

AWARENESS OF THE BUDDHISM ON ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND NATURAL DISASTERS

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Introduction

Buddhism strictly limits itself to the delineation of a way of life designed to eradicate human suffering. The Buddha refused to answer questions which did not directly or indirectly bear on the central problem of human suffering and its ending.

Objective

The objective of this research paper is to investigate whether it is possible to find the details about the awareness of the Buddhism on Environmental ethics and natural disasters.

Methodology

The method of this research is to do a brief investigation with reference to the Pali canonical texts.

Research Problem

Environmental pollution is a problem of the modern age, unheard of and unsuspected during the time of the Buddha. Therefore, it is difficult to find any specific discourse which deals with the above topic. The research problem is 'are there any awareness of the Buddhism on Environmental ethics and natural Disasters'

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Discussion of Data & Analysis

Buddhism commends frugality as a virtue in its own right. Once Ananda explained to King Udena the thrifty economic use of robes by the monks in the following order. When new robes are received the old robes are used as coverlets, the old coverlets as mattress covers, the old mattress covers as rugs, the old rugs as dusters, and the old tattered dusters are kneaded with clay and used to repair cracked floors and walls. Thus nothing is wasted.

Those who waste are derided as "wood-apple eaters." A man shakes the branch of a wood-apple tree and all the fruits, ripe as well as unripe, fall. The man would collect only what he wants and walk away leaving the rest to rot. Such a wasteful attitude is certainly deplored in Buddhism as not only anti-social but criminal.

Buddhism advocates a gentle non-aggressive attitude towards nature. According to the Sigalovada Sutta a householder should accumulate wealth as a bee collects pollen from a flower. Buddhism also prescribes the practice of metta, "loving-kindness" towards all creatures of all quarters without restriction. The Karaniyametta Sutta enjoins the cultivation of loving-kindness towards all creatures timid and steady, long and short, big and small, minute and great, visible and invisible, near and far, born and awaiting berth. The construction of parks and pleasure groves for public use is considered a great meritorious deed. Sakka the lord of gods is said to have reached his status as a result of social services such as the construction of parks, pleasure groves, ponds, wells, and roads.

In his greed for more and more possessions he has adopted a violent and aggressive attitude towards nature. Forgetting that he is a part and parcel of nature, he exploits it with unrestrained greed, thus alienating himself from nature as well. The net result is the deterioration of man's physical and mental health on the one hand, and the rapid depletion of non-replenishable natural resources and environmental pollution on the other. These results remind us of the Buddhist teachings in the suttas discussed

above, which maintain that the moral degeneration of man leads to the decrease of his lifespan and the depletion of natural resources.

Buddhism offers man a simple moderate lifestyle eschewing both extremes of self-deprivation and self-indulgence. Satisfaction of basic human necessities, reduction of wants to the minimum, frugality, and contentment are its important characteristics. Each man has to order his life on normal principles, exercise self-control in the enjoyment of the senses, discharge his duties in his various social roles, and conduct himself with wisdom and self-awareness in all activities. It is only when each man adopts a simple moderate lifestyle that mankind as a whole will stop polluting the environment.

This seems to be the only way of overcoming the present ecocrisis and the problem of alienation. With such a lifestyle, man will adopt a non-exploitative, non-aggressive, gentle attitude towards nature. He can then live in harmony with nature, utilizing its resources for the satisfaction of his basic needs. The Buddhist admonition is to utilize nature in the same way, a bee collects pollen from the flower, neither polluting its beauty nor depleting its fragrance. Just as the bee manufactures honey out of pollen, so man should be able to find happiness and fulfillment in life without harming the natural world in which he lives. On right livelihood for example Buddhist teaching requires every person to consider the manner in which the performance of his duties as employee would impact on society and the future. Employment, for example, in the armaments industry, which imperils the human future, would be a violation of the path of right livelihood.

KutadantaSutta Buddhism points out that it is the responsibility of the government to protect trees and other organic life. It is described in the Sutta on Buddhist polity named, 'The Ten Duties of the King.' (Dasarajadhamma). The KutadantaSutta points out that the government should take active measures to provide protection to flora and

fauna. Puppavagga in Dhammapada, points out that one should live in the environment without causing any harm to it.

The deforestation is major fact of environmental issues. Buddha declared monks that plucking of leaves or branches of a tree except medical needs is a minor offence (*dukulāavat*) and He proclaimed that the materials use monks must be congenial for the environment and also cutting trees is minor offence (*pācittiya*). Travelling in the raining season forbade for monks because growing grasses in raining season destroy due to walking on the earth. Monks who dwelling in jungles used to use shoes made of barks and woods. With increasing of number of monks, users of wooden made shoes also increased. Therefore, Buddha forbade to use shoes made by woods for monks. Not only cutting trees but destroying seeds is also minor offence (*pācittiya*). Buddha proclaimed that plucking flowers is offence of stealing. According to Buddhism stealing is severe offence (*pārājika*) and declared that firing forest is a minor offence (*dukulāavat*).

Buddhism strongly emphasizes the interdependence of all entities and events. There is no entity animate or inanimate and no event however trivial which is not in some way interconnected with every other. No entity or event is an island unto itself. The linkages and inter-linkages are all-pervasive and inextricable.

Conquest of the natural environment, of other species or of other groups of the human families hence the very reverse of the ideals which Buddhism teaches. Co-existence is vital and this requires a recognition and respect of those other species and groups and not an attempt at dominance. According to Cakkavattisihanada Sutta the ideal king is expected to protect not only people but quadrupeds and birds.

Conclusion

In the result Buddhism offers us a range of powerful concepts for the protection of the long-term future through such principles as interdependence, universalism, moderation, trusteeship, environmental

protection, environmental education, sustainable development and a consciousness of the rights of future generations. Buddhism's infinite treasury of wisdom cannot any longer be neglected without damage to the human future. It is clear that according to the Buddhist canonical texts there are some information about environmental ethics and natural disasters.

Keywords : Environment, Pollution, Discipline, Protection, Lifestyle

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