

# BUDDHIST COUNCIL OF QUEENSLAND INC. (IA29696)



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ARTICLE FOR INCLUSION IN “THE EAGLE” – July 2008

TOPIC: BUDDHIST VIEW ON CLIMATE CHANGE / GLOBAL WARMING / ETC

HEADING: **ECOLOGICAL MINDFULNESS WORKS FOR ALL**

More than two and a half thousand years ago, the Buddha, Shakyamuni, recognised the inter-connectedness of all things, the fundamental principle of continual change and what he termed the “Three Poisons” that afflicted everyone - anger, ignorance and greed. All of these and their results can be reduced down to just one term – “Suffering”!

He also identified the five essential principles that needed to be practiced by anyone seeking to live a peaceful and harmonious life, two of which are not to kill or steal, and all five can be reduced simply to the principle of “Non-Harm”.

It is now generally agreed that planet Earth is itself, a unified eco-system that has prevailed for several billion years, continually evolving, encouraging and sustaining life, in all its myriad forms. We now also know that it’s macro and micro systems that sustain life in its multitude of forms and that it is the finite balance between one and another that enhances life overall. The inter-relationship between these systems has evolved over billions of years, largely with immense success.

In the past few thousand years though, in seeking to influence any one of mankind’s desires, humankind has attempted to alter one system by interfering with it, either through direct eradication, cellular modification or the introduction of a different system to influence, change or even overwhelm that which has been identified as the problem. Often, the long-term result has been catastrophic for not just the target system, but also those that had been dependent upon it for their existence and others then dependent on that system also. Today, many ancient civilisations, plant and animal species are now extinct through such interference.

One forest is cleared for agriculture, another for its timber... the resulting smoke pollutes our air, while decimating the potential photosynthesis needed to sustain us, but also raising carbon dioxide levels that in turn, contribute to global warming and ultimately climate change. Erosion and rising salt-levels have turned fertile ground into deserts. Diverted and dammed rivers eliminate entire eco-systems downstream, simply to ensure water to other areas and purposes.

Every change, irrespective of the size and scope of that change can eventually lead to a significant change in the world as we share it.

Many such changes have been brought about through enterprise-led consumerism and “advancement”-driven economic growth. Countries that previously had little reliance on oil, or other resources outside their own cultural environment are now soaking up additional consumption, generating more heat – nuclear, coal, wood or solar, and are all

contributing to the changes in our shared atmosphere. Crops, previously grown for food, are now being diverted to feed the demand for fuel, leaving millions hungry or unable to now afford the basic necessities of life.

Many of these imposts have been generated out of ignorance. Humankind's failure to recognise the fine delicate balance that nature has established over these aeons, has been clouded by a basic greed and desire for more, to the point where our very existence is under serious threat. Perhaps not the threat of annihilation, but certainly change, and yet we generally oppose change – certainly suffering.

Agriculture, aquaculture and other activities including mining, oil and electricity generation need to be approached from the environmentally-friendly, sustainable and renewable perspective, to satisfy not only today's but also tomorrow's needs.

Firstly, through education, both academic and public, raising awareness of these issues is essential to reverse these trends, and by remembering "to act globally, think locally", we can all contribute to saving the future of this planet and those who rely on it to survive.

Reducing waste, using environmentally-friendly products, even switching to public transport and walking where appropriate – all of these things, however humble or simple, will have some impact on the global outcome. Governments and their people must act responsibly and be mindful of leaving this world habitable and nourishing for our children and their children too.

We all share this world. Everything depends on something and someone else and we must all be accountable for what we do.

By applying the Buddha's simple antidote of "Non-harm" in all our dealings, we can find hope in first stabilising and then reversing this situation to that which will benefit all life on this planet, not just human.

It has taken many years to reach this point and it will undoubtedly take many more to reverse the damage done, but change is certain and by practicing principles of "Non-harm" in all our daily activities, the success of such initiatives is guaranteed.

750 words...

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