

SCIENCE MEETS DHARMA - Project *Garbage*

School year 2004 / 2005

What's mentioned in Buddhist scriptures?

- Buddhists are supposed to keep the environment clean (according to the scriptures [*Sutra*]). This is good for their karma. They get five benefits (for this and also for future lives):
 1. Pure mind / peace of mind (for oneself)
 2. Pure mind / peace of mind (for all living beings)
 3. The 'good' gods will be satisfied and help us.
 4. Rebirth in the highest level of heaven in the so-called 'realm of form'
 5. Rebirth in a strong, healthy, handsome body
- Rules according to *Sutra*:
 - only drink clean (filtered) water
 - littering, urinating, spitting in public places is not allowed
 - (...)
- There don't seem to be any specific rules in order to prevent pollution of water, air and soil.
- There's a set of rules and regulations for monks concerning (individual) hygiene:
 - They are supposed to
 - wash their feet before going to bed
 - brush their teeth regularly
 - wash their hands before meals
 - keep not only their bodies but also their surroundings clean (i.e. for the individual: their rooms / *khangtsens*; for the monk community: the whole monastery!).
 - (...)
 - There's no rule for the monks to take a daily bath. According to the monks, this is due to the climatic conditions in Tibet.
- There are creatures such as demigods which live in the water, air, fire and soil. If someone pollutes a place, these demigods get angry and they can harm us. (People with a good individual karma can't be harmed much.) [According to the Dalai Lama, these demigods shouldn't be worshipped.]

'Awareness'

- Raising awareness amongst the monks ought to be one of the most important issues. We didn't get much reply when we asked the students about the garbage problem...
- 'Brainstorming' students:
 - Factories cause air pollution.
 - Garbage should be separated.
 - Recycling
 - There's a lot of garbage in rivers.
 - planting trees...

Steps to be taken in and around Sera - students' suggestions

- Raising awareness: Taking photos (e.g. of garbage dumps) and exhibiting them
- Talking about diseases caused by garbage
- Distributing pamphlets (information about diseases caused by garbage, etc.)
- Organising an essay and / or cartoon competition amongst monks (situation in / around Sera, cleaning up garbage, problems, etc); exhibiting / publishing the best essays / cartoons (could be done in collaboration with Sera Je Health Committee, they could contribute)
- Cleaning up garbage, not only around the *khangtsens*, but also at places where Sera garbage is dumped (e.g. near a creek)
- 'Stopping the garbage at the roots' (e.g. not buying plastic, etc.)
- Educating lay population and monks (e.g. Why is garbage harmful?)
- Private places are kept clean, but public places aren't; try to convince people in charge to take initiative (e.g. Health Care Centre).
- Separating the garbage; recycling (one person in charge)
- Showing documentary (film) to the monks
- Collecting articles, books on the topic and making a summary (booklet which could be distributed amongst the monks)
- Teaching / showing the people how to keep their surroundings clean (improving facilities; e.g. providing containers, dustbins for garbage – sponsoring, connections with high lamas???)