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## **HUMANISTIC ASPECTS OF ECOLOGICAL VALUES IN BUDDHISM AND TAOISM AND THEIR SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The tendency to seek the harmonization of the relationship between nature and man is as relevant as ever. In the social value discourse, increase in the role of religion and religions in public space encourages religions themselves to become useful to society with their environmental narratives, and society – to be more attentive to their potential. After all, now the answers to the question of how to save humanity without global losses and how to move from a destructive type of development to a regulated one are as relevant as ever. How to mobilize moral and intellectual potential? It is obvious that global problems affect absolutely all segments of the population: Christians and Buddhists, agnostics and atheists. Undoubtedly, these issues concern churches and their spiritual leaders. In the article, the author reveals humanistic aspects of ecological ideas of the East (on the example of Buddhism and Taoism), explains the resource of Buddhist and Taoist environmental wisdom in its heuristic possibilities for today. Relevant guidelines are important for analysis and reflection, at least because they have mentally shaped the ecological culture of its adherents. And as is known, the ecological construct of a number of Eastern countries is recognized in the West as worthy of approval and imitation for the formation of a model of sustainable development and potential establishment of environmentally friendly society. The author focuses not so much on the dogmatic features of the substantiation of Buddhist and Taoist ideas (in tendencies and directions), as on the identification of their common humanistic logic, which can be understood and accepted by Western people (they do not have to become the followers of relevant Eastern doctrines). The researcher also considers the value potential of the worldview cultures in the aspect of sacralization of the rhythms of nature, reverence for its beauty as an image of wise cosmic “industry”. The article implements the disciplinary interaction of religious studies, applied ethics, aesthetic hermeneutics.

**Key words:** *Buddhism, Taoism, culture, karma, ahimsa, ecology, global problems.*

### **Research justification**

The 21st century is marked by a number of acute challenges for society. These are environmental problems; the risks of armed conflicts (especially given that some aggressive authoritarian states have nuclear weapons); economic and demographic disparities in the modern world; ethical and communicative conflicts caused by the tendencies of the contradictory modern era. Obviously, delaying the solutions is very counterproductive (they seriously affect a person's quality of life and prospects). Multifactorial, differentiated international coordination of environmental efforts of active communities (at the political and not only political levels) is a prerequisite for an effective approach to environmental issues. But the platform for such efforts should be mental and logical transformations of ideas and attitudes towards nature. Daisaku Ikeda aptly stated: “To prevent trouble, it is important to make a conscious effort within each person. It is necessary to change oneself and change one's attitude towards nature” (*Toynbee, 2007: 52*). And the values of religious beliefs contain many heuristic algorithms.

Therefore, thinking people today do not treat religion as they often treated it during the “triumph” of rationalism (i.e., denying it the right to make a significant contribution to solving current social problems, contradictions, complications). Today it is becoming increasingly clear: the

meanings and symbols of religion (and, importantly, of different religions!) contain, albeit not linear, but spiritually and value-based effective algorithms for rethinking one's position in the world. Religious guidelines – provided they are adequately interpreted and consistent with other possibilities of society – are able to set constructive vectors of crisis prevention in our time. For example, theologian O. Brodetsky emphasizes: “religious values remain, without a doubt, a powerful motivating factor of human communication, social interaction, self-awareness of people in almost all areas of civilization” (*Brodetsky, 2016: 58*). It is noteworthy that Eastern culture cherishes its traditional values today. It has managed, perhaps even more than Christian civilization, to preserve the human creativity of the postulates of the sacred in the real society of the relevant countries (although a number of relevant societies at the same time demonstrate no less powerful technological development than the West). The “secret” of the ability to assert such a balance in life is undoubtedly an active philosophical, religious, anthropological, and morally applied (in particular, environmental) interest. Therefore, in this article the author aims to highlight the humanistic content of a number of important ethical and ecological ideas which exist in the Buddhist and Taoist worldview traditions.

**The scientific theoretical and practical significance of the research** lies in its methodological and value vector for a deeper understanding of the worldview and value potential of religion and art of the East as levers of understanding and solving environmental problems of today. The results of this study can be used by scientists and artists to ideologically and ethically encourage ethical practices of caring for nature, its wise "sacralization" (which is not identical to mystification, but focused on a balanced and responsible, active life ethos). This exploration can be useful in improving courses in ethics, global issues of today, aesthetics, cultural studies, and so on. Methodologically, we focus on the explication of the relationship of the ideological content of the value ideas of religious and philosophical traditions and their socially significant potential.

**The scientific novelty of the study** lies in the crystallization of the general humanistic core of environmental values of Buddhism and Taoism with an emphasis not on dogmatic-doctrinal "scholasticism", but on the life-practical effectiveness of relevant value ideas. This is one of the links in monitoring the modern dynamics of the social functionality of religiosity, and such dynamics is largely determined by the ethical and applied effectiveness of religious ideas and social patterns.

The study is based on the analysis of primary sources, Chunda-Sutta (2013), Tao Te Ching (2005), Dhammasangani (2004) as well as scientific works, which comprehend the interaction of religion, ecology, and art. In particular, these are the researches "Buddhism and World Civilization in the Past and Present" [19] by E. Torchynov; "Choose life: A Dialogue" (2018) by A. J. Toynbee and D. Ikeda; "India. Classical Buddhism" (2007) by T. Yermakova and E. Ostrovska; "Ethical values in religions: humanistic synergy of ideas" (2004) by O. Brodetsky, "Aesthetics of the Natural Environment" (2016) by E. Brady, "Teachings of the Buddha" (2009) by D. Keown (2013) and so on.

**The purpose of the article** is to reveal the socially significant heuristics, moral and educational potential and value-communicative functionality of the analyzed humanistic ethical and ecological ideas of Buddhism and Taoism (in particular, through the channels of religious art).

A natural question may arise: why did the author focus on Eastern religions, in particular, Buddhism and Taoism? Indeed, Buddhism and Taoism do not have a direct lineage, as, for example, Hinduism and Buddhism. And there is already a certain (in the good sense of the word) "intrigue": an attempt to highlight consonant humanistic ideas related to nature and available in different traditions. The modern world allows a person to draw ideas from different traditions, and religious studies, which highlights the possibilities of humanistic interaction of constructive ideas available in different traditions, is an approach that has a remarkable educational effect. In Western civilization, Buddhism and Hinduism are not only ritual systems, but also varieties of philosophical axiology. Therefore, there are more autonomous appeals to these traditions by the representatives of the Western world in their meaningful (not necessarily religious) search. Therefore, the philosophical relevance of the heritage of both Buddhism and Taoism prompts the author to comprehend the correlation of humanistic socially significant possibilities of their ideas.

### Presentation of main material

The relationship of the nature with the mankind in Buddhism is understood in the space of its three interrelated value "incarnations". Firstly, the perception of nature as a teacher is cultivated. Harmony with other beings and appreciation of the interconnectedness of everything alive is a prerequisite for the ability to live simply. This simplicity of life encourages openness to our environment, as well as conscious awareness and empathy. Secondly, nature in Buddhism is a spiritual force. Buddhist teachers and sages, on the one hand, allegedly calling for deep self-immersion, at the same time (and always) did not motivate to be indifferent to the "voice" of nature. On the contrary, introversion should protect against excessive expansion concerning nature and, instead, there was focus on the comprehension of it as a spiritual force, an external model of establishing internal harmony. And it follows that nature for Buddhism is a model of life. The Buddha used examples from nature to teach. In his homiletic heritage, the flora and fauna are interpreted as "parts" of ourselves, our being. If we learn to discover the origins of life, we will understand that the solution to the ecological crisis begins first of all in ourselves.

Of course, in many religions there are fragments of ideas that link people's deviations from the moral guidelines of life with natural disasters. But in Buddhism it is demonstrated with a special didactic emphasis. For example, researchers T. Yermakova and E. Ostrovsky in the work "India. Classical Buddhism" state: in the beliefs of the Buddhist tradition, "murder leads to the depletion of flora, fauna and land; theft – to salt and acid rains, as well as sandstorms; adultery – to sandy and dusty drifts; lies – to air pollution; rough language – to decrease in the fertility of the earth and turn it into salt marshes; vanity – to interruption in the traditional seasonal cycle; greed – to crop failures, etc." (Yermakova, 2004: 64) And it is such mistakes that keep Buddhists captive to samsara, the endless cycle of rebirth.

In his dialogues with Arnold Toynbee, Daisaku Ikeda notes that "according to Buddhist views, the world of nature, which includes both living and non-living beings, is life in general. And a person needs to live in harmony with the surrounding nature. Only by choosing this way of coexistence and gaining benefits from it, a man can support his life and show creativity. Based on this understanding, Buddhism teaches that the relationship between man and nature is not a confrontation, but an interdependence" (Toynbee, 2007: 44). In Buddhism, man differs from other beings not by his "exclusivity", which allegedly gives the rights of "ruler", but by the fact that he is able to consciously achieve a higher state of mind, which gives liberation from "samsara". As it is well known, the ethical norms and values of Buddhism are not limited to responsibilities to the human world, but necessarily to a system of moral behaviour concerning all living things. For example, in the Buddhist Chunda Sutta, where we are talking about the 10 main negative karmas that should be avoided, we read: "Here a man destroys life. He is cruel, bloodthirsty, resorts to violence and beatings, ruthless to living beings. He takes what [he] was not given" (Chunda Sutta, 2013). That is, in this way Buddhism emphasizes the importance of a responsible attitude to nature, as well as inner kindness, life balance and acceptance of world diversity.

The basis of Buddhism is the doctrine of karma. Even in Dhammagani (part of Abhidhamma-Pitaka) we find

that "the three roots of good (karma) are: sense, lack of lust and hatred, lack of unwisdom... If consciousness is connected with these three roots, then any action: bodily, vocal or mental originates from these three roots" (*Dhammasangani*, 2004: 343). Thus we can come to the conclusion that a man who embodies the three roots of good, a priori can not destroy nature, because it contradicts his beliefs.

In this context, D. Keown writes that "the soul can be saved only if life has been consistent with moral guidelines" (*Keown*, 2013: 107). Although these values and guidelines should at least dominate, because in Buddhism, as in other religions, there is the idea that there are no sinless people.

Buddhism emphasizes not that man is above nature, but that he has the ability to find enlightenment. O. Dorzhigushayeva aptly notes: "Awareness of the law of karma will help to bridge the gap between actions and their consequences. The law of karma states that all our deeds, words, and thoughts shape the conditions for our future existence, and that each of us feels the effects of what he has thought, said, and done in the past. Thus, the law of karma encourages a person to take responsibility for their current situation, as well as for all their lives that stretch into the future" (*Dorzhigushayeva*, 2013: 254). That is, the law of karma is a kind of guide to the right values and influence on the formation of a sense of responsibility in Buddhism.

Also notable is the principle of "ahimsa" (not harming anything alive). It is known that this principle is also recognized by Hinduism and Jainism. In particular, in Hinduism the Buddha is recognized as the ninth avatar of the god Vishnu, the guardian of respect for animals and not harming anything alive (*Torchinov*, 2018).

The environmental friendliness of Buddhism has been evident in practice for a long time. For example, King Ashoka, as N. Aleksieva emphasizes, "in addition to preaching the righteousness of Buddhism, he emphasized the need to care for nature, especially for living beings. He ordered, in particular, to dig wells near the roads and plant trees "for the pleasure of animals and people" (*Aleksieva*, 2005: 87). Buddhism is also characterized by the sacralization of nature: mountains, ponds, rivers. For example, Mount Gridhrakuta is sacred to India, the place where the Buddha passed on his teachings to his disciples. Also important are the Kailash in Tibet, the Bogd Khan and the Burkhan Khaldun in Mongolia, and so on. These mountains are a place of mass pilgrimage not only for Buddhists, but also for many other believers from all over the world.

Nature is also sacralized in Oriental art. Important in this context is the Buddhist garden art (sometimes called "zen-garden"), which is full of religious symbolism. Buddhist gardens are known for their exquisite minimalist design and atmosphere of thoughtfulness. Visual elements, namely rocks, moss and shrubs, draw attention to the existing natural beauty. The location of all the elements is a subject to the rules that follow from the canons of Zen Buddhism, because the surface of the garden symbolizes the ocean, and the stones symbolize the islands. The stones are grouped in three – a tribute to the Buddhist triad or three jewels that symbolize the Buddha, his teachings and the community of followers. Classical gardens were originally created at the temples of Japanese Zen Buddhism in Kyoto (Muromachi period). And their main idea is not just to help meditate, but also to imitate

the essence of nature, so the garden is an important place to understand religious ideas. Usually, as E. Malinina writes, it is "a flat area, most of which is covered with sand or pebbles. But the main element is, at first glance, groups of unhewn stones chaotically scattered on it. However, this garden only seems like a mess, because all the compositions are subjects to the relevant rules that follow from the worldview concepts of Zen Buddhism" (Malinina: 2010, 178). Japan is especially famous for such gardens. Very famous Buddhist gardens are Daitoku-ji, Daizen-in, Jisho-ji, Jisso-in, Rosanji, Reanji, etc. All of them are in Kyoto.

Buddhism is also characterized by the worship of "ecological" spirits, in particular, the landscape spirits, led by Sagaan Ubgen <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sagaan-Ubgen> ("White Old Man"). There is even a whole teaching about Sagaan Ubgen, which describes the meeting of the Buddha with this old man, the lord of animals and plants. This teaching is typical of Buddhists in China and Mongolia (particularly the Buryats). Later, Sagaan Ubgen became a bodhisattva Manjushri.

Of course, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama is a modern important figure in the ecological movement of Buddhism, because for Buddhists he is the embodiment of the bodhisattva merciful Avalokiteshvara. As we know, in 1989 His Holiness became a Nobel Laureate in recognition of his contribution to the struggle for peace and care for nature. He actualizes the doctrines of Buddhism in a simple and clear form, actualizing those value practices of this religion that allow to adequately perceive the world. His doctrines are also used by Western thinkers. In particular, Larry R. Squire, a professor at Columbia University, notes that "we have an ancient system in front of us, which is characterized by an exceptionally subtle penetration into the nature of the mind" (Larry R. Squire). The Dalai Lama is interested in research in the field of nuclear physics, astronomy, etc. However, there is a really deep interest in environmental issues. His Holiness speaks at universities, public centers and conferences, appeals not only to Buddhists but also to the world, calls to be kinder, to be able to sympathize and be happy, because all diseases, including social ones, can be cured by love. Of course, this is more of a message that does not aim to replace the functions of medicine, but only symbolically indicates that the social effectiveness of goodwill and empathy should be encouraged in society as an important factor in its development and improvement. Therefore, the Dalai Lama emphasizes the importance of personal responsibility to nature.

The Taoist religion is ecological in itself, because it affirms the constant interaction between man and the Tao. After all, the Tao is the principle of vital creativity of heaven, earth and all living things. Unlike the followers of other Chinese religious and cultural traditions, according to L. Komjathy, the Taoists understand the Tao as the Source of all that exists [Komjathy]. The Taoist dialectic of "Tao" (cosmic law), "where" (axio-organization of being derived from the Tao) and the principle of "wu wei" (the potential for the embodiment of "where" in each person) are also valuable.

The Taoist basis of the Qi is also relevant. James Miller, Ph.D., a professor at the Duke Kunshan University in China, said in an interview that the Taoist basis of the Qi could help us rethink our understanding of environmental sustainability. In particular, he says that Qi refers to the life principle or life energy that revives the space. All

things consist of Qi and therefore have a connection with all other beings and affect them. This means that the ethical principles of life are not limited to application to the human world, but also extend to the non-human world. These principles were enshrined in Taoist codes of ethics 1500-2000 years ago (Miller, 2019).

The highest and most reliable wisdom, which is actualized by the Tao Te Ching, is the instruction for man to become like heaven and earth, to become whole and to carry out his activity in the cycle of existence. Such a person will be able to live in unity with nature, because he becomes like it. We find in Tao Te Ching that:

"Heaven is eternal, the Earth everlasting.

How come they to be so? It is because they do not foster their own lives;

That is why they live so long.

Therefore the Sage

Puts himself in the background; but is always to the fore.

Remains outside; but is always there"

(*Tao Te Ching*, 2005: 59).

The ideas of Taoism are quite conceptual and can become the driving force that can provide the concept of ecology with the status of a consistent narrative, to comprehend new realities, based on traditional teachings. After all, nature in Taoism is the ultimate foundation that unites everything, including cultures. Meanwhile, traces of human environmental intervention have the effect (and often not a positive one) everywhere: from Antarctica to the African desert.

We see environmental friendliness in Taoist art as well. After all, Taoist art, both today and in ancient times, is based on deep symbolism, which aims to convey the values of Chinese society. Such symbolism can be observed in the works of the artist Wang Tijun ("Autumn Snow of Pond Lun", "Reflections of cracks and mountains filled with leaves in the river", etc.). The Chinese painter, having reached a certain degree of maturity in other social spheres, turning to art, embodies in it the concept of Tao as a synthesis of human life and nature. This suggests that the philosophy of Taoism, reflected in painting, dynamizes the inner world of man in self-harmony with the rhythms of nature. There were even certain instructions on where and how (i.e. at the background of which natural locations) to create paintings. One can trace the influence of Taoism in the works of such artists as Li Cheng, Guo Xing, Mi Fu and others. G. Rowley, in his "Principles of Chinese Painting", notes that for Chinese culture, art was a very important way of expressing worldview ideas: "The Chinese preferred the art of living in the world instead of religion, they preferred poetic thinking, which gives room for the development of imagination, instead of rationalization" (Torchinov, 2018: 9).

The sole purpose of Chinese aesthetics is to achieve harmony between life and art. And this can be achieved only in harmony with nature. This is a kind of manifestation of Taoist anthropocentrism, but it is an anthropocentrism of responsibility and restraint, value discipline and praxeological modesty, not self-aggrandizement and expansionism.

Therefore, no problem can be solved without knowing the religion and language features, culture and traditions of its participants. Therefore, art can be the cause of solving global problems. After all, it does not have the right or wrong answers, it helps to develop and understand others.

## Conclusions

Undoubtedly, in a globalized, full of troubles society, there are very few conditions for truly stable, lasting, reliable relations. A man, on the one hand, has conquered nature, on the other, disturbs the balance of the world. And although progress has given man powerful means of protection against natural disasters, a number of diseases, etc., it has also made man more vulnerable. Now our normal life depends on many things: technological transport, communications, energy supply, water supply, etc., and all this can also be devastating.

So why is it so difficult for us to actualize the ecological and meaningful orientations of the disciples of wisdom, in particular, of the valuable resource that is in religious teachings? After all, it is wisely written in "Tao Te Ching":

"The universe is sacred.

You cannot improve it.

If you try to change it, you will ruin it.

If you try to hold it, you will lose it."

(*Tao Te Ching*, 2005: 126)

The number of changes and problems has increased significantly: man can not adapt to such a rapid pace of his technological sphere (his own "otherness"), and nature – even more so. But there is a way to maintain balance, and it is to encourage the creation of new personal and social mechanisms that regulate changes. Such mechanisms will be heuristic and effective when they balance healthy pragmatism / realism with rootedness in the sacred as a factor of real life. That is, what has a chance to save us is not resistance to technologicalization, not blind "satisfaction" with it, but a palette of creative strategies, which necessarily implies not ignoring the search for answers in the wisdom formed by generations. Religious wisdom is one of them. And in the religious wisdom of the East, from its very beginning, ecological consciousness occupied primarily a high niche.

Prospects for further research have a number of vectors – this is an analysis of other Eastern religions, and of particular thematic interest to us is a more detailed understanding of the aesthetic consciousness of Eastern religions with their ethical and applied (and environmental, in particular) aspects.

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### ГУМАНІСТИЧНІ АСПЕКТИ ЕКОЛОГІЧНИХ ЦІННОСТЕЙ В БУДДИЗМІ ТА ДАОСИЗМІ І ЇХ СОЦІАЛЬНА ЗНАЧУЩІСТЬ

Тенденція пошуку гармонізації взаємин між природою та людиною гостро актуальна, як ніколи. Підвищення ролі релігії і релігій у публічному просторі, в соціально-ціннісному дискурсі спонукає самі релігії ставати корисними суспільству власними екологічними наративами, а суспільство – бути уважнішим до їхнього потенціалу. Адже зараз як ніколи актуальними є відповіді на питання, як зберегти людство без глобальних втрат та як перейти від деструктивного типу розвитку до регульованого? Як мобілізувати моральний і інтелектуальний потенціал? Очевидно, що глобальні проблеми торкаються абсолютно всіх верств населення: християн і буддистів, агностиків і атеїстів. Безперечно, ці питання хвилюють церкви та їхніх духовних лідерів. Авторка осмислює у статті гуманістичні аспекти екологічних ідей Сходу (на прикладі буддизму та даосизму), експлікує ресурс буддійської та даоскої енвайронментальної мудрості в його евристичних можливостях для сьогодення. Відповідні настанови важливі для аналізу й рефлексії хоча б тому, щоб ментально сформували екологічну культуру її adeptів. А як відомо, екологічний конструктив ряду країн Сходу визнається на Заході вартим схвалення та наслідування для формування моделі сталого розвитку та потенційної розбудови екологічно орієнтованого суспільства. Авторка концентрується не стільки на догматичних особливостях обґрунтування буддійських та даосистських ідей (за течіями і напрямками), як на виявленні їхньої спільної гуманістичної логіки, яка може бути осягнута й прийнята і людиною Заходу (при цьому їй зовсім не обов'язково ставати adeptом відповідних східних доктрин). Торкається дослідниця й ціннісного потенціалу мистецтва відповідних світоглядних культур в аспекті сакралізації ритмів природи, пієтету перед її красою як образом мудрого космічного «промислу». У статті реалізовано дисциплінарну взаємодію релігієзнавства, прикладної етики, естетичної герменевтики.

*Ключові слова:* буддизм, даосизм, культура, карма, ахімса, екологія, глобальні проблеми.

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