

My short thoughts on the dignity of plants according to Buddhist perspective

1. Buddhism respects the dignity of plants in terms of our sharing of the fundamental conditions of 'arising, maintaining and disappearing'. Human beings and plants are under the same law of nature, that is, we involve with the circle of birth, decay, suffering and death.
2. Although plants do not possess the dimension of morality so as humanity does, what and how human beings treat plants will affect both directly and indirectly on the life of human beings. In fact, human beings and plants depend on each other. We are interconnectedness and interdependence. Therefore human beings need to respect the dignity of plants, do whatever not to harm the plants the same as human beings do not want others to harm themselves.
3. As a Buddhist, we have the criteria to judge what the proper way to treat others including plants and all things in this universe. That is, we need the wisdom to think, speak and do in accordance with 'the skilful means'. It means that we will always exercise mindfully skilful 'intention, methods and results'. Our attitudes and actions towards plants which are composed of our intentions and methods to deal with plants should not be based on 'greed (unlimited desires), anger (fear, jealousy) and delusion (lack of enough information)'. By such ethical norm, human beings are possible to treat plants with sustainable dignity.
4. During the Buddha's time, his life and mission are surrounding with different kinds of plants from birth, enlightenment and passing away. Buddhists are encouraged to live their lives close to the nature in order to imitate the life of the Buddha and reminding how important the forests and plants are meaningful to support the spiritual development. In many parts of the monastic rules, the Buddha orders monks not to destroy and live friendly and harmoniously with nature. In Thailand, we have 'plant ordination ceremony' in order to make plants to become sacred things to avoid the deforestation.
5. In Mahayana Buddhism, 'the Buddha nature' is emphasized to be included in all living beings. In some schools, it is believed that plants, trees, the earth themselves could achieve enlightenment due to their possession of the Buddha nature in their own.

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