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Caring for the Earth, Weaving Faith: The Construction of Buddhist Eco-Theology in Response to Climate Change

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Abstract

Climate change represents not only an ecological crisis but also a profound ethical and spiritual challenge, revealing the interconnectedness of human activities, consumption patterns, inequality, suffering, and the sustainability of life. Despite growing scholarly interest in Buddhist environmental ethics, the integration of core Buddhist teachings into a coherent eco-theological framework that connects personal transformation with collective ecological action remains underdeveloped. This article addresses this gap by constructing a Buddhist eco-theology through a textual and contextual examination of the Suttas in the Pāli Canon, Mahāyāna Sūtras, contemporary Buddhist ethical formulations, and empirical studies on mindfulness and ecological behavior. Employing a qualitative literature-based approach, the study develops a conceptual model through textual, conceptual, contextual, and integrative analysis. The findings demonstrate that Buddhist eco-theology can be grounded in the interconnected principles of paṭiccasamuppāda, anattā, mettā, karuṇā, ahiṃsā, sīla, appicchatā, santuṭṭhi, sati, and paññā. The Five Mindfulness Trainings are further interpreted as a contemporary actualization of pañcasīla that connects Buddhist spirituality with respect for life, sufficiency, responsibility, dialogue, and mindful consumption. Building on a synthesis of textual, normative, and empirical perspectives, this study proposes the Relational Compassionate Mindful Ecological Action (RCMEA) model, comprising relational awareness, reduced self-centeredness, compassionate care, a sufficiency orientation, mindful agency, ethical commitment, and collective ecological action. The model provides a conceptual framework for understanding how Buddhist spiritual transformation can be translated into concrete ecological responsibility at the communal, institutional, social, and interfaith levels. Buddhist eco-theology is therefore conceptualized not merely as an environmental ethic but as a transformative Dhamma praxis that integrates inner cultivation, ethical conduct, mindful consumption, and collective ecological action.

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Introduction

Climate change has evolved from an environmental issue once projected as a future threat into an ecological reality that is currently affecting human life and various species. Rising global temperatures, changes in rainfall patterns, extreme weather events, sea-level rise, melting ice, ecosystem degradation, and pressure on biodiversity demonstrate that climate change can no longer be viewed as an issue far removed from daily life. *The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (IPCC, 2023) concludes that human activities, particularly through greenhouse gas emissions, have unequivocally caused global warming.

Global surface temperatures for the 2011–2020 period reached 1.09°C [0.95–1.20°C] above the 1850–1900 average, which the IPCC's key findings round to approximately 1.1°C. These conditions continue to pose a serious threat. *The World Meteorological Organization* (WMO, 2025) reports that 2024 was the hottest year on record over the past 175 years of observations, with a global average temperature of approximately 1.55 ± 0.13°C above the 1850–1900 average. A single year's temperature exceeding 1.5°C does not mean that the 1.5°C long-term warming threshold, as defined in the Paris Agreement, has been permanently exceeded. However, this condition remains a critical indicator of the direction of change in the global climate system.

Pressure on the climate system is also closely linked to human production and consumption activities. The IPCC (2022) estimates that global anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions reached 59 ± 6.6 $GtCO_2$-eq in 2019, about 12% higher than in 2010 and 54% higher than in 1990. Meanwhile, *the United Nations Environment Programme* (UNEP, 2024) estimates that global greenhouse gas emissions reached 57.1 $GtCO_2e$ in 2023, an increase of 1.3% compared to 2022. These figures from the IPCC and UNEP cannot be treated as an identical longitudinal series because they use different inventory scopes and methodologies. However, both demonstrate the magnitude of anthropogenic pressure on the global climate system.

Table 1. Selected Quantitative Indicators of Global Climate Change

Indicator	Quantitative Data	Source and Interpretation
Global surface temperature, 2011–2020	1.09°C [0.95–1.20°C] above the 1850–1900 average	IPCC (2023). In the key findings, this is rounded to approximately 1.1°C; human activities have unequivocally caused global warming.
Global average temperature in 2024	1.55 ± 0.13°C above the 1850–1900 average	WMO (2025). The year 2024 was the hottest year on record in the 175-year observational record; a single year above 1.5°C does not equate to a permanent crossing of the 1.5°C long-term warming threshold.
Global anthropogenic GHG emissions in 2019	59 ± 6.6 $GtCO_2$-eq	IPCC (2022). About 12% higher than in 2010 and 54% higher than in 1990.
Global GHG emissions in 2023	57.1 $GtCO_2e$	UNEP (2024). An increase of approximately 1.3% compared to 2022.

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Average global sea level rise, 1901–2018	0.20 m [0.15–0.25 m]	IPCC (2023). Indicates a long-term rise in global sea level.
Average global sea level rise rate, 1903–2002	2.1 mm/year	WMO (2025). The early period of satellite records used by the WMO as a reference.
Average global sea level rise rate, 2015–2024	4.7 mm/year	WMO (2025). More than twice the rate during the 1993–2002 period.
Population living in contexts highly vulnerable to climate change	Approximately 3.3–3.6 billion people	IPCC (2023). This highlights the immense social and humanitarian dimensions of climate change.
The top 10% of households with the highest per capita emissions	34–45% of global household GHG emissions based on consumption	IPCC (2022). This highlights the inequality in contributions to consumption-based emissions.
Contribution of the 50% of households with the lowest per capita emissions	13–15% of global household GHG emissions based on consumption	IPCC (2022). Shows that consumption-based emissions are not distributed evenly.

Source: Research Data Analysis

Note: $GtCO_2$-eq/$GtCO_2e$ denotes gigatons of carbon dioxide equivalent. Emissions figures from the IPCC (2022) and UNEP (2024) are derived from different estimates, inventory scopes, and methodologies; therefore, they are not treated as an identical longitudinal series. Therefore, the figure of 57.1 $GtCO_2e$ in 2023 cannot be directly interpreted as a decrease from the figure of 59 ± 6.6 $GtCO_2$-eq in 2019.

The data in Table 1 show that climate change has interrelated physical, social, and ethical dimensions. Physical changes are evident through rising temperatures and the accelerated rise in sea levels. At the same time, approximately 3.3–3.6 billion people live in contexts that are highly vulnerable to climate change (IPCC, 2023). This vulnerability is influenced by geographic conditions, poverty, inequality, marginalization, limited access to basic services, and livelihoods that are sensitive to climate change.

The distribution of emissions also highlights complex issues of responsibility. The IPCC (2022) estimates that the 10% of households with the highest per capita emissions account for approximately 34–45% of global household greenhouse gas emissions based on consumption, while the 50% of households with the lowest per capita emissions account for approximately 13–15%. These facts demonstrate that climate change is not merely a matter of the atmosphere and temperature, but is also linked to consumption patterns, inequality, suffering, responsibility, and justice.

A wide range of scientific, technological, economic, and policy solutions is urgently needed. Energy transition, emissions reduction, energy efficiency, ecosystem conservation and restoration, transportation transformation, resource management, and mitigation and adaptation strategies are crucial components of the response to climate change. However, technical approaches alone do not address all the underlying issues behind the ecological crisis. Technology can improve resource efficiency, but it does not automatically answer the question of how much humans feel they need to consume.

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Policies can regulate production and emissions, but they do not necessarily change the way people understand needs, happiness, ownership, success, and responsibility toward other forms of life. At this point, the ecological crisis also reveals dimensions of values and spirituality. The issue is not merely how humans use resources, but how they understand a good life; not merely how goods are produced, but why the desire to own and consume continues to grow; and not merely how the environment is utilized, but how humans understand their relationship with other forms of life. Ecological transformation therefore requires not only technological and policy changes but also a transformation of perspectives, values, behaviors, and ways of life.

Religion plays a significant role in this context. Religious traditions shape the way people understand life, suffering, happiness, moral responsibility, the use of wealth, self-control, relationships with others, and respect for life. Religious communities also have social networks, places of worship, educational institutions, organizations, leaders, practices, and traditions that allow values not only to be discussed but also to be shaped into customs and culture. Religion's contribution to addressing climate change is not meant to replace science. Science provides an empirical foundation for understanding changes in the Earth's systems, while religion can provide a source of values, spirituality, ethical motivation, and practical guidance on how people respond to that knowledge in their lives.

In the discourse on religion and the environment, eco-theology has emerged as a space for reflection that brings together religious values with ecological issues and the responsibility for the sustainability of life. In the context of Buddhism, eco-theology can be developed through an interpretation of the Dharma regarding the conditional nature of life, suffering, ethical action, loving-kindness, compassion, the control of desires, contentment, and mindfulness. In this article, Buddhist eco-theology is understood as a systematic reflection on the textual, philosophical, ethical, spiritual, and practical sources of Buddhism in fostering a harmonious and responsible relationship between humans, living beings, and the environment.

This construction requires methodological caution. Classical suttas and sutras were produced in a historical context distinct from the development of modern climate change science. Therefore, these texts are not presented as scientific explanations of climate change. This study distinguishes between the textual meaning of a teaching, the philosophical and ethical principles that can be derived from it, and the contextualization of those principles in relation to contemporary ecological issues. Such an approach enables a dialogue between Dharma wisdom, contemporary research, and climate change science without imposing modern categories onto classical texts. One relevant principle to examine is *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination). In *the Assutavā Sutta* (SN 12.61), the principle of conditionality indicates that phenomena arise and persist based on specific conditions (Bodhi, 2000). In its textual context, *paṭiccasamuppāda* primarily relates to conditioned processes and the understanding of the arising and ceasing of suffering. Therefore, this principle is not directly equated with ecosystem theory. (Anālayo, 2021) cautions against hastily linking dependent arising with modern ecological concepts of interdependence. Nevertheless, the principle of conditionality provides a philosophical foundation for understanding that life does not exist in isolation.

This understanding gains depth when considered alongside *anattā* (no permanent self). In *the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* (SN 22.59), the physical body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness should not be regarded as a permanent self that is entirely

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under one's control (Bodhi, 2000). *Anattā* is not a teaching about the environment, but it can make a philosophical contribution to eco-theology by correcting the tendency to view the self as a completely independent entity. Human life is in fact dependent on air, water, food, soil, temperature, plants, microorganisms, and various other ecological conditions.

Awareness of conditionality and interdependence does not, in and of itself, lead to ethical action. Therefore, Buddhist eco-theology requires loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*), and ethical discipline (*sīla*) as its normative orientation. *The Karaṇīyamettā Sutta* (Sn 1.8) cultivates loving-kindness toward various categories of beings whether weak or strong, large or small, visible or invisible, near or far (Norman, 2001). *Dhammapada* 129–130 reminds us of sentient beings' experience of violence and the value of life as the basis for refraining from killing or causing killing (Buddharakkhita, 1985).

The Mahāyāna tradition expands this orientation through the ideal of the Bodhisattva and the cultivation of compassion toward sentient beings. *The Avataṃsaka Sūtra* provides an important source for the development of relational thought within the Huayan tradition, while *the Brahmajāla Sūtra* elaborates on the Bodhisattva precepts, placing compassion and the protection of life within a broad ethical framework. These sources are not treated as texts on climate change, but as philosophical and ethical sources that can be contextualized within the construction of Buddhist eco-theology.

Another important dimension is the relationship between desire, happiness, and consumption. In Buddhism, greed (*lobha*) is one of the unwholesome roots (*akusala-mūla*). In contemporary life, *lobha* can manifest through ever-expanding consumption patterns, rapid turnover of goods, wastefulness, and the tendency to link happiness with material possessions. As an alternative orientation, Buddhism promotes contentment (*appicchatā*) and satisfaction (*santuṭṭhi*). *Dhammapada* 204 states *santuṭṭhiparamaṃ dhanaṃ* contentment is the highest wealth (Buddharakkhita, 1985). This principle provides the foundation for an ethics of sufficiency without having to reject well-being and progress.

Mindfulness (*sati*) lends a practical dimension to this orientation. In *the Sabbāsava Sutta* (MN 2), the use of the necessities of life is carried out through wise consideration (*paṭisaṅkhā yoniso*), including food (*piṇḍapāta*), clothing (*cīvara*), shelter (*senāsana*), and medical care (*gilānapaccayabhesajjaparikkhāra*) (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995). In an ecological context, *sati* enables a person to bring mindfulness to the act of purchasing, using, consuming, and discarding items, ensuring that actions are not driven solely by habit and spontaneous desires. Contemporary research supports a potential link between mindfulness and ecological behavior, although this relationship is not automatic.

Fischer et al. (2017) demonstrated that mindfulness has the potential to be linked to sustainable consumption through several mechanisms, including a reduction in automatic consumption behaviors and materialistic orientation. Apaolaza et al. (2022) found a relationship between mindfulness and pro-environmental behavior through cognitive reappraisal and awareness of climate change. Thiermann & Sheate (2022) indicate that this relationship is complex and influenced by various psychological mechanisms as well as life contexts. Thus, *mindfulness* holds ecological potential when integrated with values, motivations, and ethical commitments.

Within this framework, the Five Mindfulness Trainings are relevant as a contemporary development and actualization of the Five Precepts (*pañcasīla*) (Liau & Bi, 2025). The Five Precepts train a person to abstain from killing living beings (*pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*), taking

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what is not given (*adinnādānā veramaṇī*), inappropriate sexual conduct (*kāmesumicchācārā veramaṇī*), false speech (*musāvādā veramaṇī*), and the consumption of intoxicants and anything that causes heedlessness (*surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī*). The Five Mindfulness Trainings develop these principles into more concrete and contextual practices for navigating the complexities of modern life.

Respect for Life expands *the pāṇātipātā veramaṇī* through *mettā, karuṇā*, and *ahiṃsā* into an active commitment to respect and protect life. True Happiness expands the dimension of *adinnādānā veramaṇī* through *appicchatā* and *santuṭṭhi* toward an ethic of sufficiency and the responsible use of resources. True Love develops the dimension of *the kāmesumicchācārā veramaṇī* through love, respect, commitment, and responsibility for the well-being of others. Compassionate Speech and Deep Listening develop *the musāvādā veramaṇī* in relation to right speech (*sammā-vācā*) into an ethic of communication, dialogue, and solidarity. Nutrition and Healing develop *the surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī* through *mindfulness (sati)* and vigilance (*appamāda*), fostering reflection on various forms of consumption that affect the body, mind, society, and the environment.

This development reveals a close relationship between ethics and spirituality. *Sīla* provides a framework for action; *sati* brings awareness; *mettā* expands loving-kindness; *karuṇā* cultivates sensitivity to suffering; while wisdom (*paññā*) helps us understand the conditions and consequences of our actions. Spirituality within this framework does not stop at inner experience but takes shape through the ways in which humans eat, consume, use energy, communicate, treat living beings, and utilize resources.

Thus, ecological spirituality can be understood as an inner transformation manifested through responsibility toward life. The Five Mindfulness Trainings can also be viewed as one of Buddhism's contributions to *global* spirituality *and global ethics*. "Global" in this sense does not mean making Buddhist values the sole standard for all traditions. Rather, values rooted in the Dharma can enter into a dialogue on issues that transcend the boundaries of religion, nation, culture, and generation. Respect for life, sufficiency, responsibility, compassionate communication, solidarity, and mindful consumption provide values that can engage in dialogue with the ethical and spiritual sources of various traditions.

This perspective is crucial in addressing climate change because the ecological crisis demands transformation at both the personal and collective levels. Awareness of the Earth's condition must be accompanied by a transformation of desires and consumption patterns. Individual concern must evolve into a community culture. Spiritual values must take shape in institutional policies. Interfaith dialogue can also develop into tangible cooperation in protecting life. In this sense, a global ethic *serves* as a space where values converge, enabling communities with different identities and traditions to work together to address shared challenges without having to sacrifice their respective distinctiveness.

Studies on Buddhism and the environment have indeed developed, but they have also sparked debate. Harris (1991, 1995) cautions against the tendency to romanticize Buddhism as a tradition that is automatically and inherently ecological. This critique is important because normative teachings and the actual behavior of communities are not always identical. Buddhist practitioners and institutions exist within social, economic, and cultural structures that can also foster consumerist behavior and the unsustainable use of resources. Therefore, the goal of Buddhist eco-theology is not to make claims about the ecological superiority of any one religion, but rather to critically identify sources within the Dharma that can be developed into responses to ecological issues.

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This is the gap that this article aims to address. Studies of Buddhism and ecology often discuss interdependence, interbeing, mindfulness, compassion, or simplicity as key concepts. However, the relationship between these various principles has not always been structured into a framework that explains the process from philosophical understanding to ecological action. Recognizing that life depends on certain conditions does not automatically lead to concern. Having concern does not automatically change consumption patterns. Practicing mindfulness does not automatically bring about change at the community and institutional levels.

Therefore, a framework is needed that connects understanding, inner transformation, ethical orientation, behavior, and collective action. Based on this gap, this article develops the Relational–Compassionate–Mindful Ecological Action (RCMEA) model. This model is not claimed to be a teaching explicitly found in any single *Sutta* or *Sūtra*, but rather a conceptual framework constructed through a synthesis of Buddhist textual sources, the development of *Mahāyāna* ethics, the elaboration of the *pañcasīla* through the Five Mindfulness Trainings, research on mindfulness and ecological behavior, and scientific data on climate change. RCMEA integrates relational awareness, decentering of the self, compassionate concern, sufficiency orientation, mindful agency, ethical commitment, and collective ecological action.

Based on this description, this article aims to construct a Buddhist eco-theology through textual and contextual studies of the *Pāli Suttas* and *Mahāyāna Sūtras*; to analyze the Five Mindfulness Trainings as a concrete development of the *pañcasīla* and their contribution to global spirituality and ethics; to engage in a dialogue between Dharma sources and data on climate change and research findings regarding ecological behavior; and to develop RCMEA as a conceptual model that bridges relational understanding, inner transformation, ethical commitment, and ecological action.

The contribution of this article thus goes beyond the question of what Buddhism says about nature, moving toward the question of how the wisdom of the Dharma can shape a way of life that responds to the ecological crisis in a mindful, compassionate, ethical, and responsible manner. *Paṭiccasamuppāda* fosters awareness of conditions and consequences; *anattā* helps weaken self-centeredness; *mettā* and *karuṇā* expand compassion; *appicchatā* and *santuṭṭhi* cultivate contentment; *sati* brings mindfulness to choices; *sīla* provides ethical guidance; while *paññā* helps us understand actions in relation to conditions and consequences.

Within this framework, caring for the earth is not treated as an additional agenda separate from the practice of the Dharma. When understanding of conditionality develops into compassion, when compassion is realized through *sīla*, when *sati* is present in the consumption and use of resources, and when individual practice evolves into communal, institutional, social, and interfaith responsibility, eco-theology takes on its practical form. Caring for the earth can thus be understood as the actualization of the Dharma to reduce suffering, respect life, foster sufficiency, strengthen solidarity, and maintain sustainable living conditions for present and future generations.

1. Buddhist Ecotheology as a Relational, Ethical, and Practical Framework

In this study, ecotheology is positioned as a framework for understanding the relationship between religious values, humans, living beings, and the environment in addressing ecological issues. In the context of Buddhism, this framework is not built upon a single concept but through an integrative interpretation of textual, philosophical, ethical, spiritual,

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and practical sources. Therefore, Buddhist eco-theology in this study is understood as a systematic reflection on the Dharma to foster awareness of living conditions, reduce suffering, cultivate responsibility toward living beings, and shape actions that support the sustainability of life. This framework has at least three dimensions. First, the relational dimension, which is the understanding that life unfolds through various conditions and cannot be sustained independently of the conditions that support it. Second, the ethical-spiritual dimension, which involves the cultivation of inner qualities and moral orientation through loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), ethical discipline (*sīla*), mindfulness (*sati*), contentment (*appicchatā*), satisfaction (*santuṭṭhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Third, the practical dimension, which involves translating this understanding and these values into life choices, consumption, resource use, the protection of life, community culture, institutional policies, and collective ecological action.

This distinction is important because ecological awareness cannot be built solely through knowledge of environmental degradation. A person may be aware of climate change yet still maintain unsustainable consumption patterns. Similarly, spiritual experience does not in and of itself lead to ecological responsibility if it lacks an ethical orientation and clear forms of action. Buddhist eco-theology must therefore clarify the relationship between ways of understanding life, ways of cultivating the mind, ways of living, and ways of acting in response to ecological issues.

2. *Paṭiccasamuppāda*: Conditionality as the Foundation of Relational Awareness

The first principle underpinning the theoretical framework is *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination). The conditional formula in this teaching explains that when certain conditions exist, certain phenomena arise; when those conditions cease, the phenomena dependent on them also cease. In *the Assutavā Sutta* (SN 12.61), this principle is situated within a discussion of conditioned processes and the continuity of experience (Bodhi, 2000). Within the theoretical framework of this study, *paṭiccasamuppāda* is not directly equated with the concept of ecological interdependence. Anālayo (2021) highlights the need to distinguish the original context of dependent arising from the use of the term "interdependence" in contemporary Buddhist discourse. Therefore, the ecological relevance *of paṭiccasamuppāda* is developed at the level of the principle of conditionality. Conditionality provides a way to understand that human life does not exist in isolation. The body requires air, water, food, temperature, and specific biological conditions. Food requires soil, water, sunlight, seeds, farmers, energy, distribution, and social networks. Consumed goods also have material conditions in the form of raw materials, energy, labor, transportation, use, and disposal. Ecological awareness from this perspective begins with the ability to see these conditions and their consequences. The Mahāyāna tradition subsequently made significant contributions to this relational understanding.

The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* served as one of the sources for the development of Huayan philosophy regarding the interconnectedness and interpenetration of phenomena (Cleary, 1993). The concept *of "interbeing,"* which is widely used in contemporary Buddhism, can be understood as a modern articulation of relationality that engages in dialogue with *paṭiccasamuppāda*, emptiness, and the development of Huayan thought. However, *"interbeing"* is not treated in this study as a literal term derived from the Pāli Suttas or *the Avataṃsaka Sūtra*. Thus, the function *of paṭiccasamuppāda* within this theoretical framework is to foster "relational awareness" that is, the awareness that life and actions exist within a network of conditions and consequences.

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3. *Anattā*: The Diminishment of Self-Centeredness

The relational dimension gains depth through *anattā* (no permanent self). In *the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* (SN 22.59), the five aggregates namely, form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), mental formations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) should not be regarded as a permanent self that is fully controllable (Bodhi, 2000). Textually, *anattā* does not address the environment. Its relevance to eco-theology lies in its philosophical contextualization. If life is not understood as a fixed, closed, and entirely self-sufficient self, then the human relationship with the world need not be constructed through a rigid opposition between the "self" and everything "outside the self." The body's own sustainability depends on an ongoing exchange with the environment through breath, water, nutrients, temperature, and various biological processes.

In the framework of this study, the function *of anattā* is formulated as *the "decentering of the self*," that is, the weakening of the tendency to make one's own interests the sole center of consideration. *The "decentering of the self"* is not the elimination of individual needs, but rather the expansion of the ethical horizon so that the consequences of one's actions on others, living beings, the environment, and future generations are also taken into account. The relationship between *paṭiccasamuppāda* and *anattā* thus forms the philosophical foundation of eco-theology. *Paṭiccasamuppāda* emphasizes conditionality, while *anattā* challenges the assumption of a completely independent self. Both provide a foundation for a shift in perspective, but they are not sufficient to determine how one should act. For this, an ethical orientation through *mettā, karuṇā, ahiṃsā*, and *sīla* is necessary.

4. *Mettā, Karuṇā, Ahiṃsā*, and *Sīla*: The Foundations of Ecological Care

Loving-kindness (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) provide an affective and ethical dimension to relational awareness. *The Karaṇīyamettā Sutta* (Sn 1.8) describes the cultivation of loving-kindness toward various categories of beings without limiting it to specific groups (Norman, 2001). *The Dhammapada* 129–130 also fosters ethical reflection on the reality that beings fear violence and value life (Buddharakkhita, 1985). Within the framework of this study, *mettā* cultivates an orientation toward the well-being of beings, while *karuṇā* fosters sensitivity to suffering and the impulse to alleviate it. Nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*) reinforces the orientation toward minimizing actions that cause suffering, while *sīla* provides a concrete form of practice for that orientation.

Its ecological relevance does not lie in the claim that these texts have taught conservation or climate change in the modern sense. Its relevance lies in the expansion of moral consideration. Habitat destruction, water pollution, loss of biodiversity, overexploitation, and climate change have consequences for life and suffering. Therefore, sensitivity to suffering can be contextualized as compassionate concern that is, a concern that drives the protection of life-sustaining conditions. The Mahāyāna tradition reinforces this orientation through the ideal of the Bodhisattva. A commitment to the well-being of sentient beings broadens the horizon of action from individual liberation toward a broader concern for life. In the construction of eco-theology, the Bodhisattva orientation serves as a vital source for understanding that wisdom must be realized through actions that benefit sentient beings.

5. *Lobha, Appicchatā*, and *Santuṭṭhi*: From Desire to the Ethics of Sufficiency

Ecological issues cannot be separated from patterns of production and consumption. In Buddhism, greed (*lobha*) is one of the three unwholesome roots (*akusala-mūla*), along with

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hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*). In a contemporary context, *lobha* can be examined in relation to the drive for accumulation, excessive consumption, wastefulness, and the pursuit of happiness through material possessions. As an alternative orientation, contentment (*appicchatā*) and satisfaction (*santuṭṭhi*) provide the foundation for an ethics of sufficiency. *Dhammapada* 204 states *santuṭṭhiparamaṃ dhanaṃ*, that contentment is the highest wealth (Buddharakkhita, 1985). The ethics of sufficiency is not synonymous with poverty, the rejection of technology, or the rejection of development. Sufficiency is the ability to distinguish between needs and ever-expanding desires. Within an ecological framework, this orientation enables an evaluation of the amount of resources used, the lifespan of goods, food waste, energy needs, and consumption patterns. This study constructs *appicchatā* and *santuṭṭhi* as a "sufficiency orientation" that is, a way of life that links well-being to sufficiency rather than to unlimited accumulation. This dimension is crucial in RCMEA because ecological concern requires a shift in how humans understand needs and happiness.

6. *Sati, Appamāda*, and *Paññā*: Mindfulness in Choices and Actions

Mindfulness (*sati*) provides the ability to recognize experiences, impulses, choices, and consequences more clearly. This mindfulness is linked to vigilance (*appamāda*) and wisdom (*paññā*) in shaping actions. In *the Sabbāsava Sutta* (MN 2), the use of life's necessities is carried out through wise consideration (*paṭisaṅkhā yoniso*), including the use of clothing (*cīvara*), food (*piṇḍapāta*), shelter (*senāsana*), and medical care (*gilānapaccayabhesajjaparikkhāra*) (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995). Meanwhile, *the Puttamaṃsa Sutta* (SN 12.63) offers a profound reflection on the relationship with nourishment or food (Bodhi, 2000).

These texts do not address sustainable consumption in the modern sense. However, the principle of using the necessities of life reflectively can be contextualized within contemporary consumption. Mindfulness allows for a space of reflection before one buys, uses, consumes, or discards something. Within the RCMEA framework, this function is called mindful agency the capacity to make choices with awareness of one's needs, motivations, circumstances, and consequences. Mindful agency connects inner transformation with concrete actions.

7. The *Pañcasīla* and the Development of the Five Mindful Practices

The Five Precepts (*pañcasīla*) provide a fundamental ethical framework for Buddhists. These five precepts include refraining from killing living beings (*pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*), taking what is not given (*adinnādānā veramaṇī*), inappropriate sexual conduct (*kāmesumicchācārā veramaṇī*), false speech (*musāvādā veramaṇī*), and the consumption of intoxicants and substances that cause heedlessness (*surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī*). In the face of the complexities of contemporary life, these principles can be developed through the Five Mindfulness Trainings as a more concrete and practical formulation. This development does not replace *the pañcasīla*, but expands its application from the avoidance of specific actions toward the formation of an active and responsible way of life. *Respect for Life* develops *the pāṇātipātā veramaṇī* through *mettā, karuṇā*, and *ahiṃsā*. Its orientation is not merely to avoid killing, but to cultivate a commitment to the protection of life. *True Happiness* develops the dimension of *adinnādānā veramaṇī* alongside *appicchatā* and *santuṭṭhi*. Its focus is on building happiness that does not depend entirely on material possessions and consumption. *True Love* cultivates *the kāmesumicchācārā veramaṇī* toward a love that embodies respect, responsibility, commitment, and concern for the consequences of one's actions.

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Speech Full of Love and Deep Listening cultivates *musāvādā veramaṇī* and right speech (*sammā-vācā*) into communication that embodies truth, benefit, understanding, dialogue, and the ability to listen. *Nutrition and Healing* develop *surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī* through *sati* and *appamāda* into mindfulness of various forms of consumption that affect the body, mind, society, and the environment. Thus, the Five Mindfulness Trainings become the practical realization of the ethical roots of Buddhism, not a framework that stands outside or beyond *the pañcasīla*.

Table 2. Ethical Construction of the Five Precepts and the Five Mindfulness Trainings in Buddhist Ecotheology

Ethical Foundation	Development in the Five Mindfulness Trainings	Supporting Principles	Ecotheological Construction
Pāṇātipātā veramanṇī	Respect for Life	*Mettā, karuṇā, ahiṃsā*	Protection of life, reduction of suffering, care for living beings and biodiversity
Adinnādānā veramaṇī	True Happiness	*Appicchatā, santuṭṭhi*	Sufficiency, responsible use of resources, reduction of excessive consumption
Kāmesumicchāc ārā veramaṇī	True Love	*Mettā, karuṇā*, responsibility	Care for others, living beings, affected communities, and future generations
Musāvādā veramaṇī	Speech Full of Love and Deep Listening	*Sammā-vācā*	Ecological dialogue, communication, responsibility, solidarity, and cooperation
Surāmerayamajj apamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī	Nutrition and Healing	*Sati, appamāda, paññā*	Mindful consumption, reflection on needs, impacts, resource use, and waste

Source: Mapping of the Buddhist Pancasila & the Five Mindfulness Trainings of Plum Village

8. The Five Mindfulness Trainings as Spirituality and *Global Ethics*

The Five Mindfulness Trainings have not only a normative dimension but also a spiritual one. Spirituality in this study is understood as a process of transforming inner qualities that influence how people understand, experience, and live their lives. *Sati* fosters presence and awareness; *mettā* cultivates loving-kindness; *karuṇā* fosters sensitivity to suffering; *appicchatā* and *santuṭṭhi* transform our relationship with desire; while *paññā* provides the ability to understand conditions and consequences. In this sense, ecological spirituality is not merely a feeling of closeness to nature. Ecological spirituality is a transformation of one's way of life that allows inner awareness to take shape in the use of resources, consumption, relationships with living beings, communication, and social responsibility.

The Five Mindfulness Trainings can thus be viewed as Buddhism's contribution to *a global ethic*. This claim does not imply that the Five Mindfulness Trainings have been universally accepted as a global ethical system or that all traditions must adopt them. Its contribution

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lies in the values that can enter into global ethical dialogue: respect for life, sufficiency, responsibility, compassionate communication, the ability to listen, and mindful consumption. Global ethics, in the context of this study, is understood as a space for the convergence of values that enables different religious traditions and societies to collaborate in addressing shared challenges. The climate crisis is one such issue because its impact transcends the boundaries of religion, nation, culture, and generation. Thus, values rooted in the Dharma can preserve their Buddhist identity while contributing to a broader sense of human responsibility.

9. From Personal Spirituality to Collective Ecological Responsibility

One issue in the discourse on spirituality and the environment is the tendency to position individual change as the primary solution to structural problems. This study does not view mindfulness or changes in individual consumption as substitutes for environmental policies, energy system transformation, industrial regulation, or institutional reform. Rather, personal transformation is understood as one layer of ecological action. Individuals form families and communities; communities shape culture; institutions establish rules and govern resource use; and social networks can foster collective action. Therefore, Buddhist eco-theology must operate at the personal, interpersonal, communal, institutional, social, and interfaith levels.

Monasteries and educational institutions, for example, can translate the ethic of sufficiency into reducing food waste, improving energy efficiency, reducing single-use plastics, managing waste, conserving water, and greening initiatives. Religious organizations can develop ecological education and environmental protection programs. Interfaith communities can work together on water source restoration, tree planting and maintenance, waste management, biodiversity conservation, and assistance for communities affected by ecological crises. Thus, ecological spirituality moves from inner transformation toward ethical commitment and collective ecological action.

10. Development of the *Relational-Compassionate-Mindful Ecological Action* (RCMEA) Model

Based on this theoretical synthesis, this study develops *Relational–Compassionate–Mindful Ecological Action* (RCMEA) as a conceptual model to explain how the philosophical, ethical, and spiritual sources of Buddhism can be contextualized into ecological action. RCMEA is *a* middle-range conceptual model constructed in this study. This model is not a canonical doctrine and is not claimed to be a theory explicitly taught in any single Sutta or Sūtra. Its development was carried out through a synthesis of Buddhist textual sources, the development of *Mahāyāna* thought, the *pañcasīla* and the Five Mindfulness Trainings, as well as contemporary research findings on mindfulness and ecological behavior. The model consists of seven interrelated constructs.

Relational Awareness is an awareness of the conditional nature of life, grounded primarily in *paṭiccasamuppāda* and enriched by Mahāyāna relational thought. *Decentering of Self* is the weakening of self-centeredness developed through the contextualization *of anattā*. *Compassionate Concern* is the expansion of care for suffering and life based on *mettā, karuṇā*, and *ahiṃsā*. Sufficiency Orientation is an orientation toward sufficiency built through *appicchatā* and *santuṭṭhi* as a corrective to excessive desire and consumption. *Mindful Agency* is the capacity to make conscious choices through *sati, appamāda*, and *paññā*, taking into account the needs, conditions, motivations, and consequences of actions.

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Ethical Commitment is the translation of awareness and compassion into behavioral commitment through *sīla*, *pañcasīla*, and their actualization in the Five Mindfulness Trainings. *Collective Ecological Action* is the expansion of responsibility from the individual level toward communal, institutional, social, and interfaith actions to reduce ecological suffering and preserve living conditions. RCMEA, therefore, does not view ecological action as the result of a single variable. Knowledge of interconnectedness must be accompanied by a reduction in self-centeredness; compassion requires an orientation toward sufficiency; awareness requires ethical commitment; and individual commitment must take shape in collective action. This framework bridges the philosophical, spiritual, ethical, behavioral, and social dimensions of Buddhist eco-theology.

Table 3. Conceptual Structure of the RCMEA Model

RCMEA Constructs	Buddhist Foundations	Theoretical Functions	Ecological Manifestations
Relational Awareness	*Paṭiccasamuppāda*; Mahāyāna relational thought	Awareness of Conditions and Consequences	Understanding the relationship between consumption, resources, life, and ecological impacts
Decentering of the Self	*Anattā*	Reducing self-centeredness	Taking into account other beings, affected communities, and future generations
Compassionate Concern	*Mettā, karuṇā, ahiṃsā*	Expanding moral concern	Protection of life and reduction of ecological suffering
Sufficiency Orientation	*Appicchatā, santuṭṭhi*	Fostering a sufficiency orientation	Reducing waste and excessive consumption
Mindful Agency	*Sati, appamāda, paññā*	Fostering mindful choices	Reflective consumption, use of energy, water, transportation, and goods
Ethical Commitment	*Sīla, pañcasīla*, the Five Mindfulness Trainings	Transforming values into a commitment to action	Ecologically responsible habits and ways of life
Collective Ecological Action	Bodhisattva Orientation, *karuṇā*, shared responsibility	Expanding action from the personal to the collective	Community programs, institutional policies, ecological education, and interfaith collaboration

Source: Analysis and Development from the Study

Based on this framework, the theoretical framework of this study positions Buddhist eco-theology as a process that integrates relational understanding, a transformation of self-perception, the cultivation of compassion, the regulation of desires, mindful action, ethical commitment, and collective responsibility. The Five Mindfulness Trainings are part of this process as a concrete manifestation of *the pañcasīla*, while also providing a space for Buddhist values to contribute to spirituality and *a global ethic*.

Thus, the theoretical development in this study does not stop at the statement that "everything is interconnected". Interconnectedness takes on ecological significance when it

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yields ethical consequences. An understanding of *paṭiccasamuppāda* must be integrated with *karuṇā*; *karuṇā* takes shape through *sīla*; *sīla* is strengthened by *sati* and *paññā*; and individual practice gains broader ecological significance when it evolves into communal, institutional, social, and interfaith action. It is within this structure that RCMEA serves as a conceptual framework linking the Dharma, spirituality, ethics, and ecological action in response to climate change.

Research Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using *library research* to construct a Buddhist eco-theological framework for responding to climate change. The research data are drawn from three categories of literature. First, primary Buddhist sources, including the suttas of the Pāli Canon, particularly *the Saṃyutta Nikāya, the Majjhima Nikāya, the Sutta Nipāta*, and *the Dhammapada*, as well as relevant Mahāyāna sūtras, such as *the Avataṃsaka Sūtra, the Brahmajāla Sūtra, the Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, and *the Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*. Second, contemporary academic literature on Buddhism, ecology, mindfulness, sustainable consumption, and pro-environmental behavior. Third, scientific reports on climate change from the IPCC, UNEP, and WMO as the empirical context for the research. The analysis was conducted through four stages: textual, conceptual, contextual, and constructive-praxis.

Textual analysis was used to understand the teachings within the context of their sources so that concepts such as *paṭiccasamuppāda, anattā, mettā, karuṇā, sīla, sati, appicchatā*, and *santuṭṭhi* are not anachronistically treated as modern ecological terminology. Conceptual analysis identifies relevant philosophical, ethical, and spiritual principles. Contextual analysis engages these principles in dialogue with climate change, consumption patterns, and contemporary ecological issues. The constructive-praxis stage synthesizes the results of the analysis with *the pañcasīla*, the Five Mindfulness Trainings, spirituality, and *global ethics*. The validity of the interpretation is ensured through source triangulation, by comparing primary texts, academic translations, scientific studies, and reports from international institutions. The results of this synthesis are then used to develop Relational–Compassionate–Mindful Ecological Action (RCMEA) as a conceptual model that connects the foundations of Dharma, spiritual transformation, ethical commitment, and collective ecological action.

Result and Discussion

Result

1. The Construction of Buddhist Ecotheology: From Conditionality to Ecological Responsibility

The analysis reveals that Buddhist ecotheology cannot be constructed merely by equating *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination) with ecological interdependence. In the original sources, *paṭiccasamuppāda* primarily explains the conditionality of phenomena and the processes of the arising and ceasing of suffering. Therefore, its use as a foundation for ecotheology requires contextualization. The principle that can be derived is that life unfolds based on conditions and that changes to certain conditions produce specific consequences. In an ecological context, this principle allows humans to recognize that production, consumption, energy use, transportation, food, and resource management all have both ecological conditions and consequences. This insight becomes even stronger when

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paṭiccasamuppāda is interpreted alongside *anattā* (the absence of a permanent self). *The Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* (SN 22.59) does not explicitly discuss ecology, but its critique of the notion of a permanent self can be contextualized as a correction to a perspective that is overly self-centered. Human life is fundamentally dependent on air, water, food, soil, temperature, and various life systems. Within this framework, *paṭiccasamuppāda* fosters *relational awareness*, while *anattā* supports a *decentering of the self*.

However, recognizing interconnectedness does not automatically lead to ecological behavior. Therefore, the analysis highlights the need for a normative dimension comprising loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*), and ethical discipline (*sīla*). *The Karaṇīyamettā Sutta* (Sn 1.8) extends loving-kindness to various beings, while *the Dhammapada* 129–130 fosters moral reflection based on beings' experiences of violence. In an ecological context, these principles foster compassionate *concern* for the suffering of humans and other beings arising from environmental degradation. Thus, the first finding of this study indicates that Buddhist eco-theology possesses a structure that is relational, spiritual, ethical, and practical. Awareness of conditionality requires concern; concern requires ethical commitment; and ethical commitment requires concrete action.

2. From *Lobha* to Sufficiency and Mindful Consumption

Further analysis reveals that ecological issues are closely linked to how humans understand desire and happiness. Greed (*lobha*) is one of the unwholesome roots (*akusala-mūla*). In a contemporary context, this principle is relevant for analyzing excessive consumption, wastefulness, rapid replacement of goods, and the tendency to link well-being with increased material possessions. Few desires (*appicchatā*) and contentment (*santuṭṭhi*) offer an alternative orientation. The statement *santuṭṭhiparamaṃ dhanaṃ* in *Dhammapada* 204 positions contentment as the highest form of wealth. The results of this analysis indicate that these two principles can form a "*sufficiency orientation*." Sufficiency does not mean glorifying poverty or rejecting technological development, but rather the ability to distinguish between needs and desires and to consider the consequences of resource use.

Mindfulness (*sati*) further serves as a crucial mechanism for translating this orientation into action. *The Sabbāsava Sutta* (MN 2) illustrates the use of life's necessities through wise consideration (*paṭisaṅkhā yoniso*). This principle can be contextualized as *mindful agency* the ability to pause, recognize needs, understand motivations, consider impacts, and then make choices. This finding aligns with contemporary research indicating a potential link between mindfulness and ecological behavior. Fischer et al. (2017) identified mechanisms linking mindfulness to sustainable consumption, while Apaolaza et al. (2022) found a connection to pro-environmental behavior through awareness of climate change and *cognitive reappraisal*. However, Thiermann & Sheate (2022) point out that this relationship is complex. Thus, it cannot be automatically assumed that mindfulness leads to eco-friendly behavior. *Sati* must be integrated with values, *sīla*, compassion, and an orientation toward sufficiency.

3. The Five Mindfulness Trainings as Spirituality and *Global Ethics*

A key finding of this study is that the Five Mindfulness Trainings can be positioned as a practical development of the Five Precepts (*pañcasīla*) as well as a contribution of Buddhism to spirituality and *global ethics*. This positioning ensures that Buddhist ethics do not stop at the avoidance of unwholesome actions (*akusala kamma*) but evolve into a positive commitment in contemporary life. *Respect for Life*, rooted in *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*, gains

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depth through *mettā, karuṇā*, and *ahiṃsā*. In an ecological context, this practice can be realized through the protection of life, habitats, biodiversity, forests, rivers, oceans, and the conditions that sustain life.

True Happiness, developed in connection with *the adinnādānā precept, appicchatā*, and *santuṭṭhi*, forms the ethics of sufficiency. Its implications include reducing waste, reusing items, extending the lifespan of products, and distinguishing between needs and wants. *True Love* extends *the kāmesumicchācārā veramaṇī* toward responsibility in relationships. In an ecological context, this responsibility can be contextually extended to affected communities and future generations. *Loving Speech and Deep Listening* develop *the musāvādā veramaṇī* and right speech (*sammā-vācā*) into an ethic of ecological communication. The climate crisis requires accurate information, the ability to listen to science and affected communities, and dialogue that fosters cooperation.

Nutrition and Healing develop *surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī* through *mindfulness (sati)* and non-carelessness (*appamāda*). Consumption in this framework includes food, water, energy, clothing, transportation, media, and everyday items. These five practices demonstrate the connection between inner transformation and behavioral transformation. Therefore, ecological spirituality does not merely mean feeling connected to nature, but rather bringing a quality of mindfulness into one's way of life. As *a global ethic*, the Five Mindful Practices are not claimed to be a universally accepted system. Rather, respect for life, sufficiency, responsibility, dialogue, and mindful consumption constitute an ethical contribution of Buddhism that can enter the space of global and interfaith dialogue.

4. The RCMEA Model as a Result of Conceptual Development

A synthesis of textual, conceptual, and contemporary research findings has yielded Relational–Compassionate–Mindful Ecological Action (RCMEA). This model consists of seven constructs: Relational Awareness, Decentering of Self, Compassionate Concern, Sufficiency Orientation, Mindful Agency, Ethical Commitment, and Collective Ecological Action. *Relational Awareness* provides the ability to see conditions and consequences; *Decentering of Self* broadens consideration beyond personal interests; *Compassionate Concern* fosters care for suffering; *Sufficiency Orientation* corrects excessive consumption; *Mindful Agency* brings awareness to choices; *Ethical Commitment* transforms values into behavioral commitments; while *Collective Ecological Action* extends these practices to the levels of the community, institutions, society, and interfaith collaboration.

These findings indicate that ecological change is insufficient if it rests solely on individual responsibility. Practices such as reducing plastic use, conserving water, minimizing food waste, extending the lifespan of goods, and conserving energy are important, but they need to evolve into institutional cultures and policies. Buddhist temples and educational institutions, for example, can implement waste management, energy efficiency, water conservation, greening initiatives, food waste reduction, and ecological education. On a broader level, *mettā* and *karuṇā* provide the foundation for interfaith cooperation. The ecological crisis knows no boundaries of religious identity. Therefore, different values can converge in joint actions such as protecting water sources, planting and maintaining trees, reducing waste, conserving biodiversity, providing environmental education, and supporting affected communities.

The findings of this study thus position Buddhist eco-theology not as a claim that classical texts have directly addressed climate change, but as a process of contextualizing the Dharma

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in relation to contemporary ecological suffering. The strength of this framework lies in the integration of *paṭiccasamuppāda, anattā, mettā, karuṇā, sīla, appicchatā, santuṭṭhi, sati*, and *paññā* with the actualization *of the pañcasīla* through the Five Mindfulness Trainings. RCMEA encapsulates this integration by positioning relational awareness, inner transformation, contentment, compassion, ethics, and collective action as mutually reinforcing elements in responding to climate change.

5. Conditionality and the Diminishing of Self-Centeredness

The results of the textual analysis indicate that the construction of Buddhist eco-theology must begin with a careful understanding of *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination). In *the Assutavā Sutta* (SN 12.61), *paṭiccasamuppāda* primarily explains the conditionality of phenomena and processes related to the arising and ceasing of suffering (Bodhi, 2000). Therefore, this concept cannot be directly equated with ecological interdependence. Its ecological relevance stems from the contextualization of the principle that phenomena arise, persist, and change based on conditions. In contemporary life, the principle of conditionality helps us understand that human activities have conditions and consequences. Food consumption, energy use, transportation, clothing, and electronic devices are linked to the use of raw materials, water, land, energy, labor, distribution, as well as the production of waste and emissions. From this process of abstraction, this study formulates "*Relational* Awareness" the ability to understand life and actions through the relationships between conditions and their consequences.

This principle gains depth when considered alongside *anattā* (the absence of a permanent self). *The Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta* (SN 22.59) indicates that physical form (*rūpa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), mental formations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) should not be regarded as a permanent self that is fully controllable (Bodhi, 2000). Textually speaking, *anattā* is not an environmental teaching. However, in an ecological context, this principle helps correct the view of humans as beings entirely independent of other conditions of life. The application of this principle leads to *the "Decentering of the Self*," which involves reducing the centrality of self-interest in decision-making. In an ecological context, human interests are still taken into account, but they are weighed alongside the consequences of actions on other humans, living beings, ecosystems, and future generations.

6. From *Mettā* and *Karuṇā* to Ecological Concern

Awareness of conditionality does not, in and of itself, lead to ecological action. Analysis shows that the relational dimension requires an ethical and affective orientation through loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), nonviolence (*ahiṃsā*), and ethical practice (*sīla*). *The Karaṇīyamettā Sutta* (Sn 1.8) describes the cultivation of loving-kindness toward all beings whether weak or strong, large or small, visible or invisible, near or far (Norman, 2001). *Dhammapada* 129–130 also fosters moral reflection based on the reality that beings fear violence and cherish life (Buddharakkhita, 1985). In the Mahāyāna tradition, the Bodhisattva's orientation expands the commitment to act for the well-being of all beings.

From this synthesis, *"Compassionate Concern*" is constructed a form of concern that does not stop at recognizing suffering but is oriented toward alleviating the conditions that cause it. In the context of climate change, ecological suffering can take the form of loss of shelter due to disasters, disruptions in water and food supply, habitat destruction, and threats to the lives of various living beings. This interpretation does not imply that the Suttas and Sutras directly teach conservation or address climate change. Rather, *mettā* and *karuṇā* provide a

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moral framework that can be contextualized to address contemporary forms of suffering. Thus, environmental protection gains ethical significance because ecological damage has consequences for life and suffering.

7. Sufficiency and Mindfulness in Consumption

Further analysis indicates that the construction of Buddhist eco-theology must address the issues of desire and consumption. Greed (*lobha*) is one of the unwholesome roots (*akusala-mūla*). In a contemporary context, *lobha* can be used to reflect the drive toward accumulation, excessive consumption, wastefulness, and the tendency to link happiness with increased possession. As an alternative orientation, few desires (*appicchatā*) and contentment (*santuṭṭhi*) provide a foundation for a more reflective relationship with material needs. *Dhammapada* 204 states *santuṭṭhiparamaṃ dhanaṃ*, that contentment is the highest wealth (Buddharakkhita, 1985). From this principle, the concept of *Sufficiency Orientation* is derived the ability to build well-being based on sufficiency rather than unlimited accumulation.

In this study, sufficiency is not understood as a rejection of well-being, technology, or development. Sufficiency is the ability to consider needs, usage, durability, and the consequences of consumption. In practice, this orientation can be realized through reducing food waste, reusing items, extending the lifespan of products, conserving water and energy, and reducing single-use consumption. Mindfulness (*sati*) provides the mechanism for translating this orientation into choices. In *the Sabbāsava Sutta* (MN 2), the necessities of life are used with wise consideration (*paṭisaṅkhā yoniso*) (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995). The abstraction of this principle forms *"Mindful Agency*," which is the capacity to recognize needs, motivations, choices, and consequences before acting.

These findings are supported by contemporary research. Fischer et al. (2017) found a potential link between mindfulness and sustainable consumption, while Apaolaza et al. (2022) demonstrated a connection between mindfulness and pro-environmental behavior through climate change awareness and *cognitive reappraisal*. However, Thiermann & Sheate (2022) indicate that the relationship between mindfulness and ecological behavior is complex. These findings reinforce the argument that *mindfulness* alone is not enough; it must be integrated with values, compassion, sufficiency, and ethical commitment.

8. *The Pañcasīla* and the Five Mindfulness Trainings as an Ecological Ethic

The stage of ethical-practical integration demonstrates that *the Pañcasīla* provides a framework for translating awareness and values into *Ethical Commitment*. The Five Mindfulness Trainings are positioned as a contemporary development that expands *the Pañcasīla* from an orientation toward avoiding unwholesome actions (*akusala kamma*) toward a positive commitment in daily life. *Respect for Life* develops *the pāṇātipātā veramaṇī* through *mettā, karuṇā*, and *ahiṃsā*. In an ecological context, this respect encompasses sensitivity toward the protection of living beings, habitats, forests, water sources, and biodiversity. *True Happiness* cultivates *the adinnādānā veramaṇī* in relation to *appicchatā* and *santuṭṭhi*. Happiness is not built solely through the accumulation of possessions, but through contentment and the responsible use of resources. *True Love* cultivates *the kāmesumicchācārā veramaṇī* toward relationships characterized by respect, care, and responsibility. In an ecological context, the principle of responsibility can be extended to affected communities and future generations. Loving Speech and Deep Listening foster *the musāvādā precept* and right speech (*sammā-vācā*). Responding to climate change requires

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accurate information, responsible communication, the ability to listen to affected communities and scientific knowledge, as well as dialogue to build collective action.

Nutrition and Healing cultivate *surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī* through *mindfulness (sati)* and non-carelessness (*appamāda*). In a contemporary context, mindful consumption can be extended to food, energy, water, clothing, transportation, media, and various everyday items. These five practices form a bridge between spirituality, ethics, and action. On a broader level, the values of respect for life, sufficiency, responsibility, dialogue, and mindful consumption also allow the Five Mindful Practices to be framed as Buddhism's contribution to spirituality and *global ethics*. This position is not a claim to doctrinal universality, but rather an offering of Buddhist values to engage in dialogue with humanitarian and ecological issues that transcend the boundaries of religion, culture, nation, and generation.

9. Synthesis of the *Relational–Compassionate–Mindful Ecological Action* (RCMEA) Model

The final outcome of the stages of textual analysis, conceptual abstraction, ethical-practical integration, and dialogue with contemporary research resulted in the Relational–Compassionate–Mindful Ecological Action (RCMEA) model. This model consists of seven constructs: Relational Awareness, Decentering of Self, Compassionate Concern, Sufficiency Orientation, Mindful Agency, Ethical Commitment, and Collective Ecological Action. These seven constructs are not intended to form a rigid linear sequence. *Relational Awareness* provides the ability to recognize conditions and consequences; *Decentering of Self* broadens consideration beyond personal interests; *Compassionate Concern* fosters care for suffering; *Sufficiency Orientation* fosters a more balanced relationship with needs and consumption; *Mindful Agency* fosters awareness in decision-making; and *Ethical Commitment* ensures consistency between values and actions. All of these dimensions take on a social form through Collective Ecological Action.

Table 4. Synthesis Results of the RCMEA Model Development

Source of Principles	RCMEA Construct	Meaning in an Ecological Context
Paṭiccasamuppāda	Relational Awareness	Understanding the ecological conditions and consequences of actions
Anattā	Decentering Oneself	Expanding consideration beyond self-interest
Mettā, karuṇā, ahiṃsā	Compassionate Care	Concern for life and ecological suffering
Appicchatā, santuṭṭhi	An Orientation Toward Sufficiency	Sufficiency and the reduction of excessive consumption
Sati, appamāda, paññā	Mindful agency	Conscious choices regarding needs and consequences
Sīla, pañcasīla, the Five Mindfulness Trainings	Ethical commitment	Consistency of values in ecological behavior
Bodhisattva orientation and shared responsibility	Collective Ecological Action	Communal, institutional, social, and interfaith actions

Source: Analysis and Development from the Study

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The latter construct is a crucial aspect in the development of RCMEA because the ecological crisis cannot be resolved solely through individual behavioral change. Plastic reduction, energy conservation, mindful consumption, reducing food waste, and water conservation are of great importance, but their impact must be expanded through community culture and institutional policies. Buddhist temples, educational institutions, and Buddhist organizations can integrate these principles through waste management, energy efficiency, water conservation, greening initiatives, ecological education, and more responsible consumption policies. On a broader level, *mettā* and *karuṇā* also provide a foundation for interfaith collaboration. The issue of climate change transcends religious identities, so ecological actions can serve as a space for cooperation through the protection of water sources, the preservation of trees and forests, waste reduction, biodiversity conservation, environmental education, and support for affected communities.

The findings of this study thus demonstrate that Buddhist eco-theology does not stop at the idea of humanity's interconnectedness with nature. A more substantive contribution emerges when an understanding of conditionality is combined with a reduction in self-centeredness, compassionate care, sufficiency, mindful choice, ethical commitment, and collective action. RCMEA formulates this integration as a conceptual model that links spiritual transformation with ecological responsibility at the personal, communal, institutional, social, and interfaith levels**.** Since this model is the result of a conceptual synthesis, the relationships among these constructs still require validation and empirical testing in future research.

Conclussion

This study demonstrates that Buddhist eco-theology can be constructed through the integration of textual, philosophical, ethical, spiritual, and practical sources in response to climate change. *Paṭiccasamuppāda* provides the foundation for understanding the conditional nature of life; *anattā* supports the reduction of self-centeredness; *mettā, karuṇā*, and *ahiṃsā* expand compassion toward life and suffering; *appicchatā* and *santuṭṭhi* foster an orientation toward contentment; while *sati, appamāda*, and *paññā* support more mindful and responsible choices. These principles take ethical form through *sīla, pañcasīla*, and their actualization in the Five Mindfulness Trainings. A textual–normative–empirical synthesis yields Relational–Compassionate–Mindful Ecological Action (RCMEA), which consists of *Relational Awareness, Decentering of the Self, Compassionate Concern, Sufficiency Orientation, Mindful Agency, Ethical Commitment*, and *Collective Ecological Action*.

This model asserts that ecological responses must not stop at individual awareness but must evolve into behavioral transformation, community culture, institutional policies, social action, and interfaith collaboration. Buddhist eco-theology serves as a Dharma practice to alleviate ecological suffering while contributing to spirituality and *a global ethic*. The selection of Suttas and Sutras was also selective, based on their relevance to the research framework, and does not yet represent the full diversity of Buddhist texts and traditions. The contextualization of classical teachings in relation to modern ecological issues involves hermeneutical limitations; therefore, a careful distinction must be made between the original textual meaning and contemporary ecological interpretations. Furthermore, this study has not yet tested the application of RCMEA in communities, educational institutions, monasteries, or Buddhist organizations within different social and cultural contexts.

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Future research is recommended to conduct theoretical and empirical validation of the RCMEA, including expert validation, the development of measurement instruments, and the testing of relationships among constructs using quantitative or *mixed-methods* approaches. Field research is also needed to test the model's application to individuals, communities, Buddhist temples, educational institutions, and religious organizations. At the practical level, Buddhist institutions can develop *the pañcasīla* and the Five Mindfulness Trainings into ecological education, mindful consumption, waste reduction, water and energy conservation, protection of life, and sustainable institutional policies. Future studies should also broaden the dialogue with other religious traditions so that RCMEA can be explored as a foundation for interfaith ecological collaboration without losing the distinctiveness of each tradition's spiritual sources. Thus, the development of ecotheology does not remain merely an academic discourse but moves toward personal transformation and collective action in safeguarding the sustainability of life.

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