



The significance of water in Buddhism

- Its spiritual symbolism and part of daily life

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In this article we present extracts on the significance of water - its spiritual symbolism and part of daily practise and living, as it is important to include water in all its aspects as a part of the whole ecological context. Extracts of articles are added in order to communicate a taste of the Buddhist holistic view on our material and non-material reality, closely connected to the Buddhist enlightened context it is presenting. The closing article presents water in the context of Global Aid.

The origin of the threats towards water and the whole ecological system can be traced to the lack of a deeper awareness of the interconnectedness of all life and the lack of reflection on the consequences of our actions which is explained in the Buddhist teaching on karma. As you can read below:

"For contemporary engaged Buddhists a sense of responsibility rooted in compassion lies at the very heart of an ecological ethics."

"Not a single drop of water, not a single insect or animal, not a single human being, and of course not a single country, not a single continent escape this reality: we can live and exist only together."

Water - Its significance in science, in nature and culture, in world religions and in the universe¹

In Buddhism, water symbolizes life, the purest form of food, and water is the particular element which in nature carries everything together. Water symbolizes purity, clarity and calmness, and reminds us to cleanse our minds and attain the state of purity. Water is used to clean away dirt. When everyone sees you (the water), they are happy and joyful. This is because they are reminded that they can wash away the filth of their minds. They should wash away selfish and unkind thoughts and be clean and pure like you. "It is as with Ice and Water: Without Water there is no Ice ..." (Hakuins song of meditation).

Ethical spiritual horizons²

- Buddhism

Buddhist teachers and masters have constantly reminded us of the importance of living in tune with nature, to respect all life, to make time for meditation practice, to live simply and use nature as a spiritual force. Today, many well-known Buddhists in Asia and in the West such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, Venerable Kim Teng, and Venerable Phra Phrachak emphasize the natural relationship between deep ecology and Buddhism.

Buddhist environmentalists assert that mindful awareness of the universality of suffering produces compassionate empathy for all forms of life, particularly for all sentient species. Buddhist practice is designed to make one aware that one's existence is no more important than anyone else's. If one treats nature as a friend and teacher, one can be in harmony with other creatures and appreciate the interconnectedness of all that lives. All outer and inner phenomena, the mind and its surrounding environment, are understood to be inseparable and interdependent. The health of the whole is inseparably linked to the health of the parts, and the health of the parts is inseparably linked to the whole.

Buddhism teaches that in order to protect the environment we must protect ourselves. We protect ourselves by opposing selfishness with generosity, ignorance with wisdom, and hatred with loving kindness.

Selflessness, mindfulness, compassion and wisdom are the essence of Buddhism, and mindfulness and clear comprehension are at the heart of Buddhist meditation.

For contemporary engaged Buddhists a sense of responsibility rooted in compassion lies at the very heart of an ecological ethic.

Although the Buddhist doctrines of karma and rebirth link all forms of sentient existence in a moral continuum, Buddhist ethics clearly focus on human agency and its consequences. The inclusion of plants and animals in Buddhist teachings on salvation may be important philosophically because they attribute inherent value to nonhuman forms of life.

Nonetheless, humans have been the primary agents in creating the present ecological crisis and will bear the major responsibility for solving it.

Three fruits of Zen practise should be mentioned. The first is the deepening of one's mindfulness, the power of *Samadhi*. The second is the awakening to one's true self, and the third is the realization of this true self in ordinary life. These fruits enable persons to overcome the dichotomy between *inward* and *outward*.

*In rediscovering that one's true self is not separate from 'the mountains and rivers and the green earth' and all sentient beings, there is no longer anything in the universe that is outside of one's concern.*³

Article 17 /Green deal⁴

Wisdom and Compassion are at the heart of the Buddha's teachings and are the foundations of Buddhist practice.

The Wisdom referred to here is based above all on the awareness of the principle of INTERDEPENDANCE that the Buddha taught two thousand six hundred years ago. This reality of the total interdependence of all things in the universe is much more than a mere intellectual understanding that things are interconnected or in relation to each other. It practically means that not a single atom, not a single particle can exist "independently. A fortiori, not a single drop of water, not a single insect or animal, not a single human being, and of course not a single country, not a single continent escape this reality: we can live and exist only together, life can arise only in the whole of the e and not as a kind of endless addition of phenomena, species or expressions of this life. When we become aware of this shared and shared life, we begin to pay attention to what we do, we take care of things and beings, because we know that we cannot behave selfishly or individualistically; whether it is on the scale of a human being, a country or even a continent: we will not be able to live or rather survive alone by isolating ourselves.

It is from this awareness that what we call Compassion naturally appears. The word Pali that has been translated as compassion is Metta, whose root, Met, means "friend." In this sense this word joins the etymology of the word PHILANTHROPY which also comes from "friend", with the great difference that it is "friend of man". The Buddhist dimension of Metta of course includes human beings but goes far beyond that. It embraces all beings, humans, animals, insects and even of course trees, plants, water, air, minerals, all visible and invisible expressions, sensitive and insensitive, animated or inanimate are included in this unconditioned and magnanimous love. It is thus urgent to become aware of animal suffering, the cause of which is due only to the direct action of the human being.

However, the unacceptable injustices and the harshest suffering will obviously and once again be suffered by the weakest and most deprived, those who have contributed the least to the current and future disasters. For Buddhists, the top priority is to act and immediately turn to these most vulnerable populations and regions.

¹Brüesch, Peter 2011.

²Hope for the future – faith traditions address the climate threat. Interfaith Climate Summit, Uppsala 2008.

³Ruben I.F. Habito, (1997) "Mountains and rivers and the Green Earth: Zen and Ecology" in Mary Evelyn Tucker & Duncan Ryūken Williams, eds *Buddhism and Ecology*, Cambridge, Harvard, p 170.

⁴Olivier Wang-Genh, Extract of talk of Buddhist leaders of the European Buddhist Union at COP 21 UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in 201

Trossamfund och Vattenbistånd - Buddhism

Några nyckelord

Lars Nordberg, Buddha's Light International Association

1. Buddhism erkänner god vetenskap som nödvändig grund för insatser och åtgärder beträffande vatten.

- Det hydrologiska kretsloppet
- Orsak och verkan
- Obeständighet
- Vatten som agent för landskapsformer, sjöar, vattendrag, våtmarker, biologisk mångfald, flora och fauna, människor (dricksvatten, jordbruksbevattning, industri, hygien, livsmedelsproduktion, vattenburna transporter, kylning, uppvärmning, avfall, avlopp, som lösningsmedel)
- Sammanhang och interaktioner mellan olika segment, systemanalys, optimering, konflikter (lokala, rurala, urbana, regionala, mellanstatliga, co-benefits, krigsorsaker, migration, svält, konkurrens)
- Effekter av klimatförändringar (kretsloppet störs, mer torka, mer översvämning, markanvändning, saltvatteninträngning, kollapsade ledningsnät, förorenade brunnar, störda reningsverk, utspädning, hantering av restprodukter, urbanisering, befolkningstillväxt, politik, utbildning, cirkulära system, samband med ekonomi/utveckling/kvinnofrågor/arbetsmarknad)

2. Historiska insatser i Kina (boken Humanistisk Buddhism, pp. 151-160).

- Miljöskydd
- Jordbruk
- Bistånd
- Hälsa
- Brunnar
- Vattenresurser
- Broar
- Kanaler
- Flora och fauna

Helhetssyn och samarbete krävs.

3. Nutida exempel

- Tibet
- Burkina Faso
- Ecuador

4. Vattenåtgång för produktion av vissa livsmedel som grund för anpassning av produktion/konsumtion

- Ett kilo biffkött kräver 16 000 liter
- En hamburgare kräver 2 400 liter
- Ett kilo kyckling 3 500 liter

- Ett kilo potatis 500 liter
- En liter mjölk 900 liter
- Ett kilo bomull kräver 1 000 till 29 000 liter (70% av all konstbevattning används för bomull)

Vatten kan behövas för mer angelägna ändamål i många torkdrabbade länder som riskerar att bli ännu mer drabbade av klimatförändringar. En begränsad naturresurs bör användas på optimalt sätt. En vegetarisk diet är mindre vattenkrävande än en kött diet.

5. BLIAs Vege Plan är en interaktiv websida för alla.

- Sparar vatten
- Minskar avfall
- Minskar utsläpp
- Minskar kalhuggning
- Ger bättre hälsa
- Motverkar global uppvärmning av klimatet

6. BLIA har småskrifter om bl a miljö och andlighet samt vegetarianism. Dessa har relevans för tillgång och användning av vatten.

7. Buddhas Medelväg *) och den Ädla Åttafaldiga Vägen #) utgör rättesnören också vad avser vatten, utan vilket liv inte är möjligt. Hänsyn och långsiktigt ansvar betonas.

Slutsats 1: ansvarsfulla åtgärder inom vattensektorn måste bygga på god vetenskap och beprövade metoder, varför samarbete mellan olika vetenskapliga och samhällsliga sektorer är en förutsättning för framgång, inte minst vad avser projekt- och budgetbistånd till behövande länder i Världen

Slutsats 2: Hänsyn måste tas till alla segment av det hydrologiska kretsloppet, eftersom ingrepp i en del av det får effekter i alla andra—för växter, djur och människor samt för markförhållanden. Kompetent konsekvensanalys krävs.

Slutsats 3: BLIA vill medverka med kunskapsspridning som del av bistånd—rådgivning, stöd och engagemang.

**) Icke-dualism, dvs "både och", inte "antingen eller".*

#) Rätt åsikt, rätt tanke, rätt tal, rätta gärningar, rätt uppträdande, rätta ansträngningar, rätt begrundan, rätt koncentration