

PROMOTING ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH BUDDHISM

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Abstract. In today's materialistic world, sustainability is vital. Buddhism emphasizes the natural environment's importance and the interconnectedness of all beings, encouraging responsible action. Key practices such as mindfulness, compassion, and non-harming (*Ahiṃsā*) promote harmony with nature. Buddhist teachings advocate for the cultivation of compassion through concepts like *Pratityasamudpād* and *Catur Brahma Vihāra*. While ecological issues are global, their solutions often stem from local actions.

Buddhism participates in conservation by focusing on renewable energy, reducing carbon footprints, and protecting habitats. The principles of interdependence and non-harming support sustainable development in response to the environmental crisis fuelled by human greed. Effective strategies must address psychological aspects, fostering awareness and compassion through education. While Buddhism offers valuable insights, tackling environmental challenges also entails policy changes, technological advancements, and international cooperation. In conclusion, Buddhism can help cultivate a society that values ecological health and inspires meaningful action to protect our planet.

Keywords: Compassion, Ecology, Suffering, Happiness, Altruism, Mind, Enlightenment, Sustainability, Karma, Pāramita and Pratityasamudpāda.

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1. Introduction

The environmental challenges our planet is currently experiencing are extraordinary and unprecedented. Issues such as air depletion, pollution, and climate change, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, and degradation of forests have plunged our Earth into an existential crisis. The interaction between living and non-living components of the ecosystem over billions of years has fostered a harmonious habitat for various species. However, the overexploitation of our natural resources has led to a reassessment of our relationship with these limited resources. While humans relate to the environment through the habitats formed by natural resources, they have also become the destroyers of their own surroundings. This awareness has sparked a global dialogue about the urgent need to protect our environment. Nonetheless, true change requires individuals to recognize themselves as essential parts of the environment; without this recognition, efforts will falter. It is crucial to examine our perspective towards the environment from an ethical standpoint.

Ecological issues frequently engage with a variety of religious and spiritual beliefs, prompting a critical response from ecological holists and deep ecologists towards religious thinkers. In fact, ecological holism or holism in ecology is a perspective that views ecosystems as interconnected entities rather than just collections of individual components. It emphasizes the importance of relationships and interdependencies among various elements, showing that these interactions are crucial for the overall functioning of the system. In this framework, understanding an ecosystem requires examining how species, environmental factors, energy flows, and nutrient cycles work together to create a dynamic system. For example, the roles of producers, consumers, and decomposers are essential for maintaining ecological balance. This holistic perspective also applies globally, recognizing that local ecosystems are influenced by broader processes like climate change and biodiversity loss. Thus, addressing ecological challenges requires a comprehensive understanding of the entire system. By adopting a holistic approach, researchers and conservationists can understand the complex interplay of factors that shape ecosystems, leading to better strategies for ecological restoration, sustainable management, and environmental protection for future generations¹.

1.1. The Debate between Religion and Ecology. The relationship between religion and ecology is complex and continues to prompt discussions on their compatibility and influence on environmental attitudes and behaviours. Many view religion as a key motivator for environmental stewardship, highlighting ethical responsibilities that arise from

¹Brundtland, G.H. (1987) Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Geneva, UN-Dokument A/42/427. <http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-ov.htm>

spiritual beliefs, such as the care for Creation. However, critiques point out that some religious doctrines may contribute to ecological harm, particularly interpretations of dominion in Judeo-Christian traditions that promote exploitative attitudes towards nature. This discourse reflects diverse perspectives on how religious convictions shape individual and societal actions, as well as the capacity of religious organizations to advocate for environmental sustainability and influence policy. Additionally, historical and cultural contexts significantly affect these dynamics, illustrating various interpretations of humanity's relationship with nature. Proponents of ecological holism often criticize religion for perpetuating fundamentalism, nationalism, and social inequalities, arguing that such perspectives may hinder effective environmental solutions. Nonetheless, there is a growing recognition of the potential for religions and spirituality to effectively contribute to resolving environmental challenges, much like their historical role in supporting communities through adversity.

In light of critiques regarding religious influences, it is essential to acknowledge that while there may be inconsistencies between religious ideals and their practical applications, this should not deter humanity from leveraging the resources within various religious traditions to foster a more ecologically responsible worldview. Such inconsistencies can engender disillusionment and scepticism toward faith. Nevertheless, integrating spiritual and religious considerations into environmental policies, education, and legislation could enhance societal morality and safeguard the environment from ecological threats as Indian ancient thoughts echo one global family² which literally appear relevant forever. Spirituality should not be seen merely as a refuge amid uncertainty; rather, it represents a continuous journey aligned with the fundamental rhythms of creation.

2. Buddhism and its Eco-centric Worldview

The concept of Ecology encompasses various factors from biology, physiology, ecology, and society that affect human health and well-being. As environmental degradation increasingly threatens ecosystems and biodiversity, individuals worldwide are compelled to take responsibility for preserving the environment. The deterioration of environmental quality poses serious challenges, requiring concerted efforts at personal, local, national, and global levels. Human activities significantly harm the atmosphere, contributing to a range of environmental issues. Key challenges driving these threats include the irrational

²*ayaṃ nijaḥ paro veti gaṇanā laghu cetasāṃ,
udārcaritānāṃ tu vasudhaiva kutumbakaṃ*

use of natural resources, outdated environmental management practices, insufficient funding, bureaucratic obstacles, and extensive infrastructure development. It is essential to implement effective policies and regulations to guide human actions and mitigate these escalating environmental problems.

Buddhism's ethical principles are deeply intertwined with a heightened awareness of the natural world, emphasizing values such as happiness, health, and truth as 'good,' while categorizing suffering and ignorance as 'bad.' These principles extend beyond human interests to encompass all sentient beings (Mipham, 2018, pp. 31) and elements of nature, advocating for harmonious coexistence amid increasing concerns over environmental degradation. The tradition suggests that a stronger spiritual connection to the environment is essential for its protection, countering the material greed that drives climate change. By promoting an eco-centric worldview, Buddhism highlights interdependence within the ecosystem, fostering compassion and awareness through experiential knowledge. This paradigm shift encourages recognizing humanity's role as part of a vibrant community, leading to ecological ethics focused on nurturing relationships with all beings³.

Buddhism emphasizes the importance of recognizing and understanding our environment, which can play a crucial role in addressing climate change. The paper asserts that the environmental crisis mirrors a deeper crisis within the human soul, suggesting that reducing spiritual pollution correlates with lessening natural pollution (Dalai Lama and Thubten Chodon, 2020, Vol.5). To confront environmental challenges, there exists a moral obligation to cultivate awakened awareness. This transformation, facilitated by religious consciousness, enables a conscious connection with nature. Originating in India, Buddhism encourages personal introspection and peaceful resolution of inner conflicts, fostering a non-violent approach to the external world. The principle of ahimsa, or non-injury, nurtures a profound understanding of our interconnectedness with all species. Buddhism's essence is deeply interlinked with nature, exemplified by significant sites like Bodh Gaya, where the Buddha attained enlightenment under a Bodhi tree. This highlights the necessity of collaboration with nature, advocating for a nurturing rather than domineering perspective. Treating nature as a companion enhances our appreciation of its inherent beauty and significance in our lives.

³*na tvahaṁ kāmāye rājyaṁ na svargaṁ nāpunarbhavaṁ,
kāmye dukkhataptānāṁ prāṇināṁ ārtināśanaṁ*

Buddhism emphasizes the significance of living in harmony with nature, which includes valuing all life forms, engaging in meditation, embracing simplicity, and finding spirituality in the natural world. Achieving such harmony requires aligning with nature to embody loving-kindness, compassion, impartiality, and joy. The Buddha taught that the perception of isolation is an illusion, as everything is interconnected; our existence is contingent on these connections. He highlighted the interdependence of the mind and its environment, suggesting that instead of addressing environmental issues with technology, we should focus on the psychological aspects contributing to these challenges. Lord Buddha advocated for mindfulness (Das, 2022, pp5) in consumption, urging minimal resource use necessary for survival and promoting coexistence with the environment, living beings, and adherence to natural laws concerning life processes. Applying these teachings can help in guiding human behaviours and fostering a sustainable relationship with the environment.

3. Buddhist Perspectives on Ecological Protection

In Buddhism, a person's challenges do not stem from external sources but originate within -specifically in their mind⁴, thoughts, values, and the resulting actions. Consequently, spirituality should be the central focus in understanding humanity and its inherent nature. The principles governing the spiritual realm ought to be prioritized when addressing environmental challenges. Our spiritual connection to the environment can significantly enhance its preservation, as it allows for a deeper connection with nature. Unfortunately, many are prioritizing material desires and greed, which inevitably leads to environmental degradation. To counteract the adverse impacts of this situation, it is essential for individuals to rediscover the importance of performing good deeds and coexisting peacefully with all forms of life. Major world religions can play a crucial role in this endeavour, as they universally promote virtues of kindness, denounce harmful actions, and advocate for peace and well-being for everyone.

The Bodhisattva ideal has inspired eco-Buddhists during times of climate disruption when individual efforts may seem futile, yet collective actions can have devastating consequences. By following the Buddhist principles of ethical behaviour, mindfulness, meditation, and wisdom, the Bodhisattva serves as a guiding example for maintaining dedication towards achieving what may appear to be an extraordinarily ambitious goal.

⁴Dhammapada 183. Ch.14. pp. 73 says, "The cleansing (training) of Mind is the teaching of Buddha"

The *Aggañña-Suttanta*⁵, the Lotus Sutra, and teachings on mindfulness, compassion, interdependence, and impermanence provide compelling examples of timeless Buddhist knowledge that can help bring about balance and positive change in relation to the earth today. It is clear that indiscriminate consumption and the careless use of natural resources result from human tendencies driven by greed (*lobha*) or aversion (*doṣa*), both of which have detrimental direct and indirect impacts on the environment. The situation is exacerbated by self-centred views and beliefs (*ditthi*) that contribute to the persistence of greed and aversion. This is where Buddhism can have a meaningful influence.

Buddhism presents a profound and transformative perspective on addressing the global ecological crisis, drawing from its foundational teachings of interdependence, compassion, and non-harming. By tackling the underlying causes of environmental degradation, Buddhism advocates for a mindful and sustainable way of living that facilitates ecological harmony. Let's delve deeper into how core Buddhist principles can significantly contribute to solving our environmental challenges:

Central to Buddhist thought is the notion of interdependence, *pratityasamudpad*, (Kalupahana, 1999, pp102) which articulates that all beings and phenomena exist in a complex web of connections. This understanding compels individuals to consider how their actions impact not only their immediate surroundings but also the larger ecological system. For instance, the choices we make regarding consumption directly affect wildlife, resources, and climate stability. Recognizing our interconnectedness fosters a profound sense of responsibility to act thoughtfully and compassionately, prioritizing the well-being of the entire ecosystem over mere self-interest.

At the heart of Buddhism lies the virtue of compassion or Karuna, which extends beyond human interactions to encompass all living beings, including animals and the environment. The Dalai lama says, "*The realization that we are all the same human beings who seek happiness and try to avoid suffering is very helpful in developing a sense of brotherhood and*

⁵The Aggañña Sutta is the 27th sutta in the *Digha Nikaya* collection. In this sutta, the Buddha speaks to two brahmins, Bharadvaja and Vasettha, who left their families and social status to become monks. They face insults and slander from their caste for wanting to join the Sangha. The Buddha teaches that social class and lineage are not important compared to moral conduct and practicing the Dhamma. Anyone from the four varnas can become a monk and reach the state of *Arahant*. He then explains how the Earth is created and destroyed; emphasizing that this cycle is driven by karma, not by a supreme deity. The Buddha also discusses the origins and structure of social order, including the varnas. He emphasizes the universal nature of the *Dhamma* and claims that the *Dhamma* is the highest principle.

*sisterhood; a warm feeling of love and compassion for others*⁶.” This deep-seated compassion drives us to adopt practices that are considerate of other life forms. For example, it might inspire individuals to minimize waste, transition to a plant-based diet or advocate for legislative changes that protect endangered species and conserve natural habitats. Just as a compassionate act may alleviate suffering in those around us, it can also lead to a healthier planet.

The principle of non-harming, or *Ahimsā*, is foundational to Buddhist ethics and emphasizes a lifestyle that strives for minimal impact on all living entities and the Earth itself. This principle encourages adherents to cultivate sustainable practices—such as using renewable energy sources, reducing plastic waste, and supporting eco-friendly products. It challenges individuals to rethink their lifestyles and commit to choices that align with environmental preservation, thereby fostering a more harmonious relationship with nature.

Engaging in mindfulness practices, such as meditation, enhances our awareness of our thoughts, actions, and their repercussions on the environment. Developing this heightened awareness promotes intentional decision-making, allowing individuals to recalibrate their habits and consumption patterns. For instance, being mindful of the ecological consequences of excessive water usage or single-use plastics can lead to more conscious choices, such as conserving water or opting for reusable items, effectively minimizing our ecological footprint.

Buddhism advocates for a lifestyle characterized by simplicity and contentment, encouraging individuals to reduce attachment to material possessions and desires that fuel environmental strain. By learning to appreciate and find joy in what we already possess rather than seeking ever more, we can alleviate excessive consumption and its detrimental effects on the planet. Embracing a minimalistic approach not only enhances personal well-being but also contributes to the ecological balance by lessening demand on the Earth’s resources.

Buddhism offers a robust ethical framework for engaging in environmental stewardship, underscoring the importance of responsibility, non-violence, and the interconnectedness of all life forms. This ethical compass guides individuals and communities in making decisions that promote both personal welfare (Shantideva, 2011, Ch.1) and planetary health, advocating for policies that enable sustainable development and environmental protection.

⁶The 14th Dalai Lama’s Nobel Lecture, accessed on [February 6 2025], available at: <https://www.dalailama.com/messages/acceptance-speeches/nobel-peace-prize/nobel-peace-prize-nobel-lecture>

Thus, Buddhism provides a comprehensive and holistic approach to the ecological crisis by addressing both the external behaviours that harm the environment and the internal motivations that drive such behaviours. By nurturing a lifestyle steeped in mindfulness, compassion, and sustainability, Buddhism encourages individuals to live in harmony with the natural world, fostering a healthier planet for generations to come.

3.1. Four Dimensions of Buddhist Ecological Worldview. There are four dimensions of a Buddhist ecological worldview which are centred on the principle of causal interdependence.

- First, the *Existential Dimension* where Buddhism emphasizes the universality of suffering experienced by all sentient beings, with the core teachings revolving around the *Four Noble Truths*, which highlight the nature, cause, cessation, and path to overcoming suffering.
- Second, the *Moral Dimension* which the realization of a shared suffering fosters compassion, which is exemplified by the Buddha's decision to share his insights selflessly⁷. This compassion extends to all forms of life, advocating for the non-violent elevation of suffering and the prayer of universal loving kindness.
- Third, the *Cosmological Dimension* where the Concepts of *karma* and rebirth integrate the existential condition of suffering with moral considerations. All sentient life is part of a karmic continuum, with a moral hierarchy that recognizes interconnectedness among beings across various species.
- Fourth, the *Potential for Liberation* or *Nirvāṇa* that represents the ultimate spiritual liberation available to all sentient beings in the karmic continuum. The belief that even plants and the earth can achieve spiritual liberation is particularly emphasized in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. However, requiring long time span as evolution (Mishra, 1989, pp. 4).

Thus, the four dimensions of the Buddhist ecological world-view stress interconnectedness, compassion, and the moral implications of suffering within a Buddhist context.

4. The Ontological Foundations of Buddhist Ecology

In Buddhist cosmology, individual entities inherently exist in relation to one another, challenging the notion of an independent self in opposition to the “other,” whether that be

⁷Buddho bhavemaṃ jagato hitāya

another person, an animal, or a plant. Buddhist environmental advocates view their perspective as one that dismisses the hierarchical superiority of one human over another or of humans over nature, forming the basis for an ethic grounded in empathetic compassion that values biodiversity.

Over time, various Buddhist schools of thought evolved the cosmological concept of interdependent causality into a more profound understanding of ontological unity. The metaphor of Indra's net found in the Huayan tradition's *Avatamsaka Sūtra* has been a powerful symbol in discussions of Buddhist ecology. According to Gary Snyder, the Huayan depiction of the cosmos as an expansive web of multifaceted jewels, each reflecting all the others and embodying the entirety of the universe, represents a world of bio-regional ecological communities. Moreover, Buddhist environmentalists contend that ontological concepts like buddha-nature (Asang, 2018, pp. 23) or dharma-nature say for example, *Buddhakāya*, *Tathagata-garbha*, *Dharmakāya*, *Dharmadhātu* offer a foundation for connecting all existing entities within a shared sacred universe, despite the tradition's emphasis on human life regarding spiritual attainment. Buddhist environmentalists frequently refer the perspective to support the preservation of species biodiversity, a stance that ascribes intrinsic worth to all species by acknowledging their shared dharmic essence.

For Buddhists, the understanding of causal interdependence as a universal, natural principle was validated through the narrative of the Buddha's own *nirvāṇa* and his teachings (dharma). As has been highlighted, Buddhist scriptures and other writings use metaphor, storytelling, and discursive reasoning to illustrate and clarify this principle. Throughout Buddhist history, poetry has served as a significant literary instrument for expressing the dharma and the truths regarding the interdependence of humanity and nature. An early Pali sutta incorporates elements from early Vedic traditions and celebrates the beauty of nature by referencing the metaphor of Indra and a landscape of abundance.

4.1. The Ecology of Human Flourishing in Buddhism. Buddhism originated in northern India during the dynamic period of the fifth century BCE, a time characterized by significant urban growth, political consolidation, and vigorous commercial activity. This era saw the rise of vibrant artisan and merchant communities as towns proliferated, marking a shift from predominantly rural living to increasingly urbanized societies. The burgeoning agrarian economy spurred extensive land reclamation efforts, resulting in the deforestation of vast areas and the transformation of once-wild terrains into cultivated farmlands.

These profound environmental changes had a significant impact on the early development of Buddhist thought and practice. While early monastic Buddhism itself did not primarily

focus on environmental concerns, the natural world nonetheless influenced its teachings. In particular, the evolving understanding of human flourishing became intertwined with the transformations of the landscape around them. As the environment changed, so too did the Buddhist perspective on the interconnectedness of life and the importance of balance between human activity and nature.

Moreover, naturalistic beliefs and practices began to permeate early Buddhism, significantly affecting popular religious expressions. These elements were not merely peripheral but were absorbed into the fabric of Buddhism as it spread to neighbouring regions, including China, Korea, and Japan. Thus, even though early Buddhist philosophy may not have explicitly assigned intrinsic value to nature itself, the natural world has always been a vital component in shaping the Buddhist interpretation of human flourishing and the broader ecological narrative that continues to resonate within Buddhist teachings. This interplay between the environment and Buddhist practice highlights the enduring relevance of ecological considerations in the pursuit of wisdom and well-being.

4.2. The *Sangha* and Ecology. Buddhism emphasizes the importance of living harmoniously with nature, which entails valuing all forms of life, practicing meditation, embracing simplicity, and seeking spirituality within the natural world. Achieving this harmony necessitates embodying qualities such as loving-kindness, compassion, impartiality, and joy, acknowledging that the perception of isolation is an illusion and that all existence is interconnected. The Buddha stressed the need to focus on the psychological factors contributing to environmental issues rather than solely relying on technology. He advocated for mindfulness in consumption, promoting the judicious use of resources essential for survival, and encouraged coexistence with the environment and its inhabitants, thereby adhering to the natural laws of life. These teachings serve as a guide for fostering sustainable human behaviors and relationships with the environment.

Generous patronage and the influx of pilgrims have historically disturbed the tranquility of forest monasteries; however, nature remains integral to Buddhist spiritual flourishing. In Zen Buddhism, natural features like rivers and mountains are venerated, with practitioners often embracing serenity that fosters reflection and mindfulness. Japanese Zen monasteries are typically surrounded by serene gardens, embodying the philosophy of harmony with nature. Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu's forest monastery, dubbed the "Garden of Empowering Liberation", highlights the tranquility of nature and its power to alleviate daily stresses, offering lessons that facilitate spiritual rebirth. Within the Buddhist community, there is a growing understanding that addressing ecological crises requires a transformation of

values rather than mere technological solutions. The Suan Mokkhabalārāma community illustrates a sustainable lifestyle grounded in moderation and simplicity, demonstrating the synergy between spiritual growth and ecological consciousness. Buddhādāsa's garden serves not only as a sanctuary but also as a vibrant ecosystem that reflects a broader ecological ethos, encompassing principles such as compassion, nonviolence, and generosity.

The values guiding the Buddhist community, encompassing monks, lay practitioners, and citizens of all backgrounds, emphasize the principle of nonviolence, particularly for political leaders tasked with maintaining peace. A historical figure exemplifying this is King Aśoka, revered for his commitment to the welfare of all beings and humanitarian efforts, such as building hospices. The Buddhist concept of distributive justice encourages generosity, evident in practices like Thai rice farmers leaving portions of their harvest for those in need. Central to this ethos are the qualities of wisdom and compassion, illustrated by the Bodhisattva ideal articulated by Śāntideva. Contemporary engaged Buddhists advocate for ecological ethics rooted in compassion, as highlighted by the Dalai Lama, who urges a universal responsibility extending care to all living beings. These teachings provoke a deep contemplation of our interconnectedness and ethical duties towards each other and the environment.

4.3. Buddhism and its Transformative Perspectives on Ecology. The *Mahayana* tradition is encapsulated by the phrase *buddhobhaveyaṃ jagato hitāya*⁸, which translates as “may I become a Buddha for the welfare of all sentient beings.” This ideology supports world peace and sustainable development through the Middle Way approach, or *Madhyama Mārga* (Kumar and Kumari, 2023, pp 29). The Middle Way advocates a balanced path that avoids extremes, a philosophy that closely parallels the principles of sustainable development, which aim to balance economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity. Achieving this equilibrium requires expertise rooted in wisdom and compassion, both of which are foundational to Mahayana Buddhism. The *Madhyama Mārga* focuses on a balance that highlights the significance of inner values such as moderation and empathy in shaping decisions that promote long-term societal well-being. Societal crises often arise when policymakers lack essential inner values, including compassion, altruism, and a genuine commitment to collective welfare. In the absence of these values, policy decisions tend to prioritize short-term gains over collective well-being, resulting in environmental degradation, social unrest, and economic disparities. As a major world

⁸Dīpamkaraśrījñāna [= Atīśa], *Cittotpādasamvaravidhikrama*, accessed on [February 5, 2025], available at: http://grettil.sub.unigoettingen.de/grettil/corpustei/transformations/html/sa_dIpaMkarazrIjJAnacittottpAdasaMvaravidhikrama.htm

religion, Buddhism aspires to transcend cultural, political, and geographical boundaries to address and mitigate challenges faced by humans and other sentient beings.

After reaching Enlightenment, Sākyamuni Buddha decided to stay in the world to help others. He started teaching by the Ganges River in Varanasi. Before he became Enlightened, he was a Bodhisattva (Rinpoche, 2005, 296) who gained merit by doing good deeds. Gaining merit and wisdom is seen as necessary for reaching Perfect Enlightenment (Rinpoche, 1998, pp. 283). The world has many difficult problems that need careful thought. Even though suffering is everywhere, there are also answers. Today, people are more often asking what basic things that we need to live on, like clean air, water, soil, and sky. Cutting back on chasing pleasure through new technology is becoming important to protect the planet and everyone on it. In this situation, training the mind is very important, because what we think together has a big effect. Of the three gateways, Body and Speech are controlled by the Mind. Thus, we can assert that Buddhism gives a detailed look at the mind and how it works. The Mind-only school, one of the main Buddhist traditions, says the world is created by the mind and encourages looking within. The next points explain this view further.

5. The Concept of EcoBuddhism

The emergent concept of *EcoBuddhism* is seen by some as a Westernized interpretation of Buddhist principles shaped by current environmental concerns. This perspective posits that modern articulations of eco-Buddhism may not accurately represent traditional Buddhist thought but rather filter it through a contemporary lens that prioritizes ecological engagement in ways that may not resonate with historical teachings.

Some examples of these discrepancies can be observed in monastic and lay practices alike. While monastic life is often viewed as environmentally sustainable due to its emphasis on simplicity, many lay practitioners may engage in activities that contribute to ecological issues, such as purchasing mass-produced goods that are harmful to the environment. Similarly, certain ritual practices - such as the common custom of buying animals for release as acts of merit - may unintentionally support practices that are damaging to both animal welfare and environmental sustainability.

Geographically, the impact of Buddhism on the environment is uneven. Countries with strong Buddhist traditions, like Bhutan and states like Ladakh, have made commendable efforts towards conservation and environmental stewardship. However, other Buddhist-majority regions struggle with significant environmental degradation and challenges that contradict the core teachings of Buddhism.

Thus, we may say that the interplay between Buddhism and ecology is intricate and layered. While Buddhism presents profound philosophical and ethical frameworks that could potentially inspire environmental action, it is essential to confront the reality of the gap between aspirations and actions, the historical context of Buddhist teachings, and the complexities of applying these teachings to contemporary ecological crises. Some scholars advocate for a more contextually aware and action-oriented approach that could cultivate a genuinely effective Buddhist ecological ethic, one that moves beyond philosophy to inspire concrete action in the face of our pressing ecological challenges.

6. Conclusion

In Buddhism, the natural ecology is regarded as essential to life, emphasizing the interdependence of all living beings. This interconnectedness necessitates accountability for actions affecting the environment, promoting mindful practices that support sustainability. The principle of non-harming (*Ahimsā*) advocates for harmonious coexistence with nature, encouraging reduced waste and the preservation of resources. Various Buddhist organizations actively engage in ecological conservation and sustainable practices, addressing issues such as renewable energy and carbon emissions. Moreover, the teachings highlight the need to tackle environmental challenges rooted in human greed and desire. Effective environmental protection strategies must therefore incorporate a psychological approach, fostering awareness and compassion through educational initiatives. Ultimately, these efforts aim to inspire a sustainable and balanced lifestyle that fosters a deeper connection to the environment and all living beings. Another aspect of Buddhism is to neutralize self-centeredness attitude leading to over and lavish consumption for self-notion is contingent and false fabrication (Rinpoche 2003).

Buddhism offers valuable philosophical insights and practical tools that can contribute to environmental sustainability in the 21st century, despite not being a comprehensive solution to the environmental crisis. Its principle of interconnectedness fosters awareness of the impact individuals have on the environment, promoting a sense of responsibility. The practice of compassion encourages ethical considerations in consumption and conservation, while the concept of non-attachment prioritizes long-term ecological health over immediate material gains. Nevertheless, to effectively address the complex environmental challenges we face, Buddhist values should be integrated with systemic policy changes, technological advancements, and global collaboration. For example, aligning these principles with sustainable development goals can lead to legislation that emphasizes ecological health. Thus we can say that while Buddhism alone cannot resolve the ecological crisis, its

teachings can significantly enhance the cultivation of a more environmentally responsible society, inspiring actions that protect the planet.

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