

Ethics for Building and promoting Environmental Responsibility: a Buddhist perspective

Bakaki Andrew

Environmental responsibility compatibly deals with ethical norms or behaviors that are suitable to control human interactions with the natural environment. In society today, there has been no good relationship between man and environment even after knowing that man cannot survive without the environment. The Buddhist perspective on this interrelationship is best summed up in three angles: “(i) physical environment (ii) social environment, and (iii) spiritual environment.” These aspects will be discussed in the first section of this paper. While the second part, will focus on Buddhist perspective on the causal forces of environmental degradation in the modern society.

Drawing from the Buddhist *Pāli* canon, the third section of the paper explores and promotes ecological ethics and responsibility in light of the Buddhist teaching. Central to the Buddhist teaching is the provision and encouragement of partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring all people to improve their quality of life without distracting that of other beings and the future generations.

Most significantly, the paper emphasizes the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path (Buddha’s central teachings) is very important in promotion of environmental ethics. This path is defined in the *SaccavibhangaSutta* of the *MajjhimaNikāya* as: Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. This path offers an indispensable framework for both understanding and putting into practice Buddhist environmental ethics. Though the Path is aimed at attaining final liberation, its value in promoting a healthy physical, social and spiritual atmosphere cannot be magnified. The Buddha admonished his followers from behaviors such as wrong action, wrong livelihood and so on. He clearly spelled out what constitutes the right, wholesome, and skillful as opposed to wrong, unwholesome, and unskillful path. This framework not only helps us to understand the field of Buddhist environmental ethics and preservation but also realize inner peace, true happiness, and final liberation.

Keywords: Ethics, Environment, Biodiversity, Ecology, Understanding, Thought, Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, Mindfulness, Concentration

¹ Sri Lanka International Buddhist Academy,
Email : bakakia23@gmail.com