. 629.

<sup>14</sup> Ven. Narada. *Op. Cit.*, p. 596.

variabilities through the burning of the fossil-fuel and the land conversion.<sup>15</sup> This condition also influences the layer or cover of the greenhouse gas. According to the IPCC's (Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change) watch list, since the beginning of the industry revolution 250 years ago, the natural cover getting thicker day by day. It is because the emission of the greenhouse gas on the forms of carbon dioxide, methane, dinitroxide, sulfurhexsafluoride, and perfluorocarbon are evaporating because of human activities<sup>16</sup>. The effect is the cover of the greenhouse gas getting thicker and much heat energy is being trapped. This is the one of the causes which makes the earth getting simmer and creates the global warming. The global warming makes the icebergs at the earth's pole melt away and the increase the sea level. UNFCCC research<sup>17</sup> at 2005 predicted that until this last century, the sea level will increase about one meter. The impact is that 42 small island countries that are joined in Small Islands Developing States (SIDDD) are threatened to be drawn. That countries spread along the sea of Africa, Asia, Pacific, Caribbean, and Mediterranean. Papua New Guinea in the Pacific has already lost its beach line today because of drowning from the sea water. Some countries fight to each other because of their country lines was drawn. It is a political impact caused by the environmental problem. The increase of sea water level threats small islands habitants' lives and the citizens living along the coast. Human activities also make a lot of forest being converted. Forest that functions as the carbon dioxide absorber is converted to plantation field, housing, and industries. The impacts of these problems are not only ecological, but also have economical impact. The damage of ecology makes economy and politics getting worst. Through this description, we can understand *paṭiccasamupāda* of all things. The government policy should consider *paṭiccasamupāda* so that the plan being made is wisely considered out of compassion to all beings.

I agree with Joanna Macy's statement that, "That's our mission, to fall in love with the world."<sup>18</sup> We can change the environmental problem to be better in the future starting from ourselves, since we know that human activities contribute to the global warming. We can reduce the emission of greenhouse gas starting from our homes:

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<sup>15</sup> UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). Gatra, Special Edition. 2007, p. 63.

<sup>16</sup> IPCC (Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change). *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Op. Cit.*, pp.46-47

<sup>18</sup> Macy, Joanna. "The Third Turning of the Wheel: A Conversation With Joanna Macy," in Stephanie Kaza and Keneth Craft. *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism*. 2000, p. 159.

1. Use a save energy light.
2. Don't open the refrigerator's door too long. The longer we open the door, the more we waste the energy, because the cooler machine keeps working until the room in the refrigerator reaching to certain temperature.
3. Switch off the air conditioner (AC), television, radio, computer, and other electronic devices if they are not used.
4. Wash the cloth with our own hand. Beside the laundry looks cleaner, also healthy and save the energy.
5. Fill the house yard with plants.
6. Cover the house with sun screen, i.e. we put on glass film at the windows, so the house is not getting hot and we don't need to use air conditioner.
7. Give enough ventilation at the house, so there will be air circulation everyday.
8. Don't burn the trash in the house yard. The smoke releases carbon dioxide gases that harm people's body if inhaled.
9. Don't bring plastic bags to the house, because plastic material is difficult to recycle.

## Conclusion

The Jakarta coast problems indeed not a regional problem occurring in Indonesia. Any countries can share the same problems. This article proposes an approach to such the problem applying the Buddhist teaching of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, and inspired by wisdom and compassion. Any solutions should be based on wisdom and the principle of *paṭiccasamuppāda* or interconnectedness between human beings and the environment. The solutions are inspired by compassion and wisdom, as well as an understanding of the interconnectedness of all things. Because the solution is supposed to run in the long term, careful considerations are needed so that we can make a better future.

We can start from ourselves through simple activities. Improving our awareness of our surroundings will give positive impacts to our live and the lives of others. I believe that responding to any environmental problems integrating the Buddhist teachings will benefits all forms of live. May all beings be peaceful!

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