

A buddhist approach to ecology

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The teachings of the Buddha, although foremost focused on the struggle with the human psychological features of greed, hatred and delusion, nevertheless pay attention to the preservation of nature and the ecological system by engaging in promoting and spreading a non-violent teaching for the preservation of the ecological system- the protection of nature, the forests, wild animals, the earth etc. Indeed, in the ecological sense, there is no any other suitable place than the Earth for beings to survive, at least no other such place has been found at this moment. Humankind faces a direct threat, once the living conditions on earth are damaged. With regard to the protection and safeguarding of the ecological system and its animals the rule of nonharming or no-killing is the most observable precept for the Buddhist. In addition to the idea of non-harming, Buddhism proposes the philosophy of loving-kindness towards all living things visible and invisible, which should be protected as a mother protects her children. Ultimately, because of mercy and kindness towards living beings, Buddhism proposes a philanthropic attitude- the compassionate empathy for all forms of life- which undoubtedly qualifies the conservation of the ecology. Buddhist monks who are dependent upon ecological conditions for the survival of their life-style, practice disciplinary rules to preserve the forests while living in the forests and provide good examples how to preserve nature while being with nature. In this sense, Buddhism and nature are inter-related and interdependent. This paper attempts to show Buddhist engagement in ecological systems and how Buddhist thought and texts encourage followers to be with nature. Furthermore this paper will examine how Buddhist concepts of a simple but contented life with few belongings, expressing love towards all, caring and sharing, contemplative of inward and outward circumstances and developing a comprehensive understanding of oneself and the world at large- challenge and confront today's ecological challenge.

The present doctrinal research is a kind of library based exploratory research, hence the research methodology primarily involve critical analysis of existing secondary literature resources with respect to the hypothesis of the research problem. The desk work primarily included the collection of literature/reference materials in the form of hard and soft copies. The hard copies included the books, reports, reprint of published research papers, leaflets etc whereas the soft copies included web pages, pdf files (e-reprints) downloaded from the internet. The

literature so collected was referred and critically analyzed and the issues were understood from the perspectives of the objectives and hypothesis of the present research problem. **BUDDHISM: AMALGAMATION OF SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALITY** Western scholars were impressed by Buddhism for its compatibility with the new scientific worldview. Certain aspects of Buddhism such as the rejection of a Creator God, the affinity with Darwinian evolution, and the interpretation of 'Karma' as the law of cause and effect appealed them from the beginning (McMahan, 2004). Buddhist sutras such as "all things are impermanent", "all things have no self", "form does not differ from emptiness" etc have profound meaning that is comparable to sophisticated scientific principles which has been obtained through a long period of successive experiments and verifications. In respect of a scientific viewpoint, Buddhist tenets are more closely aligned with the theory of relativity of modern physics which have a deep consensus with Buddhist realities. Hence the great physicists of twentieth century such as Julius R. Openheimer, Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg, have expressed the thought that a complementary relationship between Science and Buddhism would contribute to the development of modern physics (Capra, 1975). With respect to Science and Buddhism, the quotes of none other than Albert Einstein stating "if there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism".