The Buddhist Philosophical Perspective of Environmental Preservation and Management

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At present we face a lot of environmental issues at both national and global levels. At the same time we will have to face severe environmental issues in the future. This is evident in forming the elements of earth, air, and water which reflect the human influence on organic and inorganic life. So, it is timely significant to pay attention on environmental preservation and management. The main purpose of this study is to explore how the Buddhist teaching could be used for environmental preservation and management. Accordingly, this study introduces a suitable long term environmental preservation model. The other objectives of this study are to learn Buddhism for environmental preservation and management, to create a new model which combines man and environment together, to compare Buddhist thinking and modern man’s thinking regarding environmental preservation and management through the above and, to motivate man to preserve environment in through both direct and indirect ways. This study was based on the question whether the Buddhist philosophical teaching could be utilized to solve today’s environmental issues? The hypothesis was that the Buddhist philosophical teaching could be utilized for environmental preservation and management. For this purpose, the teachings of Buddha, related to environmental preservation as found in “Suttapiṭaka” and “Vinayapiṭaka” were studied. In order to address these conditions we have subjected randomly collected information for interpretation and comparative analysis in qualitative research methodology. The content that has been analyzed is compared with the ethical code related to the patterns of human behavior and its relation to conservation. This has also given way to building some models related to the Buddhist teaching of environmental preservation. The objective of Buddhist philosophy is to generate sensitivity in the mind, of human beings and persuade them to preserve organic and inorganic environment, based on the view “Man is a creation of the environment”. The Buddhist philosophical process of environmental preservation includes preserving flora and fauna, water, air, soil as well as garbage disposal. These elements, along with ethics, can be used in effective environment preservation. This new model of environmental preservation directs human beings towards sustainable development with a realistic vision. The Buddhist teaching on environment civilizes man’s physical and spiritual behaviors, with a view to lead human beings towards environmental preservation with a realistic perspective.

Keywords: environmental preservation, models, Buddhist teaching

Introduction

Man himself is a creation of environment. But the environment is not a creation of man. Various activities
of man influence on the existence of the environment. At the same time, the environment too controls man’s physical and spiritual behavior in various ways. Therefore it could be seen that there’s an interrelationship between man and the environment. But that has been collapsed due to various political, economical and social influences.

Environment includes the things in the surrounding moreover; the physical and chemical surrounding is included in the environment (Soratha, 1999, p. 564). Some cultural and aesthetic factors which cause the qualitative development of an individual’s life are analyzed under the environment (Gamlath, 2009, p. 783). According to Merium Webster Dictionary the environment means the collection of all the conditions and causes that influence on a living being’s life and development.¹

Environmental issues are created due to the evolving of technical tendencies such as industrialization and urbanization which happened due to the development of industrial technical and communicational development that took place as a result of world’s gradual evolution.

Destruction of the naturalism of the environment, air, water, sound and soil pollution, destruction of animals and deterioration of natural resources have become present environmental issues. Man is taking various approaches in order to control these issues and preserve the environment. But is the transitional involvement of man enough to control or irradiates this rapid environmental destruction? This has become a bring issue today. Therefore it is a responsibility of every social being to involve in preserving the environment taking new approaches.

This research focused on “How the Buddhist teaching could be used in order to solve modern environmental issues”, created in national and global levels. Accordingly establishing a new suitable format to preserve the environment using Buddhist philosophical teaching is also done in this research.

The Buddhist Philosophical Perspective of Environmental Preservation

The Buddhist teaching is established on the concept that “Man is a part of the environment”. The environment serves a great deal in helping man to achieve various worldly objectives and finally reach “Nibbāna”, which is the ultimate goal of transcendental life. Environment helps man to gain spiritual purity by having self control over his mind body and verbal behavior. Man’s spirituality is nourished by the balanced existence of all the environmental factors. The functioning of the environment is important for a person who is involved in order to achieve transcendental objectives. Therefore the Buddhism philosophically defines the environment, its existence, environment pollution and environmental preservation.

The Lord Buddha has emphasized it is an important the need of protecting the environment as it is an important factor in man’s existence. The Buddhist philosophical perspective of environment preservation could be identified under two categories.

(1) Teaching of environment pollution and its results.
(2) Teaching of environment preservation and its importance.

The Lord Buddha identified the environment as a dear friend. He always motivated his followers to protect the environment. He made his followers understand the reality of the relationship between environment and man. When the action of man is unethical, the system of the environment becomes imbalanced. The Lord Buddha preached that the results which take place due to that bring bad effect to the man in return

Adhammika Sūtta analyses the environmental pollution man’s contribution to it and the way that the man gets its results in return.

“Dependent Origination” (Paticca Samuppāda) explains that the existence of man which is embedded with the environment happens due to causality. Being a member of the environment the actions of man’s imprudent behavior damages the environment. The man is susceptible to get repercussions of his all misdeeds. It is the man, who could prevent the factors that cause environment pollution. By doing that environment will be preserved. The things that happen due to various causes, when the causes are changed causes become stopped (Hēṭūpaticca Sambhūtāṃ -Hēṭūbhaṅganirūjāti). The main objective of Buddhist philosophy is to work according to this philosophical perspective and preserve the environment. Thus the causality in Adhammika Sūtta could be stated in Figure 1.

![Figure 1](image-url)

*Figure 1.* The cause and effect of environmental pollution in relation to Adhammika Sūtta.
The processing and the way how it proceeds is given above. When man thinks that him-self and environment is bound together, it provides protection to both of them.

The Lord Buddha explained the behavior of man and his physical and mental nature by using similes which are based on the environment. He also showed that there’s a similarity in every way between man and the environment through that.

Thripiṭaka is consisted of these types of preaching’s. For example; Rukkha Sūṭta of Aṅguttara Nikāya could be cited (Aṅguttaranikāya 2, 2006, p. 214). It analyses the fertility, infertility unwholesome attitudes and wholesome attitudes of the people. Moreover, this Sūṭta exemplifies human interrelationship and nature of the man. This Sūṭta says about four varieties of trees (see Figure 2).

![Figure 2. The four varieties of trees explain in Rukkha Sūṭta.](image)

Through the analysis of four varieties of trees the Lord Buddha enumerates the four groups of people in the society. Some other Sūṭtas also reveal that there are four varieties of bulls in the world (Aṅguttaranikāya 2, 2006, p. 210).

1. Being rude one’s own bulls and not being rude to other bulls.
2. Being rude to other bulls rather then being rude to one’s own.
3. Being rude one’s own bulls and other as well.
4. Not being rude to one’s own bulls and other as well.

The Lord Buddha described the nature of the four varieties of the people in society by comparing aforesaid four kinds of bulls. In the same way in Māsika Sūṭta in the Aṅguttara Nikāya also endorses that the four varieties of mice are used to describe four groups of people who have those qualities (Aṅguttaranikāya 2, 2006, p. 208). In the same way, Lord Buddha sharply revealed the physical and mental behavior of men using four varieties of clouds (Aṅguttaranikāya 2, 2006, p. 196), pots (Aṅguttaranikāya 2, 2006, p. 200), reservoirs (Aṅguttaranikāya 2, 2006, p. 204) and mangoes (Aṅguttaranikāya 2, 2006, p. 206).

A Bhikkhu should make sure that his behavior does not cause inconvenience to others. This was explained through a beautiful simile of a flower and a bee that comes to take honey. Just the Lord Buddha preached that as the bee doesn’t harm or crimple the flower and takes honey, a Bhikkhu who acts according to Ariyā conduct should not harm his audience (Khuddakanikāya, 2006, p. 36). Moreover, the Lord Buddha admired the silence. He illustrated the importance of the silence of a certain man by giving more and more information. The silence can be taken as a criterion to measure the temperaments of a person’s behavior. Accordingly, by taking a little stream and a big rivers’ flow as example and showing the difference the Lord Buddha preached that the deep silence is most meaningful (Khuddakanikāya, 2006, p. 222).

Furthermore, the Lord Buddha took the sea as an example to bring forth the well disciplined behavior and character of the Bhikkhu. This example can be seen Uposatha Sutta in Udānapāliya. The Lord Buddha
elucidated the value of well disciplined behavior of the Bhikkhū by taking the sea into his account. And also, the Lord Buddha emphasized that some features of the sea can be recurrent in the Buddhist dispensation (Bhikkhū Sasana) (Khuddakanikāyā, 2006, p. 230).

The Lord Buddha emphasized that the environmental factors, psychological and sociological of man go parallel (Go hand in hand). Through this he motivated man to preserve the environment. Moreover, by using environment related factors in Dhamma preaching the Lord Buddha established a good attitude towards preserving the ever in human.

As the environment is a friend of man, it is his duty to protect its beauty. The Lord Buddha preached that protecting the environment will cause the existence of man. Admiring the beauty of the environment is a factor of environment preservation.

The Lord Buddha preached that “Great hermitages” are beautiful. They attract the mind. Man acts with lust. They do not love the forest. But the Arahatta Bhikkhū, Who have no attachment towards anything therefore he loves the environment (Khuddakanikāyā, 2006, p. 46). The aesthetic beauty which emerges from Buddhist philosophy is bound with the beauty of the environment. The jungle, which is consisting of treats, vegetation and animals, is a soothing environment to Arahatta Bhikkhū. The great personalities those who wanted to untie all the bonds of samsāra, usually they find out calm places to meditate in order to being away from desires. (Objectives) through the experiences of forest life.

The Arahatta Bhikkhū’s, those who are detached from the worldly comforts felt the wonder of the nature. They expressed their paean of joy (Udāna) with the most aesthetic qualities in the forest. When we refer Thera Gāthā ana Thēri Gāthā wean find out Ven Mahākassapa’s paean of joy. It is as followers (Khuddakanikāyā, 2006, p. 244). A Similar appreciation of nature could be identified through Rev. Kāludāyi’s (Khuddakanikāyā, 2006, p. 152).

All these great sayings depict the beauty of the environment. Accordingly, the philosophical and aesthetic analysis of the Buddhist perspective can be cited as the the principles of environmental preservation.

Though the Lord Buddha preached “Dhamma” in order to build up a relationship between environment and audience, all the preaching’s connected with the environment are common to all human beings. Therefore, the Buddhist philosophical perspective about environmental preservation is established by giving prominence to entire human race. The Buddhist perspective of environmental preservation is not only related to Buddhist audience.

The Model That Depicts the Buddhist Perspective Utilized Environmental Preservation

The main objective of this research is to establish a format that depicts the Buddhist teaching about environment. This format is established on the basis of the teaching of Lord Buddha such as:

(1) Teaching of water.
(2) Teaching of trees.
(3) Teaching of being away from killing animals.
(4) Teaching of silence.

This format discusses the Buddhist philosophical perspective used in environmental preservation. The functioning of this new format could be described as follows:

The functioning of this format can be presented in two steps.

(1) The environment getting polluted due to the conflict between man’s social activities and the environment.
(2) Environment preservation and conducting man’s social activities according to Buddhist perspectives.

First Step

The Man engages themselves in social activities individually as a group. Those social activities are, eating, dress designing, cultivating, building houses doing a job, entertaining them, implementing development programs using machines and technical equipments.

There is always a conflict between the social activities of man and the environment. It is because most of the activities of man harm the existence of the environment. This conflict is depicted through the side arrows in the given diagram.

The environment gets polluted due to conflict between man’s social activities and the environment. Moreover service issues like wasting of resources can cause deterioration of society. The environmental problems induce to collapse the wall between social activities and environment. At the same time this will cause a severe destruction to nature and functioning environmental factors become unstable due to the imbalance of the environment. The First step of the diagram shows the conflict and resulted of man’s activities and environment, since the origin of the civilization of man.

Second Step

This reveals the way that how the environmental preservation takes place and how to conduct and mold the social activities of man according to the Buddhist perspective.

(1) The teaching of protecting purity of water.
(2) The teaching of preserving trees.
(3) The teaching of protecting the life of entire animal race.
(4) The teaching of recycling and Management.
It is obvious that the Lord Buddha has paid considerable attention in great deal above factor. It will provide an opportunity to present the problems like environment pollution, deterioration of natural resources by using the Buddhist philosophical teaching about environmental management which is depicted in the diagram. But the man’s social activities should be conducted according to the Buddhist perspective the Lord Buddha has confirmed the protection of water, air, soil, animals, and trees by leading the man towards a philosophical perspective. Moreover, man has been motivated according to Buddhist philosophical perspective for the tasks such as waste being away, recycling them. The Buddhist perspective of pressuring environmental factors such as water, trees, and animals could be depicted as follows.

**The Teaching of Protecting Purity of Water**

As a mother nourishes a child, the rain nourishes both active and lazy men (Saṃyuttanikāya 1, 2006, p. 28). Water is the life of all the animals. Water is needed for the existence of trees. Therefore, The Lord Buddha preached that it is necessary to protect water. Water soothes the mind and body of every person. Thus the tiredness is prevented. It gives coldness and happiness. Water helps man in various ways. The Lord Buddha analyzed this in *Pijota Sutta* in *Saṃyuttanikāya*.

Water is essential for all the man’s activities. When man uses polluted water, he becomes sick. Water gives advantages to all animals. Therefore, there is a great use of water (Aṅguttaranikāya 1, 2006, p. 72), so that one should not put human waste or spit into water (Pācittiypālī 1, 2006, p. 554). When the water circle is polluted it affects the social existence of man. Therefore, the Lord Buddha motivated his followers (Audience) to protect the purity of water. He said that the residence should not be built near the water sources because if will paces the way to add all the waste materials into the water (Cullavaggapālī 2, 2006, p. 364).

Water makes the interconnection with human life. Man’s daily activities are delayed when he does not get enough water the water management cause the physical well-being of man as well (Aṅguttaranikāya 1, 2006, p. 248). “Oh Bhikku, when the seeds are cultivated in a paddy field which is fertile, not scattered as it was not harmed by sun and wind and has extracted the essence needed, the seeds grow and spread very well due to the heavy rain”.

The man, who depends on agriculture for his existence, should use water when needed. He should use only the necessary amount, without any over use. The Lord Buddha has preached that the farmer who cultivate paddy also should provide water to the paddy field when necessary and remove them at the correct time (Aṅguttaranikāya 1, 2006, p. 426).

The present man has become a victim of spreading and non-spreading diseases due to the use of impure water. For example people of the north central province and many other places, are subjected to kidney diseases and some other people become victims of the diseases such as diarrhea and cholera as they use polluted water. Business of selling bottled drinking water is functioning at present. Therefore, water is a service that has to be paid a lot of money. But many people of the world can’t even get pure water even by paying money. We hear about those who die with thirst or drinking impure or polluted.

Water has become a rapidly wasting resource. Therefore water management should be done. For that the teaching in Buddhism about water management could be used. The Lord Buddha said as water gets wasting, it should be used with care. The Lord Buddha gave a prominent value to water in order to prevent it being wasted and to preserve its purity. The Lord Buddha guided his followers (audience) to purity water and preserves the religious quality of water.
Accordingly, number of teaching in Buddhism could be seen in Buddhist literature and those teachings motivate people to understand the dire need of water and the dire need of preserving its purity.

**The Teaching of Preserving Trees**

“The one, who lives according to the Dhamma, is protected by the Dhamma” (Dhammo have rakkhati dhammacārin) (Khuddakanjākyo, 2006, p. 100). Buddhism is adapted according to nature. While rejecting the ideology of the creation of man and his existence, the Lord Buddha has said that the functioning of the entire environment including man happens according to the law of nature.

Here, the Lord Buddha defined nature and its law as “Dhamma”. Therefore, The Lord Buddha motivated man to protect trees which is a marvelous gift of nature. He said that “Mūla Bhīja” (roots which grow as ginger) “Skandha Bhīja” (Branches that grow as Banyan), “Palu Bhīja Puruk” such as on sugar cane and bamboo and conducive factors should not be destroyed (Dīghanikāyo 1, 2006, p. 112). The above is a basic analysis of protecting trees depicted in Buddhist philosophical perspective. This teaching could be utilized in preserving the existence of plants and grown trees.

The Lord Buddha prevented man from destroying trees and motivated to grow trees. He admired growing trees as a valuable social activity which gains merit. The Lord Buddha said that planting flowers and trees, forest planting, building ponds, Keeping pot water which is called “pinthāliya” for travelers, hermitage cause to increase ones merits (Saffyuttanikāyo 1, 2006, p. 60). This shows the attitude towards protecting trees in Buddhism. Above details show the Buddhist attitude towards the preserving of the environment. Those who are like to get rid of worldly attachments the forest is the most favorable place. The environment with trees nourishes the spirituality of man. It is gives mental comfort (Khuddakanikāyo, 2006, p. 46). Thus the mental stress and unrest will occur no more. Only good thoughts will come to the mind. Therefore, the forest is an institute of psychiatry which could manage.

Therefore, the Lord Buddha preached that it is not worth adding excreted matters, garbage and left overs to the water not be done (Pācittiya pāli 2, 2006, p. 154). He preached so, in order to protect the purity of the environment. An important incident from “Milinda Pañña” could be identified in reaction to the attitude of Buddhism on preservation of trees (Sumangala, 1970).

“A flowering tree bear nuts and flowers”. It causes the existence of plants. The flower gives beauty and the nut gives taste. The tree gives shade those who come under it, without thinking whether they are friends or enemies. It gives shade equally. It doesn’t make any difference to anybody. Even though a person comes to destroy a tree it itself gives shade to the person. This is the behavior of tree. On the other hand there are other uses of it also thus the existence of tree is embedded with the existence of man. Destruction of tree means the destruction of man himself.

**The Teaching of Protecting the Life of Entire Animal Race.**

Being away from killing animals is one of the basic precepts that the Lord Buddha has preached. The Lord Buddha always admired not killing animals, leaving armourment, being ashamed of harming other and treating all the animals with a kind heart (Dīghanikāyo 1, 2006, p. 110). Therefore, He said that we should spread loving kindness (Maithree) towards all the living beings (Khuddakanikāyo, 2006, pp. 44-46).

The Lord Buddha spreader the qualities of “Maithree” and kindness towards all the animals those who are weak, strong, tall, fat, thin, small, big, visible and invisible, born and to be born. Through that the right to live of every living being is ensured.
Buddhism is not established with the sole objective of protecting the rights of man. A man cannot be away from the ethical teaching of Buddhism. None of the ethical teaching is designed only to give advantages to man. The well-being of all the living beings is ensured through Buddhism. Thus, when the man does not kill animals, all the animals get an opportunity to live.

The Lord Buddha made step to detach not only the ordinary man, but also the ruler of the state (Dīghanikāya 3, 2006, pp. 102-104). It is the inviolable responsibility to save the life of animals and birds. Respecting one’s life is an accepted social ethic. The involvement of the ruler and the administration are necessary to preserve the environment. The virtuousness or the bad qualities of the ruler influence on the existence of animals and the whole system of environment.

One should not kill or harm animals by comparing himself or those animals. Just like an individual doesn’t like to be killed or suffered, all the other animals don’t like it too. This wide analysis is depicted in Veludvāreyya Sutta (Saṃyuttanikāya 5(2), 2006, p. 156). “Householder’, what are the disciplines that should be practiced by comparing yourself? There, the person thinks. I like to live. I don’t like to be killed. I hate sadness. I love comfort. If someone kills me, who have all their wishes, I do not like it. The thing which I don’t like will be the same with others. Therefore one should not kill animals. Thus the bodily features of man become controlled due to the control of mind. He who purifies his physical and verbal behavior too”.

The Lord Buddha saved animals from death and he explained by spreading loving kindness towards others could save himself from the harms done by others. It is clearly stated in the Ahi Śūta in Aṅguttara Nikāya (Aṅguttaranikāya 2, 2006, pp. 134-136). Therefore the Lord Buddha motivated man to look at the environment with covering kind in his mind and to think that “man all beings live well and may their fear will be disappeared”.

Accordingly, many teachings could be identified in Buddhism which nourishes the human society with a great thought of respecting the life of the others around him. This precept could be cited as a “shikṣā” that should be practiced by everybody in this society, which is full of conflicts and inconvenient due to power and wealth.

The Teaching of Recycling and Management

The Lord Buddha showed that there should be a specific method to dump waste into the environment. None should use the environment in an unnecessary way. Man must look at the environment in a simple way just as he looks at his own life. There is a deep philosophical perspective of recycling and waste management in order to prevent environment pollution in Cullavaggapaṭīya (Cullavaggaṇā 2, 2006, pp. 560-562).

One day the queens in King Udēni’s kingdom offered five hundred pieces of Shawls to Ānanda Thero. When the king got knows this, he has gone to Ānanda Thero and asked that, what he is going to do to all those pieces of shawls. The answer given by Ānanda Thero depicts the Buddhist philosophical foundation in preserving the environment.

Ānanda Thero has said that he is going to sew robes with those pieces of shawls. He has said that those will be given to the Bhikkhū who has got old robes and with those old robes, pillow cases will be made and with the old pillow cases carpets rags to wipe dust will be made and the old rags will be used to mend the clay walls by chopping them with clay.

This analysis reveals the Buddhist attitude towards recycling and dumping waste we should not spoil the environment (With the use of the Buddhist environment management principles this shows).
There is a special teaching about resource management and environment preservation (Aṅguttaranikāyov2, 2006, p. 478). We should not allow any of the resources of the environment to be wasted. They should be mended and taken into use. The preservative method in the Buddhism is as follows.

1. The resources ended should be earned.
2. The decaying resources should not be mended.
3. Resources should be used while understanding the limit of the need.
4. Economic resources should be used in an ethical way with virtuous leadership.

This analysis is of great importance in recycling and management of environmental resources. This shows the need of man’s preservation use of resources. Thus when the man adapts himself according to above practices the existence of the environment and man will be ensured.

Conclusions

The traditional involvement of man is not enough to prevent or irradiates the rapid environmental destruction. Various approaches should be adapted to preserve the environment. The Buddhist Philosophical teachings could be used to preserve environment while avoiding the environmental issues created at present in global and national levels. This study introduced a new format which is suitable to preserve the environment. That format is based on the Buddhist philosophical teachings presented on environmental preservation. Thus, the preaching on environment of the Lord Buddha which was done due to various necessities could be utilized in motivating the modern man to preserve the environment.

References