

An Ecological Grandeur: Environmental Ethics in Buddhist Perspective

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Abstract : There are many environmental problems. Various counter measures have been taken for environmental problems. Philosophy is an important contributor to environmental studies as it takes deep interest in meaning analysis of the concept environment and other related concepts. The Buddhist frame, which is virtue ethical, remains a better alternative to the traditional environmental outlook. Granting the unique role of man in immoral deliberations, the Buddhist approach, however, maintains a holistic concept of ecological harmony. Buddhist environmental ethics is more concerned about the complete moral community, the total ecosystem, than any particular species within the community. The moral reorientation proposed here has resemblance to the concept of 'deep ecology'. Given the present day prominence of virtue ethics, we need to explore further into the Buddhist virtue theory, so that a better framework to treat the natural world would be ensured. Environment has turned out to be one of the most widely discussed issues in the recent times. Buddhist concepts such as Pratityasamutpadavada, Samvrit Satya, Paramartha Satya, Shunyata, Sanghatvada, Bodhisattva, Santanvada and others deal with interdependence in terms of both internal as well external ecology. The internal ecology aims at mental well-being whereas external ecology deals with physical well-being. The fundamental Buddhist concepts for dealing with environmental Problems are where the environment has the same value as humans as from the two Buddhist doctrines of the Non-duality of Life and its Environment and the Origination in Dependence; and the inevitability of overcoming environmental problems through the practice of the way of the Bodhisattva, because environmental problems are evil for people and nature. Buddhism establishes that there is a relationship among all the constituents of the world. There is nothing in the world which is independent from any other thing. Everything is dependent on others. The realization that everything in the universe is mutually interdependent also shows that the man cannot keep itself unaffected from ecology. This paper would like to focus how the Buddhist's identification of nature and the Dhamma can contribute toward transforming our understanding, attitudes, and actions regarding the care of the earth. Environmental Ethics in Buddhism presents a logical and thorough examination of the metaphysical and ethical dimensions of early Buddhist literature. From the Buddhist viewpoint, humans are not in a category that is distinct and separate from other sentient beings, nor are they intrinsically superior. All sentient beings are considered to have the Buddha-nature, that is, the potential to become fully enlightened. Buddhists do not believe in treating of non-human sentient beings as objects for human consumption. The significance of Buddhist theory of interdependence can be understood from the fact that it shows that one's happiness or suffering originates from ones realization or non-realization respectively of the dependent nature of everything. It is obvious, even without emphasis, which in the context of deep ecological crisis of today there is a need to infuse the consciousness of interdependence.

Keywords : Buddhism, deep ecology, environmental problems, Pratityasamutpadavada

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