



## The Significance of Sekhiya Dhammā in Environmental Protection

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### Abstract

*Buddhism is the Dhamma, which is known for universal love and peace. Like mental and social peace, Gautam Buddha has accepted the essence of environmental protection for the welfare of whole world and humanity. He gave more importance to maintain the beauty of nature by following moral values. Buddhism teaches to have good feeling of loving kindness & compassion towards nature & its beauty. Gautam Buddha instructed us to follow non-violence towards all living beings of the world. Buddhist ethics & teachings are essential for the environmental protection. There is need of the Buddha not war in current era. He did not take favor of destruction of nature or any living beings of this world. He was very conscious towards the protection of nature. The teaching of Gautam Buddha is very relevant for removal of environmental crisis. There is no doubt that the idea of Gautam Buddha was to preserve natural things and environment. He wants to avoid dangerous problems like natural disaster, global warming, and lack of water. For this reason He appreciated the universal loving kindness and brotherhood for the welfare of whole humanity and nature.*

*Gautam Buddha has taught valuable and unique teachings in the form of Sekhiyā Dhammā, which is considered as an important part of Buddhist discipline. It plays an important role for the establishment of good environment. Sekhiyā Dhammā teaches us the lesson of environmental ethics for the protection of nature and good atmosphere. Sekhiyā Dhammā is very applicable to establish an ideal modern society with good environment. There is no doubt that the idea of Gautam Buddha was to preserve natural things and environment. He wants to avoid dangerous problems like natural disaster, global warming, and lack of water. For this reason He appreciated the universal loving kindness and brotherhood for the welfare of whole humanity and nature. Hence, it can be said that Sekhiyā Dhammā is very essential for the protection and establishment of good environment.*

### Keywords

*Dhamma, Loving Kindness, Compassion, Sekhiyā Dhammā, Pāimokkha, Pātimokkha, Vinaya-Pitaka, Pācittiya-Pāli, Dukka, Nibbāna, Morality, Mental Discipline, Wisdom, Theravada Buddhism, Dhammapada, Khandha-Paritta, Aguttara-Nikāya, Metta-Sutta, Sutta-Nipāta, Sigālovāda-Sutta, Dīgha-Nikāya, Vasala-Sutta and Āmagandha-Sutta.*

### Introduction

Human being is an inseparable part of nature. There is a close relationship between nature and human life. It is impossible to imagine the existence of the world without nature. Environment is the collection of surrounding things. The surrounding things may be air, water, minerals, living being etc. Good environment is a fundamental thing for a balanced life. There are many problems, which are

occurring in life in the lack of proper environmental protection. Environmental problems are responsible for bad life. Environmental protection generally relates to the protection of physical surroundings i.e. forest, trees, plants, wetlands, animals etc. But overall environmental protection also needs to include the social, psychological, and moral values. Without protecting these aspects, a complete environmental protection will not possible.



Environmental protection is one of the critical problems facing mankind today. To spread awareness about environmental protection, World Environment Day has been started to celebrate on 5<sup>th</sup> June from 1996. All scientists, economists, philosophers, researchers through newspapers, television, radio, etc. analyzed and were alarmed on the serious adverse impacts of toxic substances on the living environment of human, animals, and vegetation. It is ironic that man is the one, who pollutes one's own health, and kill the life of other living beings in this Earth. Environmental problem of our ecology is not minor thing.

Now a day's world is facing serious problems of environmental destruction. Most of the forests, trees and plants are destroyed by human beings for their personal use. Smoke and dust from the chimney of Industry is making air pollution. Rivers and seas are getting polluted from the human and industrial waste. Increment of carbon dioxide is reducing ozone layer, creating acid rains in several places, soil is losing nitrogen, and global warming is increasing etc. Our environment of the world is destructing health and wealth of the human beings. There is no doubt that destruction of environment will create bad result in future life. It may increase land slide, flood, scarce of water, lack of oxygen, disturbance in rain etc. So it is compulsory for all people to aware about the results of environment destruction. With the help of proper knowledge and education of environmental destruction can make the earth a safe place to live in.

Now a day's protection of environment is becoming the important agenda for government and people. Several organizations & societies are coming forward for making aware about the protection of environment. But they focus only to the protection of physical environment and pay less attention toward the role of bad mentality. They are not aware that environmental destruction is not merely cause of technological development but also due to the ego centeredness of people. So it is getting late to be aware also on the

importance of protecting mental factor for environmental protection.

Our environment should be full of peace, happiness, and social harmony. Religious environment should be in favor of human beings. The teachings of Gautam Buddha are in favor of environmental protection. *Sekhiyā Dhammā*<sup>1</sup> plays an important role for the establishment of good environment. *Sekhiyā Dhammā* is a part of *Pātimokkha*.<sup>2</sup> The summary of *Vinaya-Pitaka* is found in *Pātimokkha*, which is addressed as *Pātimokkha* also. *Pātimokkha (Pātimokkha)* means the collection of two hundred twenty seven rules of monks.<sup>3</sup> If one wants to understand Buddhism, one must study the development of the Buddhist Order in the early period. The study of *Pātimokkha* is the best way to understand this development. *Pātimokkha* is found and practiced by every school of Buddhism. There are some changes in terms of rules and regulations of *Bhikkhu Pātimokkha* and *Bhikkhunī Pātimokkha*. According to Theravada Buddhism, *Bhikkhunī Pātimokkha* is an essential part of *Vinaya Pitaka*. Based on *Theravada Bhikkhunī Pātimokkha*, there are three hundred & eleven rules, which are made by Gautam Buddha for the nuns. But according to *Bhikkhu Pātimokkha*, there are two hundred twenty seven rules for monks.

### Concept of Sekhiyā Dhammā

*Sekhiyā Dhammā* is very useful for all human beings. Most of these rules were laid down at Sāvattihī on account of undisciplined behavior on the part of a group of six monks. These rules can be divided into four groups. The first group of twenty six rules is concerned with good conduct and behavior when going into villages and towns. The second group of thirty rules deals with polite manners when accepting alms-food and when taking meals. The third group of sixteen rules prohibits teaching of *Dhamma* to disrespectful people. The fourth group of three rules relates to unbecoming ways of answering the calls of nature and of spitting.<sup>4</sup>

*Sekhiyā Dhammā* term is made of two terms. They are *Sekhiyā* and *Dhammā*. *Sekhiyā* means training. *Dhammā* means moral quality, object of mind, quality, justice,



characterstice, condition, function, nature, practice, idea, thing, and duty. In Buddhism, *Dhamma* is considered as way of life. *Sekhiyā Dhammā* is made for monks and nuns to control their daily activities & behavior. *Sekhiyā Dhammā* is a group of precepts, which were preached by Gautam Buddha for the welfare of monks and nuns at that time. It consists of seventy five instructions, which are preserved in the form of *Pātimokkha*.

### Theme of Sekhiyā Dhammā

According to *Theravada Bhikkhu Pātimokkha*, there are seventy five *Sekhiyā Dhammā*. In the same way, seventy five *Sekhiyā Dhammā* are found in *Theravada Bhikkhunī Pātimokkha* like *Bhikkhu Pātimokkha*.<sup>5</sup> *Sekhiyā Dhammā* is divided into seven chapters.<sup>6</sup> They are known as *Parimattala-Vaggo Pathamo*<sup>7</sup>, *Ujjagghika-Vaggo Dutiyō*<sup>8</sup>, *Khambhakata-Vaggo*<sup>9</sup>, *Sakkacca-Vaggo*<sup>10</sup>, *Kavata-Vaggo*<sup>11</sup>, *Surusuru-Vaggo*<sup>12</sup>, and *Pādukā-Vaggo*<sup>13</sup>. There are ten *Sekhiyā Dhammā* in the first six chapters each. But, seventh chapter has fifteen rules of *Sekhiyā Dhammā*. In this way, seventy five moral rules are divided into seven parts.

The first two rules explain about the proper dressing of monks and nuns. The next twenty four rules suggest monks and nuns how to enter into towns, villages and houses. The next thirty rules instruct how to take meals. The next sixteen rules teach how to preach *Dhamma* to others. The last three rules are the instructions for the passing of urine and toilet. According to *Pācittiya-Pāli*, if a monk or nun breaks the rules of *Sekhiyā Dhammā*, he or she commits the offence of *Dukka*. This is why every monk or nun should follow these rules in every condition.

### Importance of Sekhiyā Dhammā at the period of Buddha

Based on necessity and situation, Gautam Buddha has given instructions to monks, nuns, and novices. Because of this reason *Sekhiyā Dhammā* is came to existence. He

wants to teach appreciable discipline to His monks and nuns. *Sekhiyā Dhammā* is one kind of medium to understand the teachings of the Buddha. Without following these moral rules in daily life, no one can practice spirituality in life. He wants to teach lesson of morality, mental discipline and wisdom, which are considered like three chief stairs, which leads to The Holy City of *Nibbāna*. Without practicing morality, one cannot attain mental discipline and wisdom. Gautam Buddha says:

*Sīle patihāya naro sapañño citta  
bhāvaya  
Ātāpī nipako bhikkhu so ima vijataye  
jata ti.*<sup>14</sup>

When a wise man, established well  
in virtue,  
Develops consciousness and  
understanding,  
Then as a bhikkhu ardent and  
sagacious  
He succeeds in disentangling this  
tangle.<sup>15</sup>

### The Relevance of Sekhiyā Dhammā in Environmental Protection

*Bhikkhu Vibhaga (Bhikkhu Pātimokkha)* and *Bhikkhunī Vibhaga (Bhikkhunī Pātimokkha)* are considered as literature of Theravada Buddhism. Basically, *Pātimokkha* explains about the social & moral behavior. In *Theravada Pātimokkha*, there are seventy five *Sekhiyā Dhammā* (seventy five rules), which are equally preached for monks as well as nuns also. These were very simple, but very important for nuns at the period of Gautam Buddha. These rules are made for social & moral behavior. They are very essential to practice morality. They are very helpful for the development of spiritual life. These rules were very useful for the members of Buddhist Order and common people of society. In the same, these rules are very useful to maintain peace and harmony in modern society also. It should be followed by everyone in the current society. By practicing it, real happiness of life can be



achieved by human beings. *Sekhiyā Dhammā* can be called a measurement of civilized & developed society. It is very essential for every civilized person of society. It should not be understood as a minor thing. In real sense, it is mandatory to learn social values. It is very helpful for the socialization of human beings. It develops the personality of human beings. In the lack of *Sekhiyā Dhammā*, any bad deed can take place in human life. Any bad deed should not be understood as minor or small. One should not think that it will not give bad result in life.

In spite of these things, *Sekhiyā Dhammā* is very relevant in the environmental protection. Some rules teach how to preserve our nature and environment. *Sekhiyā Dhammā* explains about of the protection of physical environment. Gautam Buddha has shown His alertness towards the protection of nature and its beauty. *Sekhiyā Dhammā* teaches us the lesson of environmental ethics for the protection of nature and good atmosphere. The significance of *Sekhiyā Dhammā* can be understood in the following ways:

The twenty-seventh rule of *Sekhiyā Dhammā* explains that *Sakkacca pittapāta patiggahessāmīti sikkhā karaṭṭiyā ti*.<sup>16</sup> It means that I shall accept alms-food carefully: this is a rule to be kept.<sup>17</sup> This rule is very relevant in modern human life. This rule instructs us that one should accept the meal with respect. It should be accepted with faith and honor. There is no doubt that all living beings depend on food. According to Buddhism, it is one kind of universal truth. Gautam Buddha has said that *Sabbe sattā āhārahitikā*.<sup>18</sup> It means that all creatures subsist by nutriment.<sup>19</sup> No one can survive without food in this universe. Everyone tries to get food properly and peacefully. It is the first and foremost necessity for every living being. It is a basic and fundamental need of all living beings including human beings. This is why; Gautam Buddha has spoken that hunger is the greatest disease. The disease of hunger cannot be stopped for ever and ever. To satisfy our hunger, food is

required again and again. It means that food is the greatest need of every living being. In *Sukha-Vagga* of *The Dhammapada*, Gautam Buddha says:

*Jighacchā paramā rogā sakhārā  
paramā dukkhā.  
Eva ñatvā yathābhūta nibbāna  
parama sukha.*

Hunger is the greatest disease. Aggregates are the greatest ill. Knowing this as it really is, (the wise realize) *Nibbāna*, the bliss supreme.<sup>20</sup>

One should not disrespect the food. One should not through the eatable things. It means that person know about his limitation of food. According to hunger and need, one should take the eatable things. But now-a-days people are following it properly in modern Indian society. It is very common that a lot of food and eatable things are wasted in marriage programs and other feast ceremonies. People do not have control on their desires. This is why; they are taking every items of food. But they are not able to eat all. At last they have through it. People have to through it in earth, grass and water. Because of this kind of activities, soil and water pollution are increasing. Because of polluted water, a lot of living beings of water are dying now-a-days. One should not through extra meal on the green grass and water. Because of this activity, green grass and small insects, which are living on grass, may die. To protect both grass and insect, He made this rule. For the welfare of all living beings, one should control one's senses.

The twentieth-ninth rule of *Sekhiyā Dhammā* explains that *Samasūpaka pittapāta patiggahessāmīti sikkhā karaṭṭiyā ti*.<sup>21</sup> It means that I shall accept alms-food with sauce in proportion (that is, sauces in the proportion of one part in four to the rice): this is a rule to be kept.<sup>22</sup> The thirty-fourth rule of *Sekhiyā Dhammā* explains that *Samasūpaka pittapāta bhujjissāmīti sikkhā karaṭṭiyā ti*.<sup>23</sup> It means that I shall eat alms-food with sauce in proportion: this is a rule to



be kept.<sup>24</sup> These rules are very relevant in modern society. According to this rule, one should take food with essential curry or sauce. There is no doubt that food is very precious for life. All living beings are struggling for food. Food is considered as an essential thing out of three important things. This is why; one should not misuse any eatable thing in the name of marriage programs and other feast ceremonies. Indian society should learn this kind of habits from the people of Japan and South Korea. Japanese and Korean people are not wasting even single piece of eatable things. Person should use eatable things in proper quantity. Among many eatable things, person should not use only one thing in more quantity. This habit may create problem to health. One should avoid this kind of bad habits. This is why; these rules should be followed by everyone. By following it, person can be free from many physical diseases.

The fifty-fifth rule of *Sekhiyā Dhammā* explains that *Na sāmisenā hatthena pānīyathāḷaka patiggahessāmīti sikkhā karatīyā ti.*<sup>25</sup> It means that I shall not accept a drinking-water pot (utensil) with a hand of soiled with food: this is a rule to be kept.<sup>26</sup> It should be followed by everyone. Generally person uses his right hand for eating purpose. While taking food, person should use his lefty hand to hold glass of water and other things. It is considered as a good habit. Because of this bad habit, glasses and other utensils will be dirtier. To wash this kind of utensils, one has to spend more water, more energy, and more detergent powder (soap). By practicing this rule, one can save many things in daily life. The savings of these things will be fruitful for our environment and nature. By following it, natural resources like water can be saved in large amount. One can stop wasting important things in life. It is very true that person should utilize (use) the resources; one should not waste it. Gautam Buddha was also in favor of this type of ideas. That is why; He has given preference in His discourses for the proper utilization of things in life for the welfare of whole humanity. In

the same way, precious time can saved a lot in our daily life. This precious time can be utilized for good activities like religious and righteous actions.

The fifty-sixth rule of *Sekhiyā Dhammā* explains that *Na sasitthika pattadhovana antaraghare chathessāmīti sikkhā karatīyā ti.*<sup>27</sup> It means that I shall not in an inhabited area throw away bowl washing water which has rice grains in it: this is a rule to be kept.<sup>28</sup> It means that I will not throw out amidst the houses rinsing of the bowl with grains of boiled rice, is a training to be observed. It is also nice thing for daily behavior. It should be practiced by everyone in daily life. One should try not to throw any eatable material outside the bowl or plate. It is true that one pay attention during taking food. It means that one should follow concentration while eating any thing. In the lack of attention, it may happen. This is why: Gautam Buddha has suggested for the utilization of proper concentration of mind.

The seventy-third rule of *Sekhiyā Dhammā* explains that *Na hito agilāno uccāra vā passāva vā karissāmīti sikkhā karatīyā ti.*<sup>29</sup> It means that I shall not when not sick evacuate or make water while standing up: this is a rule to be kept.<sup>30</sup> The seventy-fourth rule of *Sekhiyā Dhammā* explains that *Na harite agilāno uccāra vā passāva vā kheta vā karissāmīti sikkhā karatīyā ti.*<sup>31</sup> The seventy-fourth rule of *Sekhiyā Dhammā* explains that *Na udake agilāno uccāra vā passāva vā kheta vā karissāmīti sikkhā karatīyā ti.*<sup>32</sup> It means that one will not pass excrement, urine or spit if not ill; on green vegetable is a training to be observed. One will not pass excrement, urine or spit in the water if not ill is a training to be observed.<sup>33</sup> This rule is very relevant in modern period also. It should practiced by everyone. It is very helpful to preserve our valuable things like water, beauty of nature, green grass, and other important parts of nature.

In *Buddha-Vaggo (The Buddha)* of *The Dhammapada*, The Buddha has preached to follow precepts. He says that forbearing



patience is the highest austerity. Nibbāna is supreme, say the Buddhas. He, verily, is not a recluse, who harms another. Nor is he an ascetic, who oppresses others.<sup>34</sup> Not insulting, not harming, restraint according to the Fundamental Moral Code, moderation in food, secluded abode, intent on higher thoughts, - this is the Teaching of the Buddhas.<sup>35</sup> Gautam Buddha has preached the importance of limitless loving kindness towards all living beings of whole universe. He has instructed to monks to be friendly towards all living beings of nature. About the protection of natural things, He says in *Khandha-Paritta (The Protection of Mind and Body)* of *Aguttara-Nikāya*. He says:

*Apādakehi me metta metta dipādakehi me.  
Catuppadehi me metta metta bahuppadehi  
me.*<sup>36</sup>

I am friendly with those without feet, with those with two feet I am friendly, I am friendly with those with four feet, and with those with many feet I am friendly.

*Mā ma apādako hisi mā ma hisi dipādako.  
Mā ma catuppado hi si ma ma hi si  
bahuppado.*<sup>37</sup>

May the one without feet not hurt me, may the one with two feet not hurt me, may the one with four feet not hurt me, and may the one with many feet not hurt me.

Gautam Buddha preached limitless loving kindness for the protection of nature, environment, and whole humanity. One should develop selfless friendship, and universal brotherhood towards all living beings. One should not try to kill or hurt anyone for personal gain or because of anger. One should think about others that may all beings be happy and prosperous. In *Metta-Sutta*, Gautam Buddha says:

*Ye keci pabhūt'atthi tasā vā thāvarā vā  
anavasesā*

*Dighā vā ye mahantā vā majjhimā  
rassakāukathulā.*

*Dihā vā yeva adihā ye ca dūre vasanti  
avidūre*

*Bhūtā vā sambhavesī vā sabbe sattā  
bhavantu sukhittā.*<sup>38</sup>

The breathing beings whatever there are, either feeble or strong, either long or great, middle sized, short, small or large; either (they are) seen or not seen, and which live far or near, either born or in the process of taking birth, may all beings be happy, may all creatures be happy minded.<sup>39</sup>

The teaching of harmlessness is very helpful in the protection of environment. To protect and promote the life of animals, birds and plants, Gautam Buddha says:

*Sukha kāmāni bhūtāni yo datena vihitsati.  
Attano sukhamesāno pecca so na labhate  
sukha.*<sup>40</sup>

*Sukha kāmāni bhūtāni yo datena na hitsati.  
Attano sukhamesāno pecca so labhate  
sukha.*<sup>42</sup>

He who seeks his own happiness by harming others who also desires to have happiness will not find happiness hereafter.<sup>41</sup> He who seeks his own happiness by harming others who also desires to have happiness will find happiness hereafter.<sup>43</sup>

One should not harm any living beings. One, who is killing or destroying any living being, cannot be called a noble person. One, who is not killing any living being, can be called a noble one. In *Dhammatha-Vagga* of *The Dhammapada*, He says:

*Na tena ariyo hoti yena pāāni hitsati.  
Ahiṅsā sabba pātāna ariyo ti  
pavuccati.*<sup>44</sup>

He is not therefore an ariya (noble) if he harms any living beings; through his harmlessness towards all living beings is he called an *Ariya*.<sup>45</sup>

In *Āmagandha-Sutta*<sup>46</sup> of *Sutta-Nipāta*, Kassapa Buddha says that one should not kill or hurt any living beings. In *Sigālovāda-Sutta* of *Dīgha-Nikāya* explains that one should behave others with love and affection. In *Vasala-Sutta*<sup>47</sup> of *Sutta-Nipāta*, Gautam Buddha says that one, who kills or hurt any living beings, is called a mean person. Gautam Buddha abstains from destroying such seeds and vegetation. They are of five kinds, namely, root-germs, stem-germs, node germs, plumage-germs and seed-germs. One, who destroys life of other



living beings, gets bad results in one's life. He says:

*Ekaja vā dvija vāpi yodha pāta  
vihitsati.*

*Yassa pāte dayā natthi, ta jaññā  
vasalo iti.<sup>48</sup>*

Whosoever in this world kills living beings, once born or twice born, in whom there is no sympathy for living beings - know him as an outcast.

According to Gautam Buddha, all beings of this nature are equal. Every living being has right to live properly and peacefully. He has given the same importance to the all species of universe. He says that one should not misuse and abuse one's power in the destruction of living beings. One should not try to destroy these species of animals, forests, mountains, and natural resources. There is no doubt that the problem of ecological crisis has been occurred because of these kinds of damages and destructions. The problem of ecological crisis is originated from the unwholesome and greedy mind of mankind. Animals are not so much responsible for the destruction of nature like human beings. The beauty & resources of nature have been damaged by human beings.

To resolve the modern environmental crisis, a lot of policies, projects, laws and regulations should be applied to protect our environment and society. There is no doubt that these laws and regulations are increased, in the same way, violence and pollution are increased also. We are erring in our approach to the solution for the problems. Without targeting self-purity, it is impossible to protect our environment. Without morality, no one can achieve harmony, co-existence and peace in society. Modern world need a religion of non-violence, compassion and peaceful coexistence and growing awareness for the ecological awareness. For the development of ecological awareness, vision should be very scientific.

By following the teachings of Gautam Buddha, physical environment, pollution, society can be protected very nicely. By controlling the activities of body, speech, and mind, a good environment can be

established. A good environment with real *Dhamma*, can be helpful to get success in social life, economic life and spiritual life. If the teachings of Gautam Buddha are propagated properly the problem of environmental destruction can be minimized and stopped.

Gautam Buddha has preached that the cause of wrongdoing is bad mental factor of human being. Because of ignorance & wickedness, people are destroying this nature and its beauty. This is the reason; there is the need for environmental education. By spreading knowledge and awareness about the environmental destruction may be helpful for environmental protection. One should change one's attitude towards nature for the environmental protection. It is not sufficient to correct the external environment. One must begin the process by correcting one's personal attitude. It is mandatory to control greed for protection of our environment. By damaging resources of nature, human future cannot be saved. So the protection of environment is very essential for the lives of forthcoming generations.

Buddhist ethics & His teachings are essential for the environmental protection. There is need of the Buddha not war in current era. He did not take favor of destruction of nature or any living beings of this world. He was very conscious towards the protection of nature. The teaching of Gautam Buddha is very relevant and helpful for the removal of environmental crisis. The theory of *Live and Let Live* should be followed by whole world. Gautam Buddha has taught it in His whole teachings for the welfare of whole humanity as well as environmental protection. Gautam Buddha says:

*Sabbe sattā sukhī hontu sabbe  
hontu ca khemino.*

*Sabbe bhadhrāti passntu mā  
kañcidukkhāmagamā.<sup>49</sup>*

May all beings be happy, may all beings be secure, may all beings be happy minded and may their hearts be wholesome.

*Sekhiyā Dhammā* can be considered as an important part of Buddhist Ethics. *Sekhiyā Dhammā* is very useful for the development of human values. *Sekhiyā Dhammā* teaches us for personal improvement and growth to



achieve happiness and joy in life. In the same way, it emphasizes on the welfare of all livings of this universe. *Sekhiyā Dhammā* is full of many ethical values, which were very relevant at the time of Gautam Buddha. In the same way, *Sekhiyā Dhammā* is very applicable to establish an ideal modern society with good environment. *Sekhiyā Dhammā* teaches us very nice lesson of environmental protection. Hence, it can be said that *Sekhiyā Dhammā* is very essential for the protection and establishment of good environment.

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