

A Transformative Exploration Into Environmental Realization in Light of Early Buddhism and Brah̄dāranyaka Upanishad

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Abstract

The realisation that there is "unsatisfactoriness" (dukkha) in the world and that it can be eradicated by following the Noble Eight-Fold Path is central to the Buddhist doctrine. Buddhism likewise holds that there is nothing solid about the world as we know it or the beings that inhabit it. On the contrary, dependent origination (Pratītyasamutpāda) is how existence manifests itself. Nothing is permanent; everything is subject to change. But the interdependence of all beings and their submission to the cosmic law of karma are inherent in this dependent life. A strong sense of compassion for all other living beings that are "trapped" in this cycle of dependent origination is a fundamental component of practicing the Eight-Fold path. In the *Upaniṣadic* perspective, we see that *Brah̄dāranyaka Upaniṣad* argues that one should meditate on oneself. This emphasizes that men may roll up the sky like a piece of leather, but there will be no end of sorrow unless man understands the luminous self within. There is homogeneity between human life on one hand and the rest of the universe on the other. The purpose of this research paper is to investigate how the Upanishadic and Buddhist worldview relates to the environmental problems that face modern society.

Keywords: Realization, Environment, Ecology, Ethics, Karuna.

Introduction

A key component of the Buddhist path to enlightenment is compassion, or karuna. This emphasis on karuna is evident in Mahayana Buddhism's theory of the bodhisattva, also known as the Buddha-to-be, who voluntarily delays enlightenment in order to assist others who are travelling the same path. Meanwhile, the theory of dependent origination has the consequence of removing any anthropocentric bias against the natural world. Although only humans are capable of achieving "Buddhahood," this is only possible because of our capacity to comprehend the meaning of the Eight-fold path and to act in accordance with it. It is ontologically necessary to "save the earth" because all entities are interconnected, and if we let the earth suffer, then we all suffer as well. This can be interpreted as an ethical perspective that can be applied to how we engage with the outside world and, in turn, how we treat the environment, whether it be the natural world or the environment in its widest meaning. An ethics or "right path" (samma-marga) that is essential to our existence is ingrained in this ontology, and it encompasses a caring interaction with our surroundings. The research paper aims to undertake critical study and understanding of available literature in the field. It includes conceptual and logical analysis of the metaphysical concepts involved in the discussion. This would involve identifying and critically analysing the assumptions and consequences of the respective theories. There is a reciprocal, mutually reinforcing effect between

concepts and the theories in which they are embedded: the ontological commitments of a theory can be expressed in the terms which represent the concepts with which the theory deals; at the same time, a theory cannot be developed unless it has established quite clearly the concepts (and the attributes of the concepts) with which it deals. For the same, the analytic methodology will be opted, in order to have an analytic overview of the subject largely. Intricating Metaphysical concepts would also involve in this research paper; So that we can reach on an important discussion. Hence, the aim of this research article is to achieve the The Ecological Self with the Environmental realization from the perspective of Early Buddhism and *Bṛahdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*.

Issues Raised by Buddhist and Upanishadic Philosophy on Environment

How is the notion of Environmental Realization in Early Buddhism and *Bṛahdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* connects to the idea of ‘The Eco Self’? Is the Environmental Realization found in Early Buddhism and *Bṛahdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* only a Metaphysical or also Naturalistic Philosophy? Can the Buddhist and Upaniṣadic notion of ‘The Eco Self’ serve as a uniting force between all creatures and nature? Can there be a comparative study between Deep Ecology and Environmental Realization depicted in Early Buddhism and *Bṛahdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*? What is the notion of Intrinsic Value towards Nature in Early Buddhism and *Bṛahdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*? How does the Early Buddhist and Upaniṣadic wisdom propagate *Ethics of Responsibility* towards Natural Environment?

Environment and Dependent Co-existence

Environment and Ecology is the study of the dependent co-existence of natural entities. In Upaniṣadic terms, it is the dependent co-existence of the ontological entities of the world. A theory of Environmental Realization can be generated by describing the nature of this co-existence of the man within the world. The Environment and Ecology is integrated into the Upaniṣadic Philosophy. The object, the observer and the facilitator of observation has a hidden connection in *Upaniṣad*. Jonardon Ganeri calls this hidden connection or order-inducing totality ‘the Upaniṣadic episteme’. It is the relation between the ‘self’ and ‘the supreme order of things’. Ganeri also defines such hidden relation with consideration of humans as a ‘cosmological map’. Since ecology is a modern notion, it is required to precisely place it within the Upaniṣadic thought. For that purpose, a possible ontological structure of Upaniṣadic philosophy is needed in which the discussion of ecology becomes meaningful. Upaniṣadic wisdom conceived ecology as a part of their metaphysics, that one is assisted by the *devatas*. There is a dependent coexistence between Devatas, Humans, and the world. This feature of Upaniṣadic philosophy should be treated as a declaration for environmental conservation also. Hence, the environmental and ecological views proposed by *Bṛahdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* should be treated not only as metaphysical but also as a naturalistic philosophy. This research project asserts that environmentalism and Realization are engrained in the Early Buddhism and *Bṛahdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*— as a consequence of its philosophical framework.

The environmental crisis facing our world has allowed all of us to come together and work for the protection and sustenance of the entire world. It is here where the Early Buddhism and *Bṛahdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* can help us to protect the creation from further damage. It will reflect on the different dimensions of the Philosophy of Environmental Realization in *Bṛahdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, it will analyze and re-evaluate the epistemological and ethical basis of ‘Philosophy of Environmentalism’.

Literature Review

In his book *Ethics in Indian Attitude Toward Nature: Organic and Inorganic*, Nirmalaya Narayan Chakraborty examines Vedic and Upaniṣadic ethical attitude toward nature, man and environment in the environmental thinking in Indian philosophical schools. Satya Prakash Singh, in *Ethics in the Veda*, regards Atman as the basis of Vedic ethics. On this basis he goes into the details of rta and dharma, ethics of human relationship, and environmental ethics.

In his book *Buddhism and Deep Ecology*, Daniel H. Henning explores the ecological and environmental teachings of Buddha, particularly Dhamma (nature) and their relationship with Deep Ecology as well as with effective public participation. Buddhism and Deep Ecology focuses on the Buddhist view of 'One world' that is home to all known life. Badiner (1990) considers Mahayana Buddhism more responsive to society and nature. But much of the direction of both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism on the environment is subject to varied interpretation in differing local situations. The teachings of Buddhist Philosophy also have 'Oneness', with love and compassionate concern for all living beings. These teachings are very correlated and compatible with Deep Ecology and its orientations. Thus both teachings can contribute to each other for holistic and deeper approaches toward various ecological and environmental issues.

The Book titled *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds* edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryuken Williams emphasize the various images of animals as found in the early Indian Buddhist stories known as the Jataka tales. In this book, the place of animals in Buddhism, in which the particular cultural areas and traditions of India and Japan are also examined.

The Book titled *Buddhism and Ecology* edited by Martine Batchelor and Kerry Brown deals with Buddhism and Ecology on a general and overall basis so that both Buddhists and non-Buddhists with ecological and environmental interests can find this book to be a refreshing, valuable, and insightful approach. In this book, a chapter titled *Even The Stones Smile* written by Martine Batchelor emphasizes the cultivation of loving-kindness, compassion and wisdom to eliminate suffering and extend these states to Human Being, animals, plants, the Earth itself.

The Book titled *Spirit of The Environment: Religion, Value and Environmental Concern* edited by David Cooper and Joy Palmer explores the Upaniṣadic and Buddhist environmental Philosophy. In this book, a chapter titled 'Indian Religious Traditions' written by Purushottam Bilimoria emphasizes the values and concerns, which have continued to influence the discourse and aligned practices of environmentalism in much of South Asia.

The Book titled *A Historical-developmental Study of Classical Indian Philosophy of Morals* edited by Rajendra Prasad emphasizes the Environmental ethics related to Buddhist and Upaniṣadic Literature.

The Book titled *In Defense of Intrinsic Value of Nature* written by Nirmalaya Narayan Chakraborty emphasizes the different conceptions of intrinsic value of nature. In this book, He claims that we can ascribe intrinsic value to nature. The concept of intrinsic value is opposed to anthropocentrism and so he claims that environmental ethics can very well rest on intrinsic value. He also explores the non-anthropocentric approach of Upaniṣadic wisdom. In this tradition, a book titled *Nature in Indian Philosophy and Cultural Traditions* edited by Meera Baidur examines the various themes related to Environment in Indian Philosophical Tradition.

This research article intends to study the idea of Environmental Realization and its connection with the Eco-self in light of *Brahmāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* and Early Buddhism. From the Upaniṣadic point of view, one is not separate from the another. Such a realization of a common origin enables one to identify others

including plants and animals as well as with members of the universe. It is also known as the Eco-self. As a result, unity and brotherhood ought to prevail among all members of the nature's family.

Are there any current environmental theories which are comparable to or share common ground with the classical Buddhist doctrines? This research paper elucidates some fundamental doctrines of early Buddhism from an environmental perspective as well as identify some comparable modern environmental theories such as deep ecology which seem to share in the wisdom of classical Buddhism and have much to gain from a deeper appreciation of Buddhism. The inter-connectedness of all beings and realization of the same will propagate us to realise the Eco-self as well.

Conclusion

Buddhist and Upaniṣadic Literature both believes that man has no authority to dominate the Earth at the expense of his benefit. Hence, this study aims to analyze Buddhist and Upaniṣadic knowledge related to the Environment in supporting sustainable lifestyles. *Bṛahdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* believe in a supreme, absolute, indivisible underlying reality termed as "Brahman" which manifested itself in every individual being of the world; the pre-supposition of such an entity served as a uniting force between man as well as all creatures with nature. Consequently, a sense of harmony with the environment, her preservation and development, and her development of empathy and compassion towards all creatures were repeatedly emphasized in different verses of *Bṛahdāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*.

In the view of early Buddhism, one of the most illustrative influences of Buddhist thought on nature conservation is its doctrine of rebirth and reverence of special trees. This doctrine holds that a human being after dying can be reborn as an animal, or an animal upon dying can be reborn as a human being. It emphasizes the importance of co-existing with nature rather than conquering it. When one is free from the illusory self with its attachment and clinging, then one has broken the bondage that bound him or her and is freed or liberated. When it is possible to identify the causes of environmental problems, then it becomes possible to look for the ways to reduce or eliminate environmental problems. This requires the understanding that people realize their ignorance of nature and to rightfully understand that they are a part of the natural environment along with other living beings.

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