

The Ecological Values Reflected in the Buddhist Vinaya (Discipline)

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Introduction

Although the object of Buddhist discipline (*vinaya*) is to regulate the activities of monks it also has great relevance to society especially in its involvement with the environment. Some problems that affect modern society globally, and require urgent attention are pollution and wastefulness. While pollution causes health problems, wastefulness causes poverty. These problems are aggravated when adequate attention is not paid to them. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to discuss ways and means to find a common solution to minimize some of these problems through an understanding of the *vinaya* rules.

Methodology

A detailed study of the Buddhist discipline (*vinaya*) is of utmost importance to understand the impact it has had on the social and ecological aspects of life within the Buddhist fraternity. Such a study is also likely to throw new light on some problems arising from the day-to-day behaviour patterns of people in contemporary society.

Discussion

Among the many things in the world, water, flora and fauna are wonderful creations of nature (Eco-world). They are supportive resources, which influence and mutually exist not only for the benefit of mankind but also for the entire organic world. Therefore, protecting these resources is a responsibility of mankind. It is mentioned in *Sekhiya* (a group of precepts) that persons should not pollute with human waste where there is water. Today because of the desire for development without any control, various chemicals and fertilizers are used in water and this has caused health and ecological problems. Sometimes chemical weapons are

tested in the sea, which is another major problem.

Protection of the flora and fauna enhances the beauty of nature and also promotes physical and mental healthiness. *Khandhaka Vinaya* explains how to maintain the *senasana* (sylvan abodes: dwelling of the monks) and its neighborhood in a clean and eco friendly manner. Especially *Sekhiya* shows the value of cleanliness. Destroying of forests is a threat to living creatures and it also causes damage to the environment and this has created secondary problems such as floods, famine and drought etc. *Bhutagama Pacittiya* (destroying of plants) claims that wiping out flora and fauna is prohibited for *Bhikkus*. *Khandhaka* explains that even constructing the *senasana* (dwelling places) should be done with care to protect the environment. In the present day, with the advancement of science and technology, the danger to the environment is obviously noticeable.

Conclusions

The *catupaccaya* (the four basic requirements) prescribes the method of fulfilling their minimum requirement, avoiding waste and utilization of scarce resources for the benefit of mankind. Poverty is the result of socio-economic disparities and the gap between the extremes of 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Although there are many causes of poverty, the maximum utilization of resources and management of natural resources is a means of overcoming poverty and wastefulness.

The *Vinaya* rules are very clear and helpful in solving social problems and these are provided with examples and statistical data.