



Buddhism and a Sustainable World: Some Reflections

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There is no doubt that Buddhist thought, above all through its stress on the mutual dependence of all phenomena, contains resources that have been important for those working towards a more ecologically aware and sustainable way of life. The works of Buddhist-inspired writers such as Joanna Macy and Gary Snyder have helped create and shape the new ecological consciousness.

But these thinkers are essentially engaged in creating a new and contemporary Buddhism. Historically, Buddhist literature had relatively little explicit concern with environmental awareness, protection or sustainability.

In this keynote address, I examine some of the writing in this area, but suggest that the actual practice of Buddhist societies, particularly in Tibet and the Himalayas, often did engage quite deeply, if at a less explicit level, with environmental and ecological issues. I suggest that these societies have useful lessons for us today in the search for a sustainable world.