

ETHICAL STUDY OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AND HUMAN ATTITUDE IN BUDDHISM.

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ABSTRACT

One who desires the welfare of all living beings. Maximum happiness for the sake of maximum people. A true bodhisattva must follow the principles of Panchsila, Its a minimum code of ethics that even a lay man Buddhist is expected to follow. The first principle is ahimsa i.e. nonjury to life. It prohibited to have any kind of weapon for the purpose of killing living things. A true Buddhist will never indulge in the trade of meat.

INTRODUCTION

A more strict code of ethics is made for the Buddhist monks and nuns. They have been suggested even not to harm any living-being knowingly or unknowingly. For this reason, the Buddha himself follow the rule of Chaturmas (four months) rest in which all monks stay at the place where rainy season begins. Because during this season all insects come to the surface of earth due to wet weather. As in wet weather worms and insects may come under the feet during travelling. To follow the principle of ahimsa the Buddha prohibited his monks not to dig the ground, as it is a kind of violence against earth." Once a follower of the Buddha built a clay hut for himself and later he set it on fire, because it was not fine. When the Buddha informed by someone about this incident, he strongly objected the happening as so many living creatures would have been burnt in the process, It is the best example from the Buddha's point of view for cominenerations. The Buddha also advised to his monks not to drink unfiltered water as there may be smallest living creatures in water." It is undoubtedly good habit to drink filtered water as it is important from hygienic point o view but what is not worthy is the reason which prompts the practice, namely sympathy for other creatures.

In its positive aspect the first principle implies not only the non-injury of the living beings but also sympathy and compassion for all living beings." It also teaches us to have affection towards all creatures, timid and bold, long and short, big and small, minute and great, visible and invisible- near and far, born and awaiting birth. The Buddha's this principle goes against the right of abortion which is in current practice. Just each person's life is precious for him so is the case with other. Therefore, reverence must be cultivated towards all forms of life.

In Jataka it is illustrated that how one can be kindful with domestic animals. Even a wild animal can be tamed with the help of kind words. The Buddha himself two times performed such action. The Buddha was alone in the forest and elephant parilya waited on him. Again a mad elephant Nalagiri attacked the Buddha when he was on the way of Rajagira. No animal has encroached into the domain of human beings, rather humans have done so. Even in big city like Delhi, men have limited the space for animals. Animals are there much before the arrival of new comers. But blames are imposed on animals. No animal has increased the environmental pollution but man does so many times, Who has polluted the river Yamuna, man or animal? Italian Scientist Harve Vejeke of Pascal University has found aerosol on a height of 5079 meter in Khumba Valley of Himalya which is most dangerous element for the environment. It can badly hamper the Monsoon of South East Asia. Only human intervention is the cause of such pollution. Aerosol is responsible to increase the temperature of the environment. According to the Buddha human and beast can live and let live without fear of one another if humans cultivate sympathy and regard for all life with compassion. The Buddha won both the elephants by loving-kindness.

Buddhism believes in the laws of Karma and rebirth. According to this rule humans may also take rebirth in the form of animal and insects. From this point of view many animals and other creatures may be our ancestors. So, we must pay regard to them and we should keep a sympathetic attitude towards them. The Buddha's concept of merit also prompts a gentle non-violent attitude towards living creatures. It is said that if someone throws dish-washing water into a pool where there are small creatures so that they can feed on the tiny particles of food washed away, that person accumulates spiritual merit even by such trivial generosity. According to the Macchuddana Jataka, in a previous life, the Buddha-to-be threw his leftover food into a river to feed the fish, and by the power of that merit he was saved from an impending disaster. Thus kindness to animals, be they big or small, is a source of merit-merit that human beings need to improve their lot in the cycle of rebirth and to approach the final goal of Nibhana.

"Buddhism also expresses a gentle non-violent attitude towards the vegetable kingdom which provides us with all necessities of life. It is said that we should not even break the branch of a tree that has given us shelter.

Buddhists even today pay regard to old large tree. They believe in the belief of pre-Buddhistic animism. In Pali Canons trees are denoted by the term 'vanaspati' which literally means 'lords of the forests'. Buddhists differentiate between trees. Larger trees regarded as Bodhi trees. Trees like the iron wood the Sala and the fig trees under which the Buddha attained knowledge." Even today Buddhists of all parts of the world worship the tree at Gaya where the Buddha attained enlightenment.

The best examples of benevolence is to construct parks and pleasure groves for public use. Through these actions one can earn spiritual merits on a huge scale. In Buddhism, Sakka is considered to be the lord of gods, is said to have reached this position as a result of service such as the construction of parks, pleasure groves, ponds, wells and roads.

The open air, natural habitats and forest trees have a special fascination for the Eastern mind as symbols of spiritual freedom. Home life is a kind of bondage and quiescence. Renunciation is like the open air, nature unhampered by human activity. The chief events in the life of the Buddha took place in the open air. He was born in a park at the foot of a tree in Kapilavastu, he attained nirvana in the open air at the foot of the Bodhi tree at Bodhi GAYA; he began his missionary activity in the open air in the Sala Grove of the Mallas in Pava. The Buddha's constant advice to his disciples was to resort to natural habitats such as the forests. There, undisturbed by human activity, they could devote themselves to meditation.

Environmental Pollution and Human Attitude:

Modernity is the advantage of Western enlightenment. It is influenced by physical science and spreaded all over the world. With its Starting it began to dissect nature for the purpose of examining and assembling it according to human specification. The main purpose was to free humanity from the grip of nature. It was the birth of scientific rationalism, a world view that believed everything could be measured and explained according to observable physical laws. There were no miracles and no unseen spiritual forces. The pioneers of the enlightenment asserted that if there is a God. "let him watch the world mutely". God has made the world out of mechanical law. Now world is operated by its own accord.

The rationalism and scientific investigation of this era led world towards the Industrial Revolution and the Romantic movement which was a reaction against it. The Romantics rebelled against the increasingly mechanized, industrialized, rational world which they saw as isolating individuals from society, from nature and from their own inner power and creativity. It sought to regain the enchantment of a nowdis-enchanted world. But although Romanticism was a reaction against many aspects of the enlightenment, it had inherited a belief in the human individual as the measure of all things.

Such scenario is completely different from the Eastern civilization. Buddhism has enough power to encounter such blind storm. civilization. Buddhism has enough power to encot According to Buddhism, all we have to do is to make our lives 'fit' for external nacal, It strongly suggests that we must first protect the environment from ourselves.

Environmental pollution has assumed such vast proportions today that humanity has been forced to recognize the presence of ecological crisis. We can no longer turn a blind eye to the situation as we are already threatened with new pollution-related diseases. Pollution to this extent was unheard of during the time of the Buddha. But there is sufficient evidence in the scriptures to provide insight into the Buddhist attitude towards pollution. Cleanliness, both in the person and in the environment, was highly commended. Several rules prohibit monks from polluting green grass and water with saliva, urin and faeces. These were the common agents of pollution known during the Buddha's day. Rules about keeping the grass clean were prompted by ethical and aesthetic considerations as well as the fact that it is food for many animals. Water, whether in a river, pond or well, was for public use nad each individual had to use it with proper care so that others who followed could use it with the same degree of cleanliness.

Today, noise is recognized as a serious personal and environmental pollutant troubling everyone to some extent. It causes deafness, Stess and irretation, breeds resentment, saps energy and lowers efficiency.⁴ The Buddha did not hesitate to voice his stern disapproval of noise whenever the occasion arose. Once he ordered a group of monks to leave the monastery for noisy behaviour. Even in their choice of monasteries the presence of undisturbed silence was an important quality the Buddha and his disciples looked for. Silence overawes those who are impure with looked for." Silence invigorates those who are pure at heart and raises their ignoble impulses of greed, hatred and delusion. The BhayatheravaSutta beautifully illustrates how even the rustle of a falling twig in the quit of the forest sends tremors through an impure

heart. This may perhaps account for the present craze for constant auditory stimulation with transistors and cassettes. The moral impurity caused by greed, avarice, acquisitive instincts and aggression has made people fear silence which lays bare the reality of self-awareness. They prefer to drown themselves in loud music.

The psychological training of the monks is so advanced that they are expected to cultivate a taste not only for external silence, but for inner silence of speech, desire and thought as well. The sub-vocal speech, the inner chatter that goes on constantly within us in our waking life, is expected to be silenced through meditation. The sage who succeeds in completely quelling this inner speech is called a muni, a silent one. The inner silence is maintained even when speaking.

It is worth noting as well as the Buddhist attitude to speech. Moderation in speech is considered a virtue, as one can avoid four unwholesome vocal activities, namely; falsehood, slander, harsh speech and frivolous talk. In its positive aspect, moderation in speech paves the way to self-awareness. Buddhism commends speaking at the appropriate time, speaking the truth, speaking gently, speaking what is useful, and speaking out of loving-kindness; the opposite modes of speech are condemned. The Buddha's general advice to monks regarding speech was to discuss the Dhamma or maintain noble silence.

Solution:

The Buddha himself in his life time announced that the religion Buddhist as such would be vanished after a few thousand years but as a universal law it will continue for time immemorial. With the shortening of the life span of humans, moral degeneration will also take place gradually in the society. Along with the moral decay, there will be an increase in fatal diseases, the proliferation of weapons and worst of all, a deepening of spiritual delusion.

If we take seriously, these predictions confirm the forecasts of scientists and others that we are living in a way that is both unsustainable and grossly irresponsible towards other forms of life as well as our own Species. The only solution of these questions is enlightenment of the Buddhas of to attain bodhisattva, But what has been harmed to the environment, cannot be recovered in a day. For this purpose a gradual attempt should be made so that past damages can be compensated. We all know that selfishness and greed cannot be vanished overnight. So the first step towards the solution is to adopt 'skillful means', at least - must be to explain how

our present way of life is simply not in our own self-interest. We should adopt a life style in which millions of living-beings may be benefited.

The second step of a Buddhist solution would be to challenge the social structures which sustain and promote values that blind us to the ecologically destructive results of our actions. Two structures of particular importance would be education and economics. In the secular democracies of the world, both of these structures are based on belief in value-free knowledge, unlimited progress, and individual freedom. The combined effect of these belief is the rapid erosion of the moral values which still survive from our ancestral religions, such as compassion, generosity, self-confinement etc. As a force of spiritual renewal, Buddhism would seek to inject into our Social structure a fresh awareness of undisputed values - but without these depending on belief in God.

An appeal should be made for the sake of self-confinement and elilewal of social values. These both approaches can be possible only through ddal inner practices of self-transformation. Value based education; thinking and meditation would certainly uproot the tendencies of the mind which are destructive to both ourselves and the environment. We need to be encouraging within ourselves qualities such as simplicity, balance, compassion and understanding. We are each the starting point of a world-order based on these qualities. In such ways Buddhist practice would work inwardly at transforming the mind and outwardly at transforming the world.

There are two traditions in Buddhism which might prove particularly relevant to the present ecological crisis. The first is the belief that all beings are enlightened if only they would realize it. We can say that delusion is not essential for all aspects of life rather an accidental opportunity to have ignorance. In their innermost being, every creature is aglow with illumination. Insight is something which can break into our lives at any moment. Enlightenment is not a distant goal that we may reach after many acons of effort but is already present here and now in everyone.

In modern age people have become alienated from themselves and nature. When science started unveiling the secrets of nature one by one, humanity gradually lost faith in religion. Consequently, moral and spritual values were also discarded. Since the Industrial-revolution and the consequent acquisition of wealth through technological exploitation of nature, humanity nas become more and more materialistic. The pursuit of sensory pleasures and the acquisition of possessions have become ends in themselves. The senses dominate people and they are

slaves to their instable passions. Thus men and women have become alienated from themselves as they abandon themselves to sensual pleasures and acquisitive instincts.

Humans in their greed for more and more possessions, they have adopted a violent and aggressive attitude towards nature. Forgetting that they are part and parcel of nature, they exploit it with unrestrained greed, thereby alienating themselves from it as well. The result is the deterioration of humanity's special and mental health on the one hand, and the rapid depletion of non-replenish able 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 humanity leads to a decrease in life span and the depletion of natural resources.

Moral degeneration is a double-edged weapon, it has adverse effects on humanity's mental and physical well-being as well as on nature. Depletion of vast resources of fossil fuels and forests have given rise to a very severe energy crisis. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that such rapid depletion of non-renewable natural resources within less than two centuries, an infinite small fraction of the millions of years taken for them to form, is due to modern society's inordinate greed and acquisitiveness. A number of simple ancient societies had advanced technological skills; as is apparent from their vast sophisticated irrigation schemes designed to meet the needs of larger populations. Yet they survived in some countries for over 2000 years without such problems as environmental pollution and depletion of natural resources. This was no doubt due to the philosophy which inspired and formed the basis of these civilizations.

In the present crisis humanity has to look for radical solutions. Pollution cannot be dealt with in the long term on a remedial or cosmetic basis or by tackling symptoms: all measures should deal with basic causes. These are determined largely by our values, priorities and choices'. The human race must reappraise its value system. The materialism that has guided our life style has landed us in very severe problems. Buddhism teaches that mind is the force runner of all things, mind is supreme. If we act with an Umpire mind, i.e. a mind sullied with great hatred and delusion. Suffering is the inevitable result. If we act with a pure mind, i.e. with the positive qualities of contentment, compassion and wisdom, happiness will follow like shadow." We have to understand that pollution in the environment has been caused because there has been psychological pollution within ourselves. If we want clean environment, we have to adopt a life style that springs from a moral and spiritual dimension.

Buddhism offers humanity 'the middle path', a simple moderate life-style 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. Every individual has to order his life on moral principles, exercise self-control in the employment of the senses, discharge his duties in his various social roles. And behave with wisdom and self awareness in all activities. It is only when each person adopts a simple moderate life-style that humanity 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 life-style, humanity will adopt a non-exploitative, non-aggressive, caring attitude towards nature. We can then live in a harmony with nature, using its resources for the satisfaction of our basic needs. Just as the bee manufactures honey out of nectar, so we should be able to find happiness and fulfilment in life without harming the natural world in which we live.

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