

# **An Overview of Research on the Idea and Practice of Buddhist Environmental Protection in China**

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Briefly speaking, "Environmental protection" means to protect the natural environment which is necessary for our survival, including air, water, land, plants, animals, etc., to ensure that they are not polluted and destroyed. The reason to put forward the concept of environmental protection, is because the environmental crisis that we are facing today is unprecedented. Indiscriminate logging causes serious soil erosion, floods, mudslides and other natural disasters; the over exploitation of oil and coal etc. makes resources of the earth increasingly exhausted. Although people are making effort to develop new energy, the speed of research is far behind that of mining. The wanton killing of wildlife has caused lots of rare animals in both water and land to become extinct and many more hover at the brink of extinction; as a result, the food chain has been severely damaged. The overgrazing done to meet human's huge demand of meat has caused the grassland to decrease and the desert to expand. In addition, the serious impact of industrial pollution on the environment is well known to everyone and there is no need to describe again here. Technology has changed our lives as well as our ways of life, and this way of life has lead us to face the most severe survival test. However, if we want to change people's life style, what must be firstly changed is people's ideas. To change people's attitude towards the natural environment, systematical and complete theoretical support is needed.

In traditional Chinese culture, there already contains such concepts which today we call maintaining ecological balance, or environmental protection. For example, Mencius once said: "If fine-mesh nets are kept out of the ponds and lakes, there will be more fish and turtles than you can eat. If loggers are regulated in their woodcutting, there will be more wood than can be used. " <sup>1</sup> Buddhism, being an important part of traditional Chinese culture, its function as a social force to convey important ideas cannot be ignored,. In the long process of historical development of Buddhism it has gradually developed a complete set of way of life which is conducive to ecological and environmental protection. In its texts and teachings there also contains a complete and systematical concept of "ecology" and "environmental protection". Now, more and more experts and scholars, from both the Buddhist circle and outside of this circle, are aware of this point, and are actively spearheading theoretical discussion. This paper shall make a preliminary analysis of research done by experts and scholars in the past 20 years. We will now discuss their theoretical research on the Buddhist concept of environmental protection from the following three aspects: 1) journals and degree theses, 2) conferences, and 3) practice regarding to environmental protection.

## **1 Journals and Degree theses**

Since the thought of ecological and environmental protection contained in Buddhism received attention, relevant theories have also been published in various journals. These

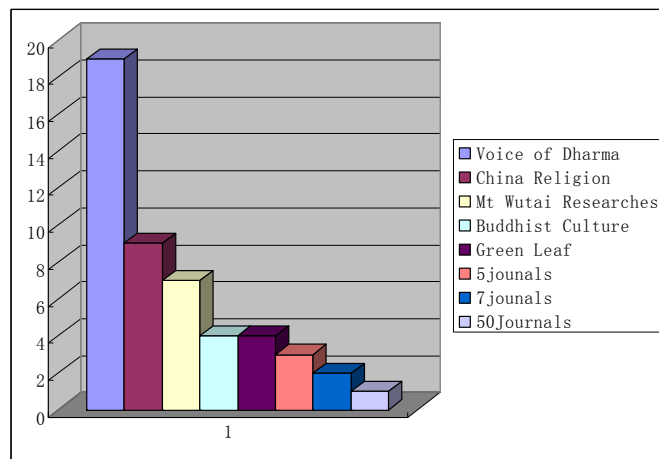
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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.kzxy.com.cn/>

publications include both official state journals and internally circulated publications within the Buddhist community. Because it is quite difficult to chronicle those articles relating to environmental protection in the latter type of journals, the paper will make an investigation on the relevant theses published in formally approved publications and degree thesis repositories in China only.

### 1.1. The Journals

Since the 90's of the last century, there are 113 articles <sup>2</sup> on Buddhist concepts relating to ecological and environmental protection published in official national journals in China. These articles appear in 66 journals respectively, among which *The Voice of Dharma* run by the Buddhist Association of China (BAC) has 19 articles, *China Religion* 9, *Mt Wutai Researches* 7, *Buddhist Culture* and *Green Leaf* 4 each, *Research on Buddhism an Chinese Culture* and *Journal of Guangxi University for Nationalities* and *Journal of Nanjing Forestry University* 3 each, and the 8 kinds of journals including *Journal of Southeast University*, *Hubei Social Sciences*, *Journal of Shenzhen University*, *Study of Northwest Minorities* etc., 2 each. The remaining 50 articles appear respectively in 50 kinds of journals. See chat 1.



**Chart 1 A statistical breakdown on the number of articles appearing in various periodicals and published papers.**

Chart 2 is a Statistical graph of articles on the concept of the Buddhist ecology, and environmental protection published each year during 1991-2010. The number of articles published in these 20 years varies up and down. From the graph, we see during the seven years from 1991 to 1997, only three articles were published, of which the one called “*Great Minds Think Alike — Ecological Consciousness in Buddhism*” published in *Forest and Human* in 1996 , is a small random essay with only some one thousand words. Since 1998 there was a big turnout, and articles on environmental issues have gradually shown an ascendant trend, and reached a small climax in 2001 when this kind of papers amounted to 11. Since then, the number of articles

<sup>2</sup> Searching the "China Academic Journal database", we find that there are 111 articles pertaining to Buddhism and Ecology and Environmental Protection, with 82 articles on Buddhism and Ecology, and 29 articles on Buddhism and Environmental Protection. There are also 9 articles related to Buddhist Animal and Environmental Protection, and three news reports about Tree-Planting and Forestation, bringing the number of papers and reports relevant to Buddhist Ecology and Environmental Protection to 123 in total. After further investigation, 4 duplicate records were deleted. This brings the actual recorded number of articles to 119. Time of search conducted is: 12:23 pm, 2011-2-6.

decreased; in 2002 there were 4 papers, in 2003 and 2004 only 3 each. Things began to emerge from the lowlands in 2005, with 5 papers published, and 6 papers published in 2006. From 2006 onwards, the number of papers increased considerably, especially in 2008, it sharply reached 20 articles. During the following two years, although the number of paper decreased progressively, it still exceeded or remained the same as that of prior to 2008. In 2009, 16 papers were published, and in 2010, 13 papers.

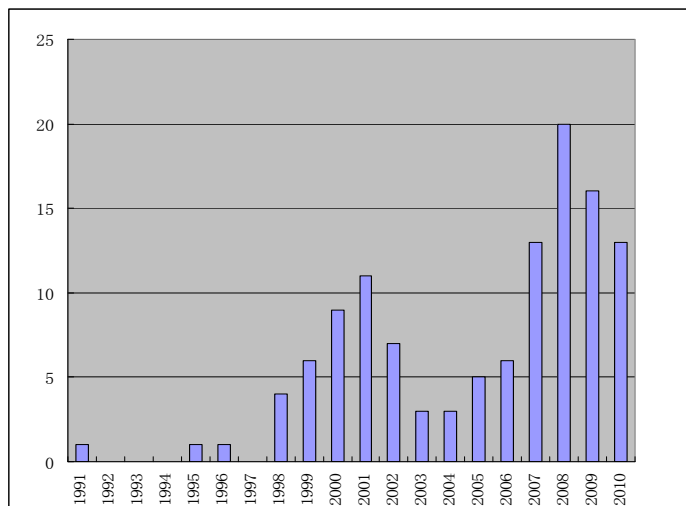


Chart 2 Statistical graph of related articles published during 1991-2010

We need to pay extra attention to the following four years in the wavy lines: 1998, 2001, 2005 and 2008. We found that the number of papers in these four years stands at the critical turning points, presenting a small peak, getting out of the ditches, and then peaking again. The question here now is: why are these four years different from other years? Having observed, we find that it is closely related to the trend of Buddhist circles in China and even the whole world.

In October 1998, the China, Korea and Japan Buddhist Friendly Exchange Conference (CKJBFEC) was held in Beijing. Buddhist delegations from China, Japan and Korea reached the decision that: in order to put into practice the great idea of beautifying the land and benefiting the people, Buddhists of the three countries shall plant trees in April each year in their respective countries so as to promote the spirit of environmental protection and purify the society.

From August 25 to 27, 2001, the BAC held an oratorical contest on the theme of "Buddhism and Environmental Protection" in Mt. Putuo, discussing and exchanging ideas on the issue of "Buddhist Environmental Protection." On 27 October, 2001, the China, Japan and Korea Buddhist Friendly Exchange Conference and an oratorical contest on the theme of "Buddhism and Environmental Protection" were held at Beijing Tian Lun Dynasty Hotel.

On June 20, 2005, the Chinese Buddhist delegation headed by Ven. Jamyang Tubdan went to Ulan Bator, Mongolia, to attend a four-day conference on "Northern Tradition of A Buddhist's Responsibility in Environmental Protection."

From October 10 to 11, 2008, "The 11<sup>th</sup> CKJBFEC- the Korean General Meeting, Academic Lectures" was held in Cheju, Korea. Once again the theme - "The responsibility of Buddhists in the area of environmental protection " - was discussed positively in the form of academic lectures. On October 22, 2008, an academic seminar on "Buddhism and Ecological

Civilization" was held at the Jade Buddha Monastery in Shanghai as one of the programs of the 7<sup>th</sup> Jue Qun Cultural Week.

If there is one or two concurrence between the peak years of the number of published-papers and the time when Buddhist meetings were held, this might be just an incidental coincidence, but all the four key time of the number of published-papers are all matching the time when the Buddhist meetings were held, then it indicates there must be something which is closely linked between these two. In 1998, the CKJBFEC was held in Beijing. It is precisely because of the advocacy from the circles of Buddhism that, from this year onwards, papers on Buddhist ecological and environmental protection started to increase. Thereafter until 2010, although the number of papers differs each year, there was never any disruption. Compared to the number of papers prior to 1998, when there were just occasionally appearances, this was a fundamental change. Since 1998 papers gradually increased, and a small peak was reached in 2001. It was during August and October in that very year that the oratorical contest and academic lectures were held respectively. In 2008, the amount of published-papers reached a peak in 20 years. In this year, academic lectures on "the responsibility of Buddhists in the area of environmental protection" and the academic seminar on "Buddhism and Ecological Civilization" were held in Korean and Shanghai respectively. The time interval of the two meetings is only ten days, and the scale of the meetings is bigger than that of previous years. A matter of note is that, the CKJBFEC held in Korea was a Buddhist conference focusing on the theme of Buddhism and Environment Protection for the third time.

In addition, when the author was sorting out the material, he noticed that among the authors of the articles published in these journals, only a few are venerables, most of them are secular experts and scholars. Nevertheless, the top three journals publishing these papers are *The Voice of Dharma*, "*China Religion*", and "*Mt. Wutai Research*", two of which are exclusively Buddhist periodicals, and *The Voice of Dharma* is an organizational publication of the Buddhist Association of China. From these facts, it is not difficult for us to conclude that the Buddhist circles have the function in actively guiding people to take good care of the environment and maintain ecological balance.

Buddhist environmental ideas which are scattered in the tripitaka need to be sorted and found out. From these published papers, we see the shaping up of a theoretical system of Buddhist ecology and environmental protection, its beginning, continuous improvement and deepening process. In 1991, Liu Yuanchun published the first publication of the year, an article, "*The Light of Sky and Shade of Clouds Wander About Together – a Thought About Buddhism and Maintaining Ecological Balance*", which probably was the first article concerning the Buddhist concept of environmental protection. The article explains the Buddhist concept of environmental protection from three aspects: 1) the theory of dependent origination, which involving the concept of "non-sentient beings have Buddha-nature (wu qing you xin 无情有性)"; 2) Cultivation of bodhicitta, citing Buddhist concept of "unconditional great compassion"; 3) seeking to be born in the pure land and the cultivation of the ten kinds wholesome deeds, such as abstaining from killing, and the practice of releasing captured animals etc. This paper did not cause any major repercussions, but the main concepts relating to ecological and environmental protection contained in Buddhism was discussed extensively in the paper. In 1995, Li Yinghui's "*A Talk on Buddhist Environmental Protection and Beautification*" was published. In this paper, although the environmentally related theory of Buddhism was not discussed much, historical facts of monks

who beautified environment through forestation were cited from historical records. In 1996, Shen Dengfeng published "*Great Minds Think Alike — Ecological Consciousness in Buddhism*". Although the article is a small one with some one thousand words, it puts forward the Buddhist concept of "non-difference between man and the world (yi zheng bu er 依正不二)" which is of ecological significance. This paper points out that, "the Buddhist theory of 'non-difference between man and the world' expounds the relationship between man and nature is that of mutual dependence", "human and nature are integrated and indivisible, to destroy our living environment is to destroy our own future".<sup>3</sup> This paper though does not mention the theory of "non-sentient beings have Buddha-nature", it briefly explains the importance of not cutting trees and other plants from the point of mutual dependence between men and other living beings in the one hand and trees and other plants on the other. From 1998 onwards, Buddhist environmental articles increased, and there appeared research articles on certain special Buddhist viewpoints pertaining to environmental protection, for instance, XiaoYu's "*on the View of Buddhist Compassion Together With Its Realistic Significance to the Ecological Environment*", Cui Wenkui's "*On the Buddhist Theory of Dependent Origination Together With Its Realistic Significance to the Ecological Environment*". In the 21st century, many scholars still made unremitting exploration into this aspect, for example, Hong Du's "*Beautifying the Land, Benefiting Sentient Beings: a Brief Discussion on the Buddhist Concept and Practice of Environmental Protection in Terms of 'Non-difference Between Man and the World'*", Wen Kaizhao's "*On the Ecological Value of the Buddhist View of Vegetarianism*", and Chen Hongbing's "*The Buddhist Theory of Liberation and Ecological Cultural Values*". In 1999, Wei Dedong's "*The Buddhist View on Ecology*" discussed in detail the Buddhist concepts on environmental protection in terms of both theory and practice, providing a general outline for Buddhist ecology. Later on, thoughtful articles by many scholars constantly improved on the system.

Chen Hongbin in his "*A Review of Research Status on the Buddhist View of Ecology*" classifies the Buddhist view of ecology into seven categories, namely, 1, the Overall View, 2, the No-Self theory, 3, view of Life, 4, the view of Intrinsic Value, the theory of "non-sentient beings have Buddha-nature", 5, view of Loving-Kindness and Compassion, 6, view of the Pure Land, 7, traditional Buddhist practice of Ecological Ethics. It mentioned that the articles of two Taiwanese scholars are of considerable depth in theory, they are Yang Huinan's "*Faith and Pure Land – Creating an In-depth Buddhist Ecology of Emptiness of Self-nature in Terms of Dependent Arising*" and Lin Chaocheng's "*As The Mind Purifies, the Land Is Purified -- on the Reflections and Challenges of Buddhist Ecological Observations*".

Vivid case studies make the exploration on Buddhist view of ecology rich in vitality. For instance, DuanYuming in his "*An Anthology of Buddhist Environmental Technology - a Case Study of Mt. Emei*" points out that "the universalized format, deified interpretation and ritualized operation are the three most basic and common kinds of Buddhist technologies for of environment protection, whose core is to use various methods to sanctify its chosen environment, and to make the general public arise fear, and thus to form rules and customs." This kind of case studies on Buddhist environmental protection is of more practical guiding value for actual implementation. In addition, there are some scholars who focus upon the view of ecology of different Buddhist traditions, for example, Wen Houhong's "*The Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy of Ecology*", Gao

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<sup>3</sup> Shen Denfeng 沈登峰, "Great Minds Think Alike - Ecological Consciousness in Buddhism (英雄所见略同——佛教中的生态意识)", *Forest & Humankind*, 1996(4).

Huinan's "*The Ecological Views of the Southern Buddhist Tradition and Buddhist Tradition of the Dai People*".

From the macroscopic theory construction, to profound case studies and practice, the internal and external Buddhist academic circles have carried out extensive and in-depth research on Buddhism and environmental protection from each and every aspect and angle. These research can be basically summarized as Buddhist ecological ethics, ecological philosophy, ecological interpretation, ecological aesthetics, ecological culture, ecological tourism, ecological education the construction of an ecological civilization, environmental technology, Buddhist vegetarianism, love of animals, mental health protection, the concept and practice of environmental protection, comparative study of ecological and environmental protection between Buddhism and Taoism, ecological environmental protection in the Tibetan and the Southern Buddhist traditions, and so on and so forth.

## 1.2 The dissertations

Except journal articles, the Masters and PhD research papers are also worthy of notice. This kind of degree thesis is deeper and more systematic in theoretical formation and discussion. From 2005 until 2010 there appeared 4 doctoral dissertations and 10 master theses, 9 of which are outstanding master theses. We roughly divide these degree theses into the following four categories:

- (1) Those discussing ecology and environment in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition are: "*The Sangha System in Monasteries of Tibetan Buddhist Tradition and the Ecological Environment in the Tibetan Region*", Zou Zhiwei, Shan Xi Normal University; "*A Research on the Environment of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in Beijing*", Qiu Yinhao (doctor), Beijing Forestry University
- (2) Research on Buddhist ecological tourism include: "*A Research on the Ecological Exploitation of Buddhist Tourist Resources*", Liu Shanshan, Chengdu University of Technology; "*A Research on the Planning Method of Buddhist Ecological Tourism*", Zhu Yongxue, South China Tropical Agricultural University; "*A Research on the Exploitation Buddhist Ecological Tourism Resources and Its Impact on the Environment*", Peng Mingyong, Southwest Normal University.
- (3) Research on Buddhist ecological ideas and ethics include: "*A Research on the Buddhist Ideas on Ecological Ethics*" He Baolin (doctor), Wu Han University; "*Harmonious Ecology Begins From the Mind*", Shi Naiyu, Fu Dan University; "*An Exploration on the Buddhist Ideas and Practice of Ecological and Environmental Protection and Its Modern Value*", Zhang Jingzhen, Shan Xi Normal University; "*Spiritual Environmental Protection*", Shi Chaoyang, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; "*Buddhist Ideas on Ecological Ethics and Its Modern Value*", Wu Xueying, Nan Chang University; "*A Review of Research on Buddhist Ideas of Ecology*", Dong Xiaotao, Inner Mongolia University; "*An Investigation on the Ecology of Ancient Buddhist Temples in Beijing*", Gu Lexiao, Chinese Academy of Fine Arts.
- (4) Research on the ecological aesthetics in Buddhism include: "*A Research on the Wisdom of Ecological Aesthetics in Chinese Buddhism*", Li Lin (doctor), Shan Dong University; "*Poem, Buddhism, Ecology*", Geng Jiyong (doctor), Shanghai Foreign Language University.

That postgraduate students take interest in research on Buddhist ecology and environmental protection brings the promotion of Buddhist ecological and environmental protection into a deeper level of thinking and exploration. It also proves the potential of the environmental ideas in Buddhism, which will have a profound impact on the future development

of environmental protection work in China. The phenomenon that the Buddhist ideas of ecology and environment protection appear in master and doctoral dissertations further reveals the fact that through the advocacy from Buddhist circles, ecological and environmental ideas in Buddhism have caught people's attention, and they are using these ideas as an theoretical basis to explore a practical way to improve the increasingly worsening living environment for humanity.

## **2. Buddhist conferences on environmental protection**

In October 1998, the China, Korea and Japan Buddhist Friendship Exchange Conference was held in Beijing. Buddhist delegations from China, Japan and Korea reached the decision: in order to actualize the ideals of beautifying the land and benefiting the people, Buddhists of the three countries shall plant trees in April each year in their respective countries so as to promote the spirit of environmental protection and purify the society. This is a concept unique to Mahayana Buddhism. In the Early Buddhism and in today's Theravāda Buddhism, monks are not allowed to dig soil and engage in planting activities. However, when Buddhism was introduced to China, the Chinese monks changed this custom from passively not cutting trees to pro-actively engaging in forestation.

From 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> August 2001, the BAC held an oratorical contest themed "Buddhism and environmental protection" in Mt. Putuo, senior Buddhist masters and young monks, as well as secular experts and scholars from different parts of China gathered and delivered a series of lectures pertaining to the issue of "Environmental Protection in Buddhism". Those from the Buddhist circle include Venerables Sheng Hui, Ming Xue, Wei Xian, and Miao Hua etc., those from the academic circle include Fang Litian, Lou Yulie, Wang Zhiyuan and other eminent scholars and professors. In addition, there were also 300 other participants, including leaders of the relevant departments from Zhou Shan city, Sangha members from the Buddhist Association of Mt. Putuo, Buddhist College, major monasteries, and also members of the laity. 21 monks and nuns from all parts of the country took part in the speech contest, which is themed "Buddhism and environmental protection". They discussed the mutually dependent relationship between humanity and the natural environment based on the Buddhist world view, and proposed that traditional Buddhist concepts such as "unconditional loving-kindness and non-differentiated great compassion", "Heaven and Earth have the same roots, all things that exists are in essence one", "abstaining from killing", "vegetarianism" and "animal liberation", forms the philosophical basis for protection of environment and maintaining ecological balance today. The most venerable Wei Xian evaluated this contest as "an unprecedented event in the country, the causes and conditions of this meeting are the most excellent". He also listed the 5 key features of the speeches, and summarized the ten main ideas and views in relation to "Buddhism and Environmental Protection".<sup>4</sup>

In 27<sup>th</sup> October 2001, the CKJBFEC cum "Buddhism and Environmental Protection" Lectures was held at Tian Lun Dynasty Hotel in Beijing. Their speech reveal the seriousness and urgency of ecological and environmental problems confronting humanity and, expounds from different angles Buddhist concepts of environmental protection and their timeless values, and put forward many constructive suggestions and recommendations. Especially, sangha speakers from China put forward that we should not only pay attention to "Natural Environmental Protection",

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<sup>4</sup> Wei Xian 惟贤, "A Buddhist Approach to Environmental Protection Based on Purifying the Human Mind" lecture review (立足于净化人心, 佛教与环保"演讲会评述)", *The Voice of Dharma*, 2001(9), pp.11-12.

but also the “Spiritual Environmental Protection”. During the conference in Beijing, Buddhists from the three countries also jointly held a photographic exhibition themed “Environmental Protection Under The Lens Of Monks”. Some 160 photographic works were exhibited. These comprehensively reflect the unique perspectives and attitudes of Buddhists from the three countries towards environmental protection issues.<sup>5</sup>

The Buddhists in China not only publicize Buddhist concepts of environmental protection, but also send delegations to participate international environmental meetings. On June 20, 2005, the Chinese Buddhist delegation headed by Ven. Jamyang Tubdan, abbot of Yonghegong Lama Temple, went to Ulan Bator of Mongolia to attend a four-day conference on "The Northern Tradition of Buddhism and Environmental Protection". In his speech, the Ven. Jamyang Tubdan said: “Earth is mankind’s common wealth Every nation and country has its own needs for this wealth. However, from a global perspective, this wealth is a 'public goods' belonging to all mankind. It needs all countries and all races to work in unity to protect it ... .. Let us work hand in hand together to actively improve the ecological environment of Asia and the world.”<sup>6</sup>

From October 10<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008, “The 11<sup>th</sup> CKJBFEC – the Korean General Meeting, Academic Lectures” was held in Cheju, Korea. Once again the theme - “A Buddhist’s Responsibility in Environmental Protection ” - was enthusiastically discussed in the form of Academic lectures, the event helped to increase the awareness of the participants with regards to this issue. Everyone expressed that: in the globalized world today, Buddhism should not only focus on teaching its followers, it should also seek to influence the general public to care for the environment and protect planet earth, the home of all humanity. Buddhists should also shoulder the important responsibility of maintaining the harmonious development of the world.<sup>7</sup>

On October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2008, the Jade Buddha Monastery in Shanghai held its 7<sup>th</sup> Jue Qun Cultural Week. Themed “Buddhism and Ecological Civilization”, the event invited many nationally renowned experts, scholars, dharma masters and lay practitioners to engage in an in-depth discussion about Buddhism and the construction of an ecological civilization, and the formation of a Buddhist framework for ecology in our country. In the course of the two-day seminar, participants proceeded around the main theme, everyone offered his/her own opinion and wisdom freely and achieved fruitful results. The conference papers were compiled into "*Buddhism and Ecological Civilization*", which was published by the Religious Culture Publishing House in 2009. Except for the preface, a total of 49 articles was collected. Among them, 7 are written by Dharma Masters from the Buddhist circles, including Ven. Jue Xing’s “*The Unique Characteristics of the Buddhist View of Ecology and its Modern Relevance*”, Yuan Ci’s “*World Fellowship of Buddhists and Ecological Environmental Protection*”, Shen Kai’s “*An Investigation on the Concept ‘As The Mind is Purified, The Land of the Buddha is Purified’ and Its Modern Explanation – With a Side Discussion on the Predicament of Buddhist Ecology*” and so on. 42 papers are written by secular scholars from the academic circles, including the famous professor Fang Litian’s “*The Four Buddhist Theories on Dependent Origination and Their Relevance For*

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<sup>5</sup> Ling Haicheng 凌海成, *Buddhism in China 中国佛教* (E-book in Chinese), Beijing: Chinese Intercontinental Press, 2004, p.210.

<sup>6</sup> *The Voice of Dharma*, 2005(07), pp. 43-44.

<sup>7</sup> Wang Rutong 王孺童, "The Golden Link Shines Forth in New Splendour, a discussion on Environmental Protection For the Benefit of Sentient Beings – Notes by the Chinese Buddhist delegation to South Korea, 11th China-Korea-Japan Buddhist Friendship Exchange Conference "(黄金纽带熠新辉 共议环保利群生——中国佛教代表团赴韩国参加第 11 次中韩日佛教友好交流会议侧记), *The Voice of Dharma*, 2008 (11), pp. 22-32.



*the Construction of an Ecological Civilization*”, Yang Zengwen’s *Contemporary Buddhism and the Construction of an Ecological Civilization*”, Wang Leiquan’s “*What Ecological Thought Resources Can Buddhism Provide towards Environmental Protection*”, Huang Xianian’s “*A Proposal Pertaining To Buddhism and Ecological Environmental Protection*”, and “*A General Review of Academic Seminars on Buddhism and Ecological Civilization*” , Wen Jinyu’s *The Buddhist Ideals of Non-killing and Protecting Lives and the Ecological Civilization – an Investigation based in Nu Bi City* ”, Song Lidao’s “*Western Environmental Ethics and Buddhist Ecological Ethics* ”, Zheng Xiaojun’s *On the Ecological Civilization in Theravada Buddhism*”, Xuan Fang’s *A Review of Research on Buddhism and Ecology by European and American Scholars*” and so on. The wide range of topics and rich content show many insights and illuminating ideas from Buddhism with regards to Environmental Protection. At the conclusion of the meeting, Huang Xianian summarized the three achievements of the event, 1) It puts forward the importance of the issue on ecological civilization, 2) About the establishment of a Buddhist ecology, 3) The theoretical origins of Buddhist ecology. Professor Chen Hongbing in “*New Developments in Research on Buddhist Ideas of Ecology in Our Country – a Review of ‘Buddhism and Ecological Civilization’*” made a summary of the important ideas from the host of experts, scholars, clergy and lay people. He remarked that the meeting had three outstanding points: 1) Discussions about the method of research, 2) Deepening of the theoretical research, 3) Suggestions for Thought Resources. These represent the latest achievements in research in the area of Buddhist ideas on ecological and environmental protection in China.

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009, the Second World Buddhism Forum held a sub-forum on the theme of “*Spiritual Environmental Protection in China*” at the Dharma Drum Mountain in Taiwan, where 29 papers were read, of which 12 are related to spiritual Environmental Protection. Other papers are about Environmental Protection, Ecology, Vegetarianism and other issues. Four of the articles are written in English and one in Japanese.<sup>8</sup>

In November 2009, Ven. Jue Xing, invited by the World Religions and Environmental Protection Foundation (ARC) attended the activities of the “*Windsor Festival – Celebrating The Commitment of Religious Believers Towards Protecting The earth*” in London, where he submitted “*The Eight-year-plan for Environmental Protection by the Buddhist Community in Shanghai*”, promoting the construction of an Ecological Civilization, and the perfection and implementation of environmental protection planning among Buddhists in Shanghai. A year later, on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2010, the Shanghai Buddhist community held the “*Welcoming The World Expo Forum*” at the Jade Buddha Temple in Shanghai, and the specific implementation steps of the “*Eight-year-plan for Environmental Protection by the Buddhist Community in Shanghai*” was discussed.

### **3. Practices**

The Buddhist practice of environmental protection can be said to have never stopped since ancient times, and to run through their daily lives. Their achievements are too numerous to mention. This article will mention briefly only several major activities organized by the Buddhist communities in China. These are described below.:

In the end of May 2000, a delegation from the Hong Kong Buddhist Association went to the Zan Huang County of He Bei Province to help the poor through planting trees. They raised

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nanshan.org.cn/Cgi-Bin/luodong/fjlt/show.asp?ArticleID=52&ClassID=2>

320,000 Hong Kong dollars which were used to plant 445 acres of date trees and honeysuckle, which helped the mountain people out of poverty. On March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2001, to commemorate the first anniversary of the death of Zhao Puchu, president of the BAC, the BAC organized activities for Buddhists from China, Korea and Japan to plant trees in Mr. Zhao's hometown, at Tai Hu County in An Hui Province. More than 400,000 RMB charitable funds were raised to plant peach trees, loquats, chestnuts, tea and other cash crops, which will allow 450 families consisting of more than 1,800 people out of poverty. From 2008 to 2009, the Guangdong Provincial Buddhist circles organized the "Guangdong 10,000 Buddhist Tree Planting Campaign" and donated towards the "Under The Same Blue Sky, Together Building the Mangrove Woods" Community Program. The Guangdong Buddhist Association donated 500,000 RMB towards the Provincial Environmental Protection Fund, which was used to plant 400 acres of mangrove woods in the two places of Zhan Jiang and Shantou, as a community of Buddhists, they actualized the Buddha's vow of benefiting sentient beings without any discrimination.

In addition, the Buddhist circles also actively promote a civilized way of burning incense to relieve air pollution during Buddhist religious events. Some groups of lay Buddhists also distribute pamphlets to fellow Buddhists or visitors advocating a healthy vegetarian life style and so on. Of particular note, the Dharma Drum Mountain in Taiwan can be said to a model in practicing Buddhist environmental protection, as such, its model is worthy of emulating and popularizing.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Ideas are the forerunners of action. Our ultimate purpose in conducting theoretical research is to better guide the practice, and thus change the deteriorating environment. Buddhists spare no money, and have time and again organized experts and scholars from both inside and outside the Buddhist circles to conduct theoretical research and discussions, so as to perfect the theoretical framework of a Buddhist view of ecology, to make people truly recognize the social value of Buddhism in the maintenance of ecological balance and easing the crisis of survival. In terms of actual practice, Buddhists also take the lead in efforts to implement the teachings of the Buddha.

Although advocating environmental protection and maintaining ecological balance is a common problem faced by the society as a whole, the guiding role played by Buddhists can not be ignored. Leveraging on its theoretical strengths, the Buddhist community promotes environmental protection through their personal actions, as such, their social responsibilities are also much more challenging .