

Chapter 2

Global Ecological Values and Buddhism

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ABSTRACT:- Ecological values are related to the surroundings covering all aspects of nature i.e., Trees, plants, animals, and human beings in the environment. Modern unscientific and unplanned technological advances are considered the major causes of the ecological imbalance. Buddhism is a system of ethics and values. Lord Buddha is the founder of Buddhism. He is one of the greatest ethical teachers in the world.

Buddhism teaches us to respect all forms of life and nature. Ecological values can be observed by applying Buddha's tenets of the Four Noble Truths, Law of Dependent Origination, Eight-Fold Path, Right livelihood, etc. We have to realize the extent to which the forest ecosystem and the entire global life-support system are interdependent. The ethics and values of Buddhism show the feelings of Love, compassion, kindness, and other noble qualities and human values, which are compulsory for ecological values. This paper will explore how Buddhism and Lord Buddha's teachings are purely eco-friendly and how they can bring about happy, healthy, harmonious, and peaceful co-existence through the principle of regard for all levels of beings in the world as a whole.

Keywords: Ecological values, Buddhism, Eight-Fold Path, Eco-friendly, Peaceful

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GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL VALUES AND BUDDHISM

SHANTI MANTRA -

“1: OM SARVESAM MANGLAM BHUYAT (SARVE BHAVANTU SUKHINAH),

2: SARVE SANTU NIRAMAYAH.

3: SARVE BHADRANI PASHYANTU,

4: MA KASHCHID DUKH BHAGBHAVET.

5: OM SHANTIH, SHANTIH, SHANTIH.”¹

Meaning:

1 : Om, may all become happy.

2 : May all be free from illness.

3 : May all see what is Auspicious.

4 : May no one suffer.

5 : Om Peace, Peace, Peace.

This Shanti Mantra of the GARUDA PURANA is the main theme of Indian culture. So, we wish that every one of us, every member of society, not only humans but also our animals, plants, trees, and rivers i.e., everything in the universe should be happy, healthy, and harmonious. The study of the environment is not to be limited only to the study of ecological systems or the study of plants, trees, rivers, animals, etc. Environment means everything by which we are surrounded; not only natural but also social, moral, and spiritual elements play an extremely effective role in our daily life everywhere. It may affect us directly or indirectly. Global warming and pollution are the main and the most important problems of the present world. Our industrial development pollutes and warms our environment very badly. Our physical and materialistic needs have increased manifold in this century and in fulfilling them our ecological system has become imbalanced. It is the demand of the time that we should think very seriously and positively about the environment and ecology. Author thinks that without developing moral, spiritual, and ecological values, we may not succeed in protecting our environment and ecology.

In Ancient India, Our Rishis used to worship the Sun, the Moon, rivers, plants, trees, and animals which shows the relationship between nature and man was very eco-friendly. Now we have forgotten this eco-friendly relationship, and as a result our natural environment and ecology are becoming increasingly polluted day by day. The greed of man has increased so fast that he wants to earn pleasure by any means. Everyone wants to achieve his goal at any cost, in any way. To solve

this problem, Ecological values in Buddhism can play an important role. First, we have to know about the word 'ECOLOGY'. The English word 'ECOLOGY' is derived from the two Greek words 'OIKOS' and 'LOGOS'. 'OIKOS' means home or a place to live. It refers to the world where we live in. 'LOGOS' means study or discussion. Ecology is the study of the relationships between living organisms, including humans and their physical environment, it seeks to understand the vital connections between plants and animals and the world around them. Ecology also provides information about the benefits of ecosystems and how we can use Earth's resources in ways that leave the environment healthy for future generations. Today ecology is used in a more technical sense. It is considered a study of the relationship or organism to surroundings covering all aspects of nature, plants, animals, and human beings and their general relation to the environment. Our survival depends on the protection of our surroundings very often indicated by the term environment. So according to it how to live a better life depends upon how to establish a balanced relationship between our ways of living with nature. To harm any aspect of nature is as good as doing harm to oneself. This sense of integral relation between us and nature for our survival on earth has been beautifully but indirectly discussed in Buddhism.

Lord Buddha is the founder of Buddhism. He is one of the greatest ethical teachers in the world. Buddhism is the first world religion that evolved in India and spread across its frontiers by virtue of its intrinsic validity and spiritual energy.¹ Buddhism is a system of thought, a religion, a spiritual science, and a way of life that is reasonable, valuable, and practical. Radhakrishnan says - "In the Lord Buddha's scheme of ethics, the spirit of love is more important than good works. So let everyone cultivate a boundless love towards all beings." Respect for the living being is an integral part of morality and values. We can win the heart of any being even of animals by virtue of love and compassion. Man is not divine but has to become divine. His divine status is something to be built upon good thoughts, words, and deeds. Lord Buddha emphasized the ethical aspect, according to which the world is an expression of law but this law is an ethical law. Ecological values in Buddhism are based on the ethical law of Buddhist ethics.

Ecological values and environmental ethics, according to Buddhism can be observed through the practical application of Lord Buddha's tenets of the Four Noble Truths, Law of Dependent Origination, Eight-Fold Path, Right Livelihood, etc. Ecological values and environmental ethics can be made pollution-free and development can be continued through the Buddhist approach by practicing compassion, humility, love, non-violence, etc. Based on Buddhist ecological values, we can confront the problems of nature exploitation more effectively than other religions and ethics.

Lord Buddha asked the people to follow the ethical code of life that he had himself led to get rid of suffering. Thus, Buddhism is a way of living, not merely a theory of life. It teaches people to live a good and peaceful life. It emphasized the need for inward concentration and meditation. Animals, plants, trees, and forests are parts of human life. For the protection of trees, plants, and forests, Lord Buddha forbade the disciples to cut the trees, to avoid harming seeds, and plant life. Among the Buddhists, large and old trees are particularly reserved. These trees and plants are called 'VANASPATI' in Pali. The Buddhist monk and nun do not allow wandering during the rainy season to avoid injury to the life of insects and growing crops, grasses, plants, and trees.

As Lord Buddha himself said: - "BE YE A LAMP UNTO YOU."² Everyman can be a light unto himself (ATMA DIPO BHAVA), a saviour of himself. The aspirants must themselves try for their uplift. Ecological values in Buddhism teach that one should apply Buddhist ethics in practical and daily life. Ecological values and ethical conduct are built on the vast conception of universal love, compassion, and humility for all living and non-living beings, on which Lord Buddha's teachings and ethics are based. Lord Buddha taught us to live for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many. Lord Buddha's compassion represents love, charity, kindness, humility, tolerance, and other noble qualities and values. Therefore, Buddhist ethics consists of the qualities and values of the heart and the mind.³ Every religion of the world teaches us to abstain from evil whether it is mental or physical.

In Buddhism, ecological values are based on a non-violent and gentle attitude to nature. The word 'nature' means everything, which is not organized and constructed by man. The Pali equivalent, which comes closest to 'nature', is PAKATI (SKT. PRAKRUTI). The word dhammata

and niyam are used in Pali literature as “natural law or way.” We cannot do better than be patient. If we return violence by violence, there will be no end to violence, enmity will give rise to enmity hatred will only beget hatred, revenge will rouse more revenge, and resentment can never be conquered by resentment. The best thing we can do with these evils is to appease them with antidotes of love, sympathy, and forgiveness. “Hatred can never be overcome with hatred in this world”.⁴ Buddha says – “Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time, it ceases by love, and this is an eternal law”.⁵ Let us, therefore, destroy hatred and cultivate love in our hearts. Then we shall obtain peace of mind and ecological values.

Purity and purification have loaded purport in Buddhism. Lord Buddha is no doubt a person of perfect purity. A man of good conduct and character is a pure man because his conduct and character are free from blemishes. Those who do not commit evil actions in thought, speech, and body are said to keep themselves pure. “Do well and be good, purify your mind.” These are the teachings of Lord Buddha, which makes ecological values practical and relevant in our daily lives. Buddhism is a religion of self-examination. So, Lord Buddha has said – “Do not be controlled by greed, anger, and pride.” The mind has a vital role in penetrating into the nature of reality. Lord Buddha has repeatedly and emphatically said that ‘polluted consciousness’ brings suffering and evils whereas a purified consciousness becomes the background of the arising of consciousness. A man becomes polluted because of the pollution of consciousness and he becomes purified, as there is the springing of purity in it. One should make the right efforts to remove the pollution of consciousness by utilizing every moment of life with complete awareness keeping in view of ecological values.

Ecological values in Buddhism may be described as four dimensions of a Buddhist Ecological worldview. Here Buddhists view the interdependent world as conjoined in four ways: - existentially, morally, cosmologically, and ontologically. Existentially, Buddhists affirm that all sentient beings share the fundamental conditions of birth, old age, suffering, and death. Buddhist environmentalists and ecologists extend loving kindness, compassion, and respect beyond people and animals to include plants and the earth itself. “We humans think we are smart, but orchid knows how to make a beautiful, well-proportioned

shell. We should bow deeply before the orchid and the snail and join our palms reverently before the monarch butterfly and the magnolia tree".⁶

If immorality grips society, man and nature deteriorate, if morality reigns, the equality of human life and nature improves. Thus, greed, hatred, and ignorance produce pollution on one hand. Sacrifice, love, peace, humility, friendliness, and right understanding produce purification on the other hand. Thus, man and nature are interdependent. Buddhism considers that all actions of human beings play an important role in creating a pleasant or unpleasant world and ecological values. Just as the mind and body of a person are interdependent and interrelated. Life and nature particularly, humanity, environment, and ecology are equally dependent on each other. The interrelationship between humanity and the environment or ecology can be seen in laws (PANCANIYAMA DHAMMA). The Buddhist literature stresses that nature and human beings need to live in close harmony. Trees, plants, and animals should be the objects of unlimited kindness and benevolence since they do not demand anything but give and only give.

KABIR says: -

‘VRIKSH KABAHU NAHI PHAL BHAKHE, NADI NA SANCHAI NEER.

PARMARTH KE KARNE, SADHUN DHARA SHAREER”⁷

Meaning - Vriksh Kabhi appna phal nahi khate, Nadiyan kabhi apna pani khud ke liye jama nahi karti. Dusre ki bhalayee ke liye sadhu bhi sharir dharan karte hai. Iska matlab yeh hai ki paropkar ki bhavna prakriti me har jagah dikhai deti hai. Prakriti khud ke liye kuch nahi karti hai. Aadikal se vah sristi ke kalyan ke liye anvarat juti huyee rahti hai.

These trees, plants, and animals live for others and do for others. Therefore, we should follow the path of “JIYO AUR JINE DO”. It is not possible without following the path of ecological values and non-violence (Ahimsa). Non-violence (Ahimsa) means violence in any form is strictly prohibited. Violence, injury, or harm caused to any living beings in any form is violence (himsa). Therefore, non-violence or ahimsa is to be practiced not only in deed but also in thought and words. So not

to kill but to practice harmlessness, compassion, and love for all. For ecological values it is said in Buddhism –

“NA HI VAIREN VERANI SAMMANTIGH KUDACHAN.
AVAIREN CHA SAMMANTI YES DAMMO SANATANO”⁸

Non-violence or Ahimsa implies a life of love for all. So, Non-violence or Ahimsa is most emphasized for ecological values in Buddhism. The feelings of Love, compassion, charity, kindness, tolerance, humanity, and other noble qualities and human values are compulsory for ecological values. It is said in the Buddhist DHAMMAPADA –

“Tolerance and forgiveness are ultimate Tapas or Param Tap”
“KHANTI PARAM TAPO TITIK KHA”⁹

Lord Buddha says in the DHAMMAPADA: -

“Give up anger and pride”
“KRODH JAHE VIPPA JAHEYAY MAN”¹⁰

Because of the above-mentioned discussions, I conclude that ecological values in Buddhism are based on Buddhist ethical values i.e., love compassion, humility, charity, kindness, tolerance, forgiveness, non-violence, and other noble qualities. Today Lord Buddha’s statue inspires us to love, charity, compassion, kindness, non-violence, peace, and other positive, spiritual, ethical, and ecological values for our troubled age.

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