

Dissertation Title : Buddhādāsa on Environmental Consciousness and its
Relationship to Environmental Ethics

Researcher Name : Mr. Phubes Sukjam

Dissertation Advisor : Dr. John Giordano

Academic Year : 2020

ABSTRACT

This research is an attempt to respond to the global problem of an environmental crisis that has threatened and affected all dimensions of living things and non-living things in the world. It mainly deals with Eastern and Western environmental worldview. In Eastern, the researcher selects Buddhādāsa as a representative of Eastern intellectual thinker who discusses the environmental issues through the lens of Dependent Origination, which is defined as interconnected no-self. In Western, there are two main forms of environmental ethics: Anthropocentrism and Non-Anthropocentrism, which is understood according to their definition.

As the result of the research, research finds that an ecocentrist, Arne Naess, presents ontological environmental consciousness similar with Buddhādāsa. Naess, who has drawn his deep ecology from ecological science and ecological wisdom from Hindu religion and Spinoza's philosophy, formulates the recognition of the ontological premises, which can move our environmental consciousness beyond constructed distinctions between science and Eastern religion. The belief in the interconnectedness of all things is central of Naess's Deep Ecology, whereas Buddhādāsa also heightens one's sense of interconnectedness with the natural world through his interpretation of the law of conditionality. Based on the ontological premises, both Buddhādāsa and Naess are

conceptualized as radical environmental and ethical critique of anthropocentric worldview by expanding the notions of self to disrupt distinction between human and non-human world. Naess relies on Self-realization as a process to gradually reduce egoistic self and identify it to ecological Self. Whereas, Buddhādāsa relies on mindfulness as a process to gradually control and remove selfishness, which results all kinds of violence and exploitation to be removed as well. Buddhādāsa and Naess presents environmental consciousness to pave the way for the development of environmental philosophy or ethics through spiritual approach in order to advise practitioners to shift to a lifestyle of sufficiency and frugality in a way to harmonize with nature.

The difference is that Buddhādāsa posits a notion of the self in terms of both dynamic and developmental, which is seen as a dynamic continuity. As the result, Buddhādāsa's environmental consciousness stems from a transformation of self-attachment to an interconnected selfless or no-self. Whereas Naess posits a notion of the Self in terms of an essential ontological substantiality, which is seen as an underlying permanent Self. As the result, Naess's environmental consciousness stems from self-identification from the egoistic self to the ecological Self.

Buddhādāsa argues that once we realize clearly the reality of natural phenomena through the teachings of interconnected no-self, we will discover selflessness of human nature, which will eventually release humans from the ignorance and selfishness. The environmental consciousness of the interconnected non-self enables humans to stop the behavior of excessive exploitation of the natural resources, instead to develop loving kindness and compassion toward fellow humans and non-human entities. We will act whatever in the ways of interconnected selfless, which detach from egocentric actions,

but not detach from the natural world. With the spirit of egocentric detachment, we will produce and consume natural resources based on ecocentric worldview like a bee consumes honey without injuring the plants.

