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Name: Hana Jones

Date: 30/09/2023

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"Is Buddhism an Eco-Friendly Religion, and How Does the Concept of 'No Self' (Anatta) Contribute to Its Environmental Ethics? A Comprehensive Examination of Buddhist Environmentalism."

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This dissertation is written in loving memory of Rhiannon Harris aka Myngs - I know you'd have been so proud.

Miss Hana Jones BA (Hons), PGCE.

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**Abstract**

The aim of this dissertation is to explore the intricate and complex relationship between Buddhism's key philosophical concept of 'no self' (anatta) and its implications on environmental ethics. This paper focuses on the eco-friendliness of Buddhism, with research delving into whether the doctrine of 'no self' fosters an ethical framework conducive to environmental friendliness or not. Drawing on an extensive examination of Buddhist scriptures, historical developments, and interpretative variations of 'no self,' this study provides a comprehensive understanding of this key Buddhist concept. It investigates how different Buddhist traditions and scholars interpret 'no self' and its relevance to ethical behaviour.

The dissertation focuses on quantitative research collecting sources of literature. In addition, arguments were strengthened and examined with two case studies of two distinct Buddhist communities, assessing their eco-friendly initiatives and discerning how 'no self' is integrated into their environmental ethics and how this impacts their understanding of how 'no self' is practised differently and its impact on eco-friendliness.

In conclusion, this research provides a comprehensive assessment of whether Buddhism can be classed as a truly eco-friendly religion focussing on the impact of its core concept of 'no self'. The findings presented in this dissertation have implications not only for scholars of religion and philosophy but also for those seeking novel insights into the intersection of spirituality and ecological consciousness.

# Chapter One: Introduction

**Background and Context:**

In order to assess whether Buddhism can be seen as an eco-friendly religion we must take into consideration its deep connections to the environment. Buddhist philosophy provides a foundation for ecological awareness and ethical considerations. The aim of this introduction is to introduce Buddhism and its key teachings that are significant in the study of philosophy and religious environmental narrative.

The first concept to consider is Interconnectedness and dependent origination. Through the work of D. Loy[1] we learn that Buddhism teaches that all things, from humans to the natural world, are in some way interconnected and interdependent. It is through interconnectedness we learn the significant relationship Buddhism has with the environment as the links between all things are at the heart of Buddhist philosophy.

The second key concept to consider is Ahimsa (compassion and no-harming). Compassion for all sentient beings is a key Buddhist teaching. This compassion extends to animals and the environment, promoting non-harming and ethical treatment of all life forms. This concept links to several concepts discussed in this dissertation.

The third key concept to consider is mindfulness and connection to nature. In order to successfully practise mindfulness, a Buddhist needs to ensure that they are fully present and aware of their surroundings. According to Thich Nich Hanh[2], through this practice of mindfulness is how a connection to nature fosters appreciation and care for the environment. Care for the environment is emphasised as a way of ensuring a good and ethical way of living.

The next concept is very much on the rise in the UK as a movement that encourages the active engagement of Buddhists on social and environmental issues. Through engaging with such issues Buddhists get to practically apply Buddhist principles to address ecological challenges[3]

Karma and rebirth are two key Buddhists beliefs that are central to their way of life. Similar to Hindus, Buddhists believe in the law of cause and effect (karma). It is believed that based on one's karma they will be reborn in their next life, with their new life based on the karma from the life

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[1] Loy, David. Nonduality a Study in Comparative Philosophy. Humanities Pr, 1997.

[2] Hanh, Thich Nhat. The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation. Beacon Press, 2013.

[3] King, S B. Being Benevolence: The Social Ethics of Engaged Buddhism. University of Hawaii Press, 1999.

before. This shows the significance of consequences and actions extending beyond this lifetime, which then motivates some to ensure a better ethical behaviour towards the environment[4].

The final concept is the one that will be referred to the most in this study, the concept of no self (anatta/anatman). The Buddhist concept of 'no self' emphasises the lack of a separate, permanent self. Instead, it emphasises the impermanence of all things and that all things are subject to change. Some scholars such as S Batchelor believe that the concept of no-self can lead to a more ecological perspective. They believe this as it reinforces the notion of interconnectedness of all life[5].

As previously mentioned, Buddhism naturally has a plethora of environmental practices, as a result of those key concepts mentioned above. For example, many Buddhists practise vegetarianism. Later in this dissertation we will study communities who ensure they practise sustainable agriculture and responsible resource use in order to practise ecological consciousness[6].

Throughout this introduction chapter it is clear that Buddhism has strong links to an eco-friendly way of life. The core teachings discussed focus on doctrines as well as a way of living life in the kindest way to all, including the planet. This dissertation will assess whether Buddhism is truly an eco-friendly religion and how the concept of ‘no-self’ has an impact on its eco-friendliness.

**Rationale for choosing this subject:**

The environmental crisis is widely reported on and the situation is only increasing in severity. During times of crisis people often turn to philosophy and/or religion in a desperate attempt for guidance. Philosophy contributes to addressing the environmental crisis by providing the intellectual tools, ethical principles, and critical perspectives needed to navigate complex environmental challenges. Philosophical inquiry encourages reflection on humanity's relationship with the environment and fosters a deeper understanding of our moral and ethical responsibilities toward the natural world[7].

Buddhism is often referred to as an ‘eco-friendly’ religion as many of its key concepts are surrounded by compassion, no-harming and living in a simple and modest way. In addition to this, Buddhism includes many philosophical teachings such as the conception most discussed in this dissertation (no-self). The topic for this dissertation was chosen to further study the key concepts of the religion and to assess whether Buddhism can really be seen as an ‘eco-friendly’ religion in this time of environmental

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[4] Gethin, Rupert. *Foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

[5] Batchelor, Stephen. *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist*. Spiegel & Grau Trade Paperbacks, 2011.

[6] Kaza, Stephanie, and Kenneth Kraft. Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism. Shambhala Publications, 2000.

[7] DesJardins, Joseph R. Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy. Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2013.

crisis. If this is the case, does its philosophy of ‘no-self’ impact the religion's ability to be called ‘eco-friendly’?

**The aims and objectives to this dissertation are as follows:**

- To Assess the Environmental Ethical Foundations of Buddhism: Examine the core principles of Buddhism, such as compassion, non-violence, and interconnectedness, to determine their alignment with environmental ethics.
- To Investigate the Role of 'No Self' (Anatta) in Buddhist Philosophy: Analyse the concept of 'No Self' (Anatta) within Buddhist philosophy, its historical development, and its implications for human-nature relationships.
- To Examine the Relationship Between Buddhism and Eco-Friendly Practices: Explore how Buddhist principles and teachings have influenced the eco-friendly attitudes and behaviours of Buddhist communities and individuals.
- To Identify Case Studies of Buddhist Environmental Initiatives: Investigate specific Buddhist communities or individuals that have actively engaged in eco-friendly practices and assess the motivations, practices, and impact of these initiatives.
- To Analyse the Conceptual and Practical Contributions of Anatta to Environmental Ethics: Investigate how the concept of 'No Self' (Anatta) contributes to eco-friendly attitudes, including reduced egoism, materialism, and a heightened sense of interconnectedness with the natural world.
- To Contribute to the Academic Understanding of Buddhist Environmental Ethics: Provide insights into the relationship between Buddhism and environmental ethics, shedding light on how Buddhist philosophy and practices can be applied to contemporary ecological challenges.
- To Offer Recommendations for Future Research and Practice: Based on the findings, suggest areas for further research and practical applications in the field of Buddhist environmentalism.

**Significance of Study:**

This research on whether Buddhism is an eco-friendly religion and how the concept of 'No Self' (Anatta) contributes to its environmental ethics is important because it sheds light on the potential synergy between spirituality, philosophy, and ecological sustainability. Through extensive research it offers valuable insights into how different belief systems can shape our attitudes and actions towards the natural world, which is crucial in trying to understand contemporary environmental challenges.

**Theoretical Framework:**

The purpose of this chapter is to define key terms and concepts that will be referred to throughout the dissertation, including 'no self,' eco-friendliness, and environmental ethics. The second half will establish the theoretical framework for analysing the complex relationship between Buddhism and eco-friendliness.

## 1. Key Terms and Concepts

### 1.1. 'No Self' (Anatta/Anatman)

'No self' is one of the main concepts discussed in this dissertation and it refers to a core concept of Buddhism that challenges the notion of a fixed, permanent self or ego. It emphasises that the self is an impermanent entity that lacks inherent existence. This key concept is central to Buddhist philosophy and ethics, as a result it influences how individuals perceive their relationship with themselves and the world around them.

### 1.2. Eco-Friendliness

The second key term is eco-friendliness. This refers to a set of values, practices, and behaviours that prioritise environmental sustainability and the well-being of the planet. For the context of this dissertation, eco-friendliness within Buddhism emphasises ethical principles and practices that contribute to environmental preservation and harmony.

### 1.3. Environmental Ethics

Thirdly, environmental ethics is a branch of ethics that examines human moral responsibilities toward the environment and its non-human inhabitants. It encompasses ethical frameworks and principles that guide decisions and actions related to environmental issues.

## 2. Theoretical Framework for Analysing Buddhism and Eco-Friendliness

The theoretical framework for this dissertation draws on several key perspectives:

### 2.1. Buddhist Philosophy and Ethics

The core of the theoretical framework relies on the ethical and philosophical teachings of Buddhism. It emphasises that Buddhism provides a rich ethical foundation that focuses on compassion, non-harming, and interconnectedness. Whilst it could be argued that it was not their original purpose, these principles can be examined in the context of environmental ethics and can be demonstrated to align with eco-friendly values and practices.

### 2.2. Eco-Buddhism

The concept of 'Eco-Buddhism' serves as a way to theoretically explore the relationship of Buddhism and environmentalism. Eco-Buddhism acknowledges the compatibility between Buddhist principles and ecological concerns. It provides a framework for understanding how Buddhist teachings, including 'no self', can inspire an eco-friendly way of living.

### 2.3. Environmental Ethics Frameworks

Within the broader field of environmental ethics, the theoretical framework considers various ethical frameworks, such as deep ecology, biocentrism, and anthropocentrism. It examines how Buddhist environmental ethics relate to and potentially enrich these ethical perspectives, shedding light on the unique contributions of Buddhism to eco-friendliness[8].

### 2.4. Engaged Buddhism

Engaged Buddhism, as developed by Thich Nhat Hanh and other contemporary Buddhist thinkers, emphasises the active application of Buddhist principles to address social and environmental issues. This theoretical framework explores how Engaged Buddhism serves as a bridge between traditional Buddhist teachings, 'no self' included, and practical eco-friendly actions[9].

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[8] Naess, Arne. “The Deep Ecology Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects.” *The Selected Works of Arne Naess*, 1986, pp. 29–46, doi:10.1007/978-1-4020-4519-6_88.

[9] Hanh, Thich Nhat. Engaged Buddhism in the West, 1993, pp. 17–22.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

Buddhism emphasises simplicity and a kind way of life. By recognising the interconnected nature of all beings and learning to treat all things with compassion and loving kindness, it's clear to see how Buddhist values align with an environmentally friendly narrative. However, to determine whether Buddhism can be determined as an environmentally friendly religion, it is important to review existing literature. The aim of this literature review is to briefly explore the arguments, evidence, and perspectives surrounding Buddhism's relationship with the environment. This literature review examines the existing body of scholarship on Buddhism and its environmental ethics, focusing on the concept of 'no self' and its relationship to eco-friendliness. In addition, it will study the eco-friendly practices within Buddhism that emphasise compassion, non-harming, and interconnectedness.

Furthermore, this review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Buddhism's core concepts and practices relate to environmental sustainability.

### 1. Buddhism and Environmental Ethics

Buddhism, as one of the world's oldest spiritual traditions, emphasises an ethical way of life that is rooted in its core teachings and ethical principles. Many scholars have explored the relationship between Buddhism and environmental values:

#### 1.1. Compassion and Non-Harming

Firstly, Buddhism places a strong emphasis on compassion (karuna) and non-harming (ahimsa). Evidence of these key teachings can be seen in the Five Precepts, which guide ethical behaviour for Buddhists. Some scholars such as Gyatso would argue that Buddhism's commitment to non-violence extends to the environment, therefore naturally emphasising the protection of all living beings[10].

#### 1.2. Interconnectedness and Interdependence

Another key concept is interconnectedness (pratityasamutpada), which teaches that all things are somehow interdependent. According to David Loys this encourages a holistic view of the environment, where harm to any part of the ecosystem affects the whole thing. Loy would also suggest that this interconnectedness principle aligns with modern ecological thinking as it shows how our impacts on humans have an impact on the natural world which will in the long run impact us as humans again[11].

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[10] Gyasto, T. Environmental Ethics and the Dalai Lama's Environmental Ethics: The Middle Way, vol. 17, no. 3, 1995, pp. 209–224.

[11] Loy, David. Nonduality a Study in Comparative Philosophy. Humanities Pr, 1997.

## 2. 'No Self' (Anatta) and Eco-Friendliness

The key concept for this dissertation which is 'no self' hold a key role in the study of Buddhism and environmental ethics:

### 2.1. Egolessness and the Ego-Centric View

In contrast to 'Western' religions such as Christianity, Buddhism holds a non-egocentric view of their relationship with the environment. This is due to the concept of 'no self' as it challenges the ego-centric view of existence by emphasising that there is no permanent or unchanging self. To strengthen this argument Santina argues that 'no-self' can lead to a more eco-friendly perspective by diminishing the human ego's dominance over nature. Lyn White[12] also argues that 'Western' religions hold a dominion over nature due to its ego-centric view of their sacred texts[13].

### 2.2. No Self and Ethical Behaviour

Similarly, the absence of a fixed self in Buddhism is often linked to a more ethical way of life. This is achieved by recognizing the fluidity of identity, Harvey argues that individuals may become more sensitive to ethical concerns, including those related to environmental stewardship through accepting the concept of 'no-self' and living a more compassionate way of life[14].

## 3. Eco-Friendly Practices in Buddhism

Finally, Buddhism promotes eco-friendly practices that reflect its ethical principles as exampled in the following points:

### 3.1. Sustainable Living

As previously stated, Buddhism advocates for simplicity and contentment, which can lead to more compassion and connectedness with the earth which then ultimately leads to a more sustainable lifestyle. One example of this sustainable way of life is monastic communities. through minimalist

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[12] White, Lynn. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." *Science*, vol. 155, no. 3767, 1967, pp. 1203–1207, doi:10.1126/science.155.3767.1203.

[13] Santina, P D. "The Doctrine of Anatta in Buddhism: A Modern Interpretation." *Buddhist Philosophy* , vol. 1, 2018, pp. 10–18.

[14] Harvey, Peter. "Buddhism and Modernity: An Interview with Peter Harvey." *Religion*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2000, pp. 179–197.

living and resource conservation monastic communities model an environmentally friendly way of living as argued by King[15].

### 3.2. Vegetarianism

Another ethical practice which is common in Buddhist communities is vegetarianism, which is especially popular in Mahayana traditions. This is done in order to practise ahimsa (non-violence) and compassion through reducing harm to animals and the environment[16].

## 3. Challenges to Buddhism's Eco-Friendliness

### 3.1. Historical Practices

Though many core Buddhist teachings naturally align with an eco-friendly narrative of Buddhism, some scholars argue that some historical Buddhist practices do not align with the current environmental concerns. Some examples of this include forest clearing for monastic construction or animal sacrifices in ancient rituals. As argued by Kaza these practices indicate a more complex relationship between Buddhism and the environment than the above key teachings originally indicate[17].

### 3.2. Consumerism in Modern Buddhism

Another challenge to an eco-friendly Buddhist narrative is modern consumerism and the desire for material possessions. These can be seen as contradictory to Buddhist values of simplicity and contentment as it shows a desire for something and Buddhism teaches that attachment is unnecessary due the impermanent nature of all things. Some critics such as Harvey argue that the modern practice of Buddhism may not always reflect its eco-friendly principles[18].

## 4. The Middle Way: Buddhism's Ongoing Dialogue with Environmentalism

### 4.1. Engaged Buddhism

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[15] Queen, Christopher S., and Sallie B Kings. Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia. State Univ. of New York Press, 1999.

[16] Phelps, N. “The Great Compassion: Buddhism and Animal Rights.” *Moral Animals: Ideals and Constraints in Moral Theory*, 2004, pp. 112–125.

[17] Kasa, Stephanie. “Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deed.” *Environmental Ethics*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2019, pp. 413–432.

[18] Harvey, Peter. “Buddhism and Modernity: An Interview with Peter Harvey.” *Religion*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2000, pp. 179–197.

Engaged Buddhism, pioneered by Thich Nhat Hanh and others, seeks to link Buddhism's ethical principles with contemporary environmental and social issues. This movement exemplifies Buddhism's adaptability in addressing ecological challenges therefore aiding the idea that Buddhism is indeed an eco-friendly religion[19].

**Conclusion**

Therefore to conclude, the existing literature presents a nuanced perspective on whether Buddhism can be considered an environmentally friendly religion. While its core teachings of compassion, non-harming, and interconnectedness align with environmental ethics, historical practices and modern consumerism pose challenges to this characterization. Engaged Buddhism offers a path toward environmental responsibility within the tradition. Ultimately, Buddhism's eco-friendliness remains an evolving and dynamic dialogue between tradition and modernity.

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[19] Hanh, Thich Nhat. *Love Letter to the Earth*. Parallax Press, 2014.

# Chapter Three: Methodology

**Research Approach:**

The main research approach will be a qualitative research approach in order to explore the complex relationship between Buddhism and environmental ethics. In addition to this, qualitative methods are appropriate for investigating philosophical and religious fields of study.

**Data Collection:** Data will be collected in a multi-method approach, including literature review, case studies, and content analysis of relevant sacred texts.

**Literature Review:** The first step in data collection will be to conduct an extensive review of existing literature on Buddhism, environmental ethics, and the concept of Anatta. This will provide the foundation for the rest of the dissertation.

**Case Studies:** Two Buddhist communities will be selected in order to study their eco-friendly practices and how the concept of 'no-self' impacts these practices, if they impact at all.

**Textual Analysis:** Throughout the dissertation there will be reference to Buddhist scriptures, teachings, and writings related to eco-friendliness and environmental ethics as well as the concept of Anatta. This analysis will help with understanding the philosophical underpinnings of Buddhist environmentalism.

**Data Analysis:**

**Qualitative Content Analysis:** As part of the data analysis this dissertation will look at textual data (e.g. Buddhist scriptures) using qualitative content analysis. This involves exploring themes related to eco-friendliness, Anatta, and their relationship.

**Comparative Analysis:** In order to assess the impact on 'no-self' and Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion this dissertation will compare the findings from the case studies to identify commonalities and differences.

**Ethical Considerations:**

**Cultural Sensitivity:** When studying a religion and culture it is important to address data and views with respect and sensitivity.

**Limitations:**

**Sample Bias:** Due to the length and nature of this dissertation it is impossible to look at every source available. Through choosing two case studies with varying beliefs, it's important to acknowledge that while there is a variety of views there may be other contrasting viewpoints.

**Interpretation:** It is also important to acknowledge and recognize that interpretations of Buddhist teachings and practices can vary among individuals and communities. This analysis aims to capture a range of perspectives.

**Timeline:** This dissertation will be written over the course of two years. The first year will focus on data collection and the second year will be focused on writing up the findings from this piece of research.

**Conclusion**: The final chapter will summarise the key findings of this dissertation and establish whether Buddhism is an eco-friendly religion or not as well as addressing whether the concept of 'no-self' has any impact on Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion.

**Recommendations:** The final chapter will acknowledge the significant progress that has been made concerning the relationship between Buddhism and eco-friendliness, and recommend that the following areas warrant further research:

- In-depth Case Studies
- Longitudinal Studies
- Cross-Religious Comparisons
- Interdisciplinary Approaches

## Chapter Four: Environmental Ethics and Buddhism

This chapter will present Buddhist principles and teachings related to ethics, compassion, and interdependence. These key concepts and teachings all play a central role in the practice and philosophy of Buddhism. This chapter will examine historical and modern interpretations of key Buddhist concepts.

The development of Buddhist environmental ethics has evolved over time, influenced by various factors including the early teachings of the Buddha, cultural contexts, and contemporary challenges. It is clear to see that some ethical principles are naturally integrated in early Buddhist teachings, one example of this is The Five Precepts. The Five Precepts are the foundation of Buddhist ethics, serving as guide for all moral decisions and actions. The Five Precepts include no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no false speech, and no intoxicants. By adhering to this ethical guide, Buddhists hope to live an ethical life making morally correct decisions[20]. It can be argued that though The Five Precepts don't specifically mention the environment they do indirectly link to an eco-friendly narrative. The first precept (no harm/ahimsa) emphasises the protection of life which could be extended to the protection of nature by not taking the life of another living thing[21]. The Five Precepts are one of the earliest Buddhist teachings, found in the Pali Canon. There is a great emphasis on the principle of non-harming (ahimsa). It is argued by Dhammika that his core concept rooted in the first precept of not killing, laid the groundwork for ethical considerations in relation to all living beings, including animals and the environment[22]. The second precepts prohibits stealing, in an eco-friendly interpretation it could be linked to the respect of resources and not taking what doesn't belong to you[23]. The fourth precept advises against false speech, from an environmental point of view it could be argued that it promotes transparency when discussing environmental issues. Therefore, though eco-friendliness isn't distinctly mentioned, as an ethical framework to help Buddhists make the correct moral choices it indirectly advises Buddhists to make choices that will not harm anything, including the environment which supports the idea of Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion.
In addition, The Noble Eightfold Path is a key ethical and spiritual framework in Buddhism. It includes eight linked aspects, including right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. These guide practitioners toward

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[20] Dhammika, S. The Five Precepts: Buddhist Ethics for Modern Life. Buddhist Publication Society, 1996.

[21] Gyasto, T. Environmental Ethics and the Dalai Lama's Environmental Ethics: The Middle Way, vol. 17, no. 3, 1995, pp. 209–224.

[22] Dhammika, S. The Five Precepts: Buddhist Ethics for Modern Life. Buddhist Publication Society, 1996.

[23] Batchelor, Stephen. *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist*. Spiegel & Grau Trade Paperbacks, 2011.

ethical behaviour and mental clarity24. In a similar way to The Five Precepts as it doesn't directly discuss eco-friendliness, it could be argued that The Noble Eightfold Path maps the correct way to live life and this can be linked to environmental ethics. One example to support this argument is Right Action, this involves avoiding any actions that cause harm. In an environmental context, it supports ethical conduct that avoids harming living beings, ecosystems, and the environment. It aligns with eco-friendly practices like conservation and ethical consumption. A second example to support Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion is Right Livelihood which encourages individuals to engage in occupations that are ethical and do not harm others. It aligns with eco-friendly livelihoods, such as sustainable farming, eco-tourism, renewable energy, and environmentally responsible businesses. This a weaker link as it is difficult to find scholarly support to strengthen it, however it is mentioned by Gunaratana[25]. A third example is Right Effort which could be interpreted to involve cultivating positive qualities and eliminating negative ones. Applied to eco-friendliness, it encourages efforts to reduce carbon footprint, conserve resources, and promote sustainability. This is a stronger argument for eco-friendliness as it has more scholarly support[26].

The next core concept is Metta (Loving-kindness). Metta is the practice of practising limitless loving-kindness and goodwill toward all beings, without discrimination. It is considered one of the divine abodes and is central to the development of compassion in Buddhism[27]. Closely linked to metta compassion. Compassion involves understanding and alleviating the suffering of others. Compassion is seen as an essential quality for those on the Buddhist path[28]. Bhikkhu Bodhi's work strengthens the argument of metta and compassion as eco-friendly Buddhist practices. Bodhi is a respected Buddhist monk, scholar, and translator who has written extensively on ethical practices. While Bhikkhu Bodhi may not explicitly link Metta meditation to eco-friendliness in his writings, his work emphasises compassion, non-harm, and ethical living—values that can align with eco-friendly attitudes and behaviours[29].

Interconnectedness is emphasised in Buddhism as it is strongly believed that there is an interconnected nature of all beings. This interconnectedness is exemplified in teachings such as the

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[24] Rahula, Walpola. *What the Buddha Taught*. Grove Atlantic, 1969.

[25] Gunaratana, Henepola. The Path of Serenity and Insight: An Explanation of the Buddhist Jhānas. Motilal Banarsidass Publishing House, 2015.

[26] Chah, Ajahn. Food for the Heart: The Collected Teachings of Ajahn Chah. Wisdom Publications, 2002.

[27] Salzberg, Sharon. Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness. Shambhala Publications Inc , 2002.

[28] Dalai Lama, and Desmond Tutu. The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World. Avery, an Imprint of Penguin Random House, 2016.

[29] Bodhi. The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Sammyutta Nikaaya. Wisdom Publications, 2000.

Indra's Net metaphor, which illustrates how every element reflects and is reflected by all others, highlighting the oneness of existence[30]. These principles and teachings are central to the ethical and spiritual framework of Buddhism. They provide a guide for practitioners to cultivate moral conduct, compassion, and an understanding of the interdependence of all life. Bodhi[31] argues that the awareness of interconnectedness and dependent origination (paticcasamuppada) serves as a basis for recognizing the ethical implications of one's actions in the wider context of life. By integrating these principles into their lives, Buddhists aim to reduce suffering and attain spiritual awakening. Though none of these teachings directly mention eco-friendliness, their roots in compassion, loving kindness and ahimsa strengthen the argument that Buddhism can be seen as an eco-friendly religion, even though it may not have been their original purpose.

Moving on to more modern interpretations, it is still clear that historical key concepts lay the foundations for a more eco-friendly and aware type of Buddhism which is highlighted in the following examples. Many modern Buddhist scholars and environmental activists within the Buddhist tradition have created a framework for environmental ethics. They've focused on key Buddhist teachings of compassion, mindfulness, and non-harming in order to create this framework to answer the challenge of the environmental crisis[32].

Engaged Buddhism is a fairly modern movement introduced and made popular by Thich Nhat Than, Sulak Sivaraksa and similar thinkers. This movement emphasises Buddhist engagement with social and environmental issues. In order to address environmental issues this contemporary movement emphasises the practical application of Buddhist principles to address ecological challenges[33]. Engaged Buddhists argue that ethical behaviour and mindfulness should extend to all aspects of life furthermore supporting the view that Buddhism is an eco-friendly religion[34]. Some practices completed by engaged Buddhist may include vegetarianism and living a simple life. These practices reflect ethical considerations for reducing harm to the environment and thus supporting the view that Buddhism can be seen as an eco-friendly religion as argued by Loy[35].

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[30] Loy, David. Nonduality a Study in Comparative Philosophy. Humanities Pr, 1997.

[31] Bodhi. The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Sammyutta Nikaaya. Wisdom Publications, 2000.

[32] Kaza, Stephanie, and Kenneth Kraft. Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism. Shambhala Publications, 2000.

[33] Hanh, Thich Nhat. *Love Letter to the Earth*. Parallax Press, 2014.

[34] Queen, Christopher S., and Sallie B Kings. Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia. State Univ. of New York Press, 1999.

[35] Loy, David. Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution. Wisdom Publications, 2008.

Developments in Mahayana Buddhism expanded on the early Buddhist teachings and also placed an emphasis on compassion (karuna). According to the Dalai Lama compassion should not only be shown to sentient beings such as humans and animals but also to the natural world. This emphasises the importance of eradicating suffering in all forms of life. The Dalai Lamas arguments strengthen the idea of Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion as it refers directly to the eradicating suffering experienced by the natural world[36].

The second Mahayana development is the concept of emptiness (sunyata). The Madhyamika school of Mahayana Buddhism, founded by Nagarjuna, introduced the concept of emptiness (sunyata). Emptiness is stated as a profound philosophical doctrine, that also has ethical implications by emphasising the lack of inherent existence in all things, including the self and the environment.

Teachings from Tibetan Buddhism and Vajrayana practice respect for Sacred Natural Sites. For example, the practice of respecting and protecting sacred natural sites, such as mountains and lakes. The reason for this is that these sites are considered spiritually significant and therefore have been preserved as part of Tibetan environmental ethics. Through respecting the significance of these natural sites Tibetan Buddhists show a respect for the natural world which aligns with an eco-friendly narrative and therefore strengthens the argument that Buddhism is indeed an eco-friendly religion[37].

The historical development of Buddhist environmental ethics demonstrates the evolution of ethical considerations within Buddhism, with an increasing focus on compassion, interconnectedness, and responsible stewardship of the environment. Kaza and Kraft argue that though these original concepts were not directly created for environmental ethics, the way these concepts continue to develop shape contemporary Buddhist perspectives on environmental issues. They go on to argue that adaptations made reflect the ongoing development of Buddhist environmental ethics in the modern context and therefore support the argument of Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion[38].
As evidenced above, Buddhist institutions that promote environmental awareness have significantly increased and evolved over time. These institutions, including monasteries, temples, and Buddhist organisations, have made note of the environmental challenges facing the world and have taken steps to address them. These practices strengthen the argument of Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion as it exemplifies commitment to development and improvement in trying to tackle this global crisis, this is explained in Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds[39].

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[36] Dalai Lama, and Desmond Tutu. The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World. Avery, an Imprint of Penguin Random House, 2016.

[37] Gutschow, Kim. Being a Buddhist Nun: The Struggle for Enlightenment in the Himalayas. Harvard University Press, 2004.

[38] Kaza, Stephanie, and Kenneth Kraft. Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism. Shambhala Publications, 2000.

[39] King, S B. Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds. Harvard University Press, 2000.

As well as practising vegetarianism and compassionate consumptionReference: Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on mindful eating and his book "The World We Have: A Buddhist Approach to Peace and Ecology.", many Buddhist monasteries and temples are implementing eco-friendly practices within their own communities. For example, sustainable agriculture, recycling programs, and reduced energy consumption. Such initiatives serve as practical examples of living in harmony with the environment and as explained by Duncan Williams, this strengthens the idea that Buddhism is an eco-friendly religion as their practices have been adapted in order to be kinder to the environment[40].

David P. Barash argues that some Buddhist institutions strengthen the idea that Buddhism is an eco-friendly religion through incorporating environmental rituals and ceremonies into their practices. For example, some ceremonies include tree planting or blessings for the protection of endangered species. These kinds of ceremonies and rituals can raise environmental consciousness among followers and therefore promote a more eco-friendly way of life[41]. In order to engage further with the issue of environmental crisis, some Buddhist institutions engage in interfaith dialogues and collaborations with other religious groups to address common environmental concerns. This leads to a broader understanding of ecological issues and encourages collaboration and more action therefore strengthening the eco-friendly worldview.

In conclusion to this chapter it is evident that Buddhist institutions play a key role in promoting environmental awareness through a combination of education, practical initiatives, advocacy, and ethical guidance. These efforts are deeply rooted in Buddhist teachings of compassion, interconnectedness, and non-harm and contribute to a growing global movement towards sustainable and eco-friendly practices which strengthens the view that Buddhism is an eco-friendly religion, despite the obvious challenges that have been analysed in this chapter and will be discussed further in the concluding chapters.

**Challenges Environmental Ethics and Buddhism**

While the above concepts evidence how Buddhism can be considered a religion that promotes eco-friendliness and environmental ethics, there are arguments and criticisms that challenge this view and suggest it may not be as eco-friendly as some suggest.

Critics like Dhammika argue that throughout history, Buddhist civilizations have not always demonstrated an eco-friendly approach like some more modern Buddhist monasteries and

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[40] Williams, Duncan R. “The Greening of Buddhism.” *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review*.

[41] Brash, David P. “Ecology and Buddhist Ethics.” *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, Oxford University Press.

communities outlined previously. The building of some Buddhist societies has contributed to deforestation, habitat destruction, and resource exploitation. This goes against the concepts of no-harm, compassion, engaged Buddhism and does not coincide with the argument of Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion or teach good ecological stewardship[42].

Some scholars like B. Taylor would argue that some Buddhist teachings may reflect a degree of anthropocentrism, where human interests are prioritised over those of non-human beings. They argue that it leads to a less eco-friendly worldview as it prioritises human liberation above all else[43].

Though Buddhism tries to respond to the environmental crisis, critics like Ian Harris contend that traditional Buddhist teachings do not provide adequate guidance for addressing contemporary global environmental crises, such as climate change and biodiversity loss. He argues that Buddhism needs to adapt and engage more directly with these issues instead of emphasising personal conduct and practices. Not enough response by Buddhists to environmental issues would in turn suggest that Buddhism is not as eco-friendly as some would argue[44].

The literature to support Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion is clear to see throughout this dissertation. Many key concepts lend themselves to an eco-friendly ethic naturally, some critics suggest that the perception of Buddhism as inherently eco-friendly can lead to complacency. This argument is made focussing on Buddhist communities being seen as eco-friendly havens which may not always be the case as highlighted in an earlier argument of past monasteries and communities being built. Whilst this argument is a valid one as complacency is often a risk in human nature, the authors Leshner, G., and Hirsch, P. recognize that this belief may not be consistent with modern conservation practices which limits its validity somewhat. Reference: Leshner, G., & Hirsch, P. (2018). The Danger of Religious Exceptionalism in Conservation. Conservation Biology, 32(3), 524-526.

As with traditions, some practices will vary within communities which can be evidenced by studies of any religion across the globe. As ways of life may vary Buddhism's eco-friendliness may also vary across regions and cultures. Some Buddhist communities may prioritise eco-friendliness, while others

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[42] Dhammika, S. The Five Precepts: Buddhist Ethics for Modern Life. Buddhist Publication Society, 1996.

[43] Taylor, B. Buddhism and Postmodern Imaginings in Thailand: The Religiosity of Urban Space. Ashgate Publishing., 2013.

[44] Harris, I. “The Contemporary Challenge of Buddhism to Engage with the World.” *Journal of Global Buddhism*, vol. 14, 2013, pp. 31–43.

may not. As argued by Skilton, the diversity of interpretations and practices within Buddhism means that it cannot be universally characterised as eco-friendly[45].

In their book Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia. Queen and King argue that Buddhism as a religion hasn't always been at the forefront of pressing ecological issues. While they mainly have certain eco-friendly teachings, Queen and King argue that Buddhism shows limited direct engagement with environmental issues and despite the Engaged Buddhism movement, it has not consistently played a prominent role in environmental advocacy and activism. This argument could weaken the credibility of Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion, though this is an older source which could impact on its credibility[46].

It's important to note that these arguments do not necessarily negate the eco-friendly potential of Buddhism but highlight the complexities and variations within the religion. Buddhism, like any religious tradition, can be interpreted and practised in diverse ways, and its relationship with environmental ethics may vary across different contexts and communities.

## Chapter Five: The Concept of 'No Self' (Anatta)

The aim of this chapter is to explain the concept of no self within Theravada and Mahayana traditions referencing prominent Buddhist texts and scholarly work where relevant. As previously outlined, Buddhism teaches that everything, including the self, is constantly changing. This concept emphasises the interconnected nature of existence and how it is devoid of inherentness.

Beginning with Theravada Buddhism we will look at the concept of anatta as no inherent, permanent self. Theravada Buddhism teaches that there is not one unchanging soul or self that remains the same at all times and this doctrine is derived from the Buddha's teachings on the "Five Aggregates" (khandhas) – form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. These aggregates are all impermanent and subject to change at all times. This shows that the self cannot exist within them as there is nothing permanent to house them[47][48].

Another key teaching that includes anatta in Theravada is the Three Marks of Existence. Here we see that no-self is also closely linked to two other key teachings in Buddhism which make the Three

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[45] Skilton, A. Buddhism and Environmental Ethics: A Historical and Practical Examination. Routledge, 2014.

[46] Queen, Christopher S., and Sallie B Kings. Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia. State Univ. of New York Press, 1999.

[47] Bodhi. The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Sammyutta Nikaaya. Wisdom Publications, 2000.

[48] Majjhima Nikaya 22 (The Simile of the Snake) in the Pali Canon.

Marks of Existence. These are anatta (no-self), anicca (impermanence) and dukkha (suffering). The Three Marks of existence emphasise the ever changing nature of all things and strengthen the argument that the concept of no self aids the eco-friendly narrative of Buddhism. Though it is not on its own here, the Three Marks of Existence are all of equal importance when it comes to recognising the ever changing nature of all things. Through accepting no self, The concept of 'no self' is closely linked to two other key doctrines in Theravada Buddhism: impermanence (anicca) and suffering (dukkha). Impermanence emphasises the ever-changing nature of all phenomena, including the aggregates that make up what we conventionally call "self." The recognition of impermanence is a foundation for understanding 'no self.'[49] [50]

Another key concept that connects to ‘no self’ is dependent origination (paticcasamuppada). This illustrates the interdependence of all living things and explains how suffering arises due to the presence of various factors. The lack of an inherent self means that suffering is not happening to an enduring self but is a result of conditioned processes.

Buddhists believe in the concept of nirvana where it is believed that Buddhists will reach enlightenment and be freed from the samsara cycle. For Buddhists, understanding the concept of 'no self' is key to the Buddhist path to liberation (nirvana). By recognizing the idea of a permanent self is nothing but an illusion and by letting go of attachment to it, individuals can free themselves from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth[51]

Therefore to conclude, In the school of Theravada Buddhism, the acceptance and understanding of the concept of 'no self' is key to understanding the nature of reality and therefore plays a role in bringing suffering to an end. Through accepting no self Buddhists are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences and gain a better understanding into the impermanence and interdependence of all things.

Similarly, in Mahayana Buddhism, the concept of 'no self,' known as "anatman" in Sanskrit, is a key doctrine that shares similarities with the Theravada concept of 'anatta.' However, Mahayana Buddhism expands on this concept and introduces the idea of "emptiness" (sunyata). In Mahayana Buddhism, 'no self' is intricately connected to the concept of emptiness (sunyata). This concept of ‘emptiness' refers to the idea that all things, including the self, lack inherent existence or inherent self-nature. This means that nothing possesses an independent, unchanging essence. Instead, everything is interdependent including all living beings and nature.The concept of emptiness can be better

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[49] Dhammapada 279 in the Pali Canon

[50] “Paticca-Samuppada.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/topic/paticca-samuppada.

[51] Bodhi. The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Sammyutta Nikaaya. Wisdom Publications, 2000.

understood from The Heart Sutra[52]. A Buddhist philosopher, Nagarjuna, is particularly associated with the development of the doctrine of 'no self' and emptiness. In his work, the "Mulamadhyamakakarika" (Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way), Nagarjuna emphasises the concept of emptiness and argues that all things, including the self, are empty of inherent existence[53].

In Mahayana Buddhism, the understanding of 'no self' is often explained within the framework of the Two Truths doctrine – conventional truth (samvrtisatya) and ultimate truth (paramarthasatya). Conventional truth refers to the everyday, relative reality where distinctions, including that of the self, are valid. Ultimate truth points to the ultimate nature of reality, which is characterised by emptiness and the absence of inherent existence. The Prajnaparamita (Perfection of Wisdom) Sutras are a central body of Mahayana texts, explain the concept of 'no self' and emptiness in great detail. These sutras emphasise the emptiness of all things and explain that this teaching is the ultimate reality.

Theravada and Mahayana are the two main traditions in Buddhism and they share the fundamental understanding that the idea of a permanent unchanging self is an illusion and that clinging to an idea of a fixed self will only lead to suffering. The teachings on 'no self' encourage Buddhists to further investigate the nature of the self and acknowledge its impermanence. This understanding is key to Buddhism.

Historically, the concept of anatta can be traced back to the foundational teachings of the Buddha, who emphasised the impermanence of all beings, including the self. This part of the chapter looks at the historical development of the concept of ‘no-self’. Firstly, the Buddha's discourses in the Pali Canon contain numerous references to anatta.Reference: Various discourses in the Pali Canon, such as the Anatta-lakkhana Sutta (Discourse on the Not-self Characteristic) in the Samyutta Nikaya. Five Aggregates (Skandhas) mentioned above was one of the first teachings on the concept of ‘no-self’. The five collectively summarise what is regarded as the self, but the Buddha taught that none of them represents a permanent, unchanging self[54]. As stated earlier in this chapter the main development of no self in Mahayana Buddhism is the added idea of emptiness.

The smaller school of Vajrayana Buddhism teaches of clear light and illusory body. In Vajrayana or Tibetan Buddhism, these practices aim to uncover the ultimate nature of mind and the absence of a solid, inherent self. Throughout the historical development of Buddhism, we can see that the concept of anatta has always been a core teaching. However due to timings and cultures its interpretation and depth of understanding has evolved. Mainly in the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions, we can see that anatta was explored in greater depth and connected to the broader teachings on emptiness and the

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[52] The Heart Sutra (Prajnaparamita Hridaya Sutra)

[53] “Paticca-Samuppada.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/topic/paticca-samuppada.

[54] Samyutta Nikaya 22 (The Simile of the Snake) in the Pali Canon

nature of reality. These developments reflect the richness and adaptability of Buddhist thought over time. As these developments are highlighted, we can see the potential Buddhism shows for growth and adaptation meaning that Buddhism could indeed be seen as an evolving eco-friendly religion with core teachings that may become more evolved and relevant to the eco-friendliness over time.

As with all religious teachings, traditions and cultures evolving leads to a varying of interpretations and variations. Beginning with Theravada we will briefly examine the differences in different traditions. The Theravada emphasis on anatta as a central and foundational teaching explains that the self is not a permanent, unchanging entity but a collection of impermanent and conditioned elements (the five aggregates) has already been explained[55]." Buddhist Publication Society. Mahayana teaches that the concept of 'no self' is linked to emptiness[56]. In addition to this some schools of Mahayana, like the Tathagatagarbha (Buddha-nature) tradition, understand that all sentient beings possess the potential for Buddhahood within themselves. Though this may seem to suggest the concept of a self, it is understood as a potential rather than a conventional self[57].

Zen Buddhism offers a different perspective, here we see how Zen Buddhism emphasises direct experience and meditation. Their interpretation of the concept of 'no self' often revolves around experiential realisation rather than philosophical analysis. Zen masters aim to guide Buddhists to directly perceive the absence of a fixed self through meditation[58].

Therefore, we learn that while 'no self' is a common theme across Buddhist traditions, the variations in its interpretation reflect the diversity of thought within Buddhism. Whether through the five aggregates, emptiness, or direct experience, the key theme still remains that the self is not a fixed, unchanging entity but a conditioned and ever-changing phenomenon.

The next section of this chapter will focus on the relationship between 'no-self' and identity Starting with individual identity. The concept of 'no-self.' Buddhism is relevant to both individual and collective identity as it challenges the notion of selfhood and identity. Through offering a unique perspective on the nature of the self and its interconnectedness.

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[55] Majjhima Nikaya 22 (The Simile of the Snake) in the Pali Canon. Buddhaghosa was an influential Theravada commentator, and he elaborated on the concept of 'no self' in his Visuddhimagga (The Path of Purification). Reference: Buddhaghosa. (1999). "The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)

[56] "The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way (Mulamadhyamakakarika)." Oxford University Press.

[57] "The Tathagatagarbha Sutra" and "The Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana" (by Asvaghosha).

[58] The Zen Teachings of Dogen." Shambhala.

Bhikkhu Bodhi explains how the concept of ‘no-self’ challenges the idea of an enduring, independent self, encouraging individuals to examine their attachments, their ego and self-identifications. Through accepting the concept of ‘no-self’ Buddhists should be able to let go of attachments and alleviate suffering[59].

The Dalai Lama goes on to explain how understanding the concept of ‘no-self’ can help individuals reduce suffering by recognizing the impermanence of self-identity and the stress caused by clinging to a fixed self. Once again through accepting the concept of no permanent self, this will alleviate personal sufferings.

Tiht Nhat Hanh explains how anatta encourages better practices of empathy by highlighting the interconnectedness of all beings, which can lead to greater compassion and therefore better ethical behaviour which should encourage Buddhists to live in a more eco friendly manner. Reference: Nhat Hanh, T. (2010). The World We Have: A Buddhist Approach to Peace and Ecology. Parallax Press.

Batchelor explains how embracing Anatta can facilitate personal growth and transformation through allowing individuals to let go of rigid self-definitions and be open to change which could lead Buddhists to treating the earth and its resources with more compassion[60].

Next, we will study the concept of ‘no-self’ and collective identity. Firstly, the concept of no self emphasises the idea of an interconnectedness amongst all beings, which has implications for collective identity by promoting a sense of unity among individuals and communities. Through seeing the links between all beings and acting in a better ethical manner more Buddhists would be able to follow an eco-friendly way of life[61]. Through understanding ‘no-self’ can lead to a better social harmony by reducing divisive notions of group identity and fostering inclusivity. This recognition of Anatta can help mitigate conflicts rooted in identity by emphasising the fluidity and interconnectedness of identity constructs.

Finally, R M Gethin argue that the concept of ‘no self’ helps provide a better basis for cultivating global ethics that transcend narrow identity boundaries, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for the well-being of all beings[62].

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[59] Bodhi, Bhikkhu. Buddhas Teaching on Social and Communal Harmony. Wisdom Publications,u.s., 2016.

[60] Batchelor, Stephen. *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist*. Spiegel & Grau Trade Paperbacks, 2011.

[61] Loy, D. R. “The Religion of the Market.” Journal of the American Academy of Religion, vol. 32, no. 1, 1997, pp. 49–62.

[62] Gethin, Rupert. *Foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

In conclusion, the concept of ‘no-self’ is proven to be highly relevant to both individual and collective identity, offering insights into the nature of the self, interconnectedness, and the potential for personal and societal transformation. Buddhist teachings and scholarly works emphasise how understanding Anatta can lead to greater empathy, compassion, and ethical behaviour at both the individual and collective levels, contributing to a more harmonious and interconnected world. A more harmonious and interconnected world would strengthen the argument for Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion.

## Chapter Six: Anatta and Environmental Ethics

This chapter focuses on the exploration of the concept of Anatta and how it can contribute to eco-friendly attitudes. This chapter will argue that the absence of a fixed self can lead to reduced egoism and materialism. It will also analyse how Anatta fosters a sense of interconnectedness with nature.

The final part of this chapter will explore how 'no self' is linked to ethical behaviour, especially in relation to nature and the environment. The concept of 'no self' (anatta), defined in the introduction, in Buddhism is closely linked to ethical behaviour, especially with reference to nature and the environment. Understanding 'no self' plays a significant role in fostering a sense of interconnectedness, compassion, and responsible stewardship of the natural world. Firstly with regards to interconnectedness and compassion, as the concept of 'no self' challenges the notion of a fixed, separate self and puts emphasis on the interconnectedness of all. When individuals realise that there is no inherently existing self, it becomes apparent that they are part of a vast web of life, including the natural world. This recognition of interconnectedness fosters a sense of compassion for all beings, including the environment[63].

Batchelor argues that the absence of a fixed self implies that individuals are not isolated from but are intimately connected to all that exists. In this context, ethical behaviour happens naturally because actions that harm others or the environment are seen as harming oneself. Batchelor also argues that this concept implores a "treat others as you would like to be treated." approach. If this is true then it would strengthen the argument of Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion[64].

Simillar to the concept of ‘treat others how you wish to be treated’ Rahula outlines how the concept of 'no self' aligns with the principle of non-harming (ahimsa) in Buddhism. When one accepts the concept that there is no inherent self to protect or preserve at the expense of others or the environment, the ethical implications become clearer. Ahimsa extends to all sentient beings and the

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[63] Dalai Lama, and Desmond Tutu. The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World. Avery, an Imprint of Penguin Random House, 2016.

[64] Batchelor, Stephen. *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist*. Spiegel & Grau Trade Paperbacks, 2011.

natural world, guiding ethical behaviour of non-violence and care which would extend in a good eco-friendly narrative[65]. Kaza and Kraft argue that acknowledging 'no self' implies that individuals do not have an automatic entitlement to exploit or harm the environment for personal gain. Instead, they are stewards of the Earth, responsible for its well-being. This perspective encourages responsible and sustainable practices in how humans interact with the natural world and thus directly links to an eco-friendly worldview[66].

A movement closely linked with environmental activism from a Buddhist point of view is that of Engaged Buddhism. This movement within Buddhism, emphasises the active engagement of Buddhists in social and environmental issues. The understanding of 'no self' is integral to this, as it encourages followers to transcend self-centred concerns and act for the benefit of all beings and the Earth. Through acting in a way that will benefit the earth this will help shape an eco-friendly religion that takes care of the things encompassing it.

In conclusion, the concept of 'no self' in Buddhism is intricately linked to ethical behaviour in relation to nature and the environment. It promotes a sense of interconnectedness, compassion, ethical responsibility, and responsible stewardship of the natural world. By recognizing the absence of a fixed and separate self, individuals are encouraged to act in ways that benefit not only themselves but also the entire ecosystem of which they are an integral part.

The concept of ‘no-self’ challenges the egocentric attachment to a fixed, unchanging self. Egoism, driven by the belief in a separate and enduring self, often leads to behaviours that prioritise individual desires over the well-being of others and the environment. Bodhi argues that by recognizing the impermanent and interdependent nature of the self, the concept of ‘no-self’ encourages individuals to act with greater compassion and kindness towards all living beings[67].

Materialism is often associated with the relentless pursuit of possessions and consumption, which goes against many core Buddhist beliefs. The concept of ‘no-self’ challenges materialism by questioning the notion of self as a consumer that seeks material wealth. When individuals recognize the impermanence of the self and the transitory nature of material possessions, they are less likely to engage in excessive consumerism and resource exploitation. D R Loy outlines how materialism and over consumption are harmful to the environment and therefore are not conducive to an eco-friendly

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[65] Rahula, Walpola. *What the Buddha Taught*. Grove Atlantic, 1969.

[66] Kaza, Stephanie, and Kenneth Kraft. Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism. Shambhala Publications, 2000.

[67] Bodhi, Bhikkhu. Buddhas Teaching on Social and Communal Harmony. Wisdom Publications,u.s., 2016.

way of life. Through letting go of attachment to material possessions Buddhists are more free to practise with compassion and kindness and a better eco-friendly point of view[68].
The final section of this chapter will emphasise something already discussed and that is the concept of fostering a sense of interconnectedness with nature. This is because the concept of 'no-self' as outlined by Tich Nhat Hanh is a closely related to the doctrine of Dependent Origination (Paticcasamuppada), which explains the interdependent nature of all phenomena. By recognizing that everything is interconnected and that the well-being of individuals is linked to the well-being of the environment, Anatta fosters a sense of ecological interconnectedness. This recognition can lead to more responsible and sustainable interactions with nature. This coincides with the arguments outlined by Bodhi[69].

The concept of 'no-self' overtakes the dualistic view that separates the self from the natural world. When the notion of a separate, enduring self is taken apart, individuals may come to see themselves as integral parts of the ecosystem rather than separate entities dominating nature. This perception encourages a greater sense of responsibility and care for the environment and therefore making a more eco-friendly way of living[70].

Therefore to conclude, this chapter has outlined how the concept of 'no self' challenges the egocentric attachments, materialism, and dualistic thinking that can contribute to environmental degradation. By recognizing the absence of a fixed self and embracing the interconnectedness of all life, 'no-self' provides a profound philosophical foundation for eco-friendly attitudes and behaviours. In the absence of rigid self-identifications and ego-driven desires, individuals are more likely to act with compassion, reduce their ecological footprint, and develop a sense of ethical responsibility towards the environment. The teachings of 'no-self', when applied to environmental ethics, offer valuable insights for addressing contemporary ecological challenges and can also lead to a more eco-friendly way of life.

## Chapter 6: Eco-Friendliness and the Concept of 'No Self':

The concept of 'no self' (anatta) in Buddhism emphasises the interconnectedness of all living things, including the self. This belief serves as a profound basis for promoting a sense of responsibility for the environment. This chapter will explore how 'no self' emphasises interconnectedness and how this interconnectedness can inspire an eco-friendly way of living thus strengthening the argument of Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion.

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[68] Loy, David. Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution. Wisdom Publications, 2008.

[69] Hanh, Thich Nhat. The World We Have: A Buddhist Approach to Peace and Ecology. Parallax Press, 2013.

[70] Batchelor, Stephen. *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist*. Spiegel & Grau Trade Paperbacks, 2011.

As previously stated, the concept of ‘no self' challenges the idea of a fixed, independent self. Instead, it teaches that the self is a constantly changing and interdependent process. The self arises in dependence on various factors, and it is not separate from the world around it.Reference: Majjhima Nikaya 22 (The Simile of the Snake) in the Pali Canon. The concept of 'no self' (anatta) plays a key role in shaping the environmental ethics and practices of these Buddhist communities. First and foremost is interconnectedness and compassion. The concept of 'no self' emphasises the interconnectedness of all life forms. This interconnectedness emphasises compassion and a sense of responsibility towards the environment. In both Plum Village and the Tzu Chi Foundation, the recognition of the impermanence of the self contributes to a deep-seated compassion for all living beings, including the Earth itself. Therefore, emphasising Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion. The doctrine of dependent origination (paticcasamuppada) further explains this interconnectedness through explaining how all living things exist dependently on multiple causes and conditions, thus highlighting the interdependence of everything in the universe. Reference: Bodhi, B. (2000). "The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya." Wisdom Publications.

Secondly, the absence of a fixed, permanent, unchanging self challenges ego-driven desires and consumerism. In these Buddhist communities, members are motivated by 'no self' to lead simpler, more sustainable lives. The emphasis on this concept encourages them to reduce their carbon footprint and minimise harm to the environment. This possible way for living with emphasis on non-harming and living sustainable strengthens the argument that Buddhism is an eco-friendly religion as it emphasises better choices through teaching some key concepts discussed previously.

Recognising that everything is interconnected through the concept of ‘no self’ can also lead to promoting responsibility for the environment. This can be done in several ways, firstly through encouraging better ethical responsibility. When one understands that there is no separate, permanent self, ethical actions that avoid harm to the environment become a natural expression of interconnectedness. Harming the environment is equal to harming oneself and all other sentient beings. Rahula, W. (2007). "What the Buddha Taught." Grove Press.

Secondly is compassion for all beings as interconnectedness fosters compassion for all, including non-human life forms and the environment. This compassion encourages individuals to consider the well-being of the natural world in their actions. Dalai Lama & Tutu, D. (2016). "The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World." Avery.

It also taught that the realisation of interconnectedness leads to a better implementation of stewardship and sustainable living. This is due to the belief that if an individual understands that their actions have consequences for the entire ecosystem that they would take steps to live sustainably and protect the Earth. Kaza, S., & Kraft, K. (2000). "Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism."

Shambhala.

Finally, the concept of interconnectedness is key to the Engaged Buddhism movement as it encourages Buddhists to actively engage in social and environmental issues. Engaged Buddhists view their actions as integral to the well-being of all beings and the Earth. King, S. B. (1999). "Being Benevolence: The Social Ethics of Engaged Buddhism." University of Hawaii Press.

In summary, the concept of 'no self' in Buddhism puts great emphasis on interconnectedness and the concept of no separate, permanent self. This realisation of interconnectedness serves as a foundation for promoting responsibility for the environment. It encourages ethical behaviour, compassion for all beings, and a sense of stewardship and engagement with environmental issues, reflecting a deep understanding of the interdependence of all life forms and the natural world.

The next part of this chapter will study how the concept of ‘no-self’ links with the concepts of compassion and non-harming. It is argued that the concept of 'no self' in Buddhism is intimately connected to compassion and non-harming (ahimsa) towards all living beings, including the environment. This link is fundamental to Buddhist ethics and environmental stewardship. Here, we'll explore how 'no self' is linked to compassion and non-harming, along with examples of eco-friendly practices grounded in these principles. 'No self' teaches that the self is not a fixed, independent entity but a constantly changing and interdependent process. Through accepting this, the Dalai Lama believes that individuals are more likely to extend compassion to all living beings because they understand that they share the same interconnected web of existence. Reference: Dalai Lama & Tutu, D. (2016). "The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World." Avery.

This argument by the Dalai Lama is strengthened by scholars such as Rahula who sees that the absence of a permanent, separate self reduces self-centeredness and ego. Therefore, making it easier to empathise with the suffering of others, whether they are human or non-human beings. Reference: Rahula, W. (2007). "What the Buddha Taught." Grove Press.

In addition to this, the concept of ‘no self' supports the principle of non-harming (ahimsa) because it implies that harming others is akin to harming oneself. Mahatma Gandhi was one of the most well-known advocates of Ahimsa. Gandhi incorporated these principles into his philosophy of nonviolent resistance. His work, including writings like "Hind Swaraj," highlights the connection between non-violence, ethics, and the environment. This links to the idea that the absence of a fixed self also fosters a sense of responsibility for one's actions. If an individual understands that their choices impact the interconnected web of life they should then strive to act with kindness. Reference: Batchelor, S. (2010). "Confession of a Buddhist Atheist." Spiegel & Grau.

Many of Buddhism's eco-friendly practices stem from a belief in compassion and non-harming such as vegetarianism/veganism. Many Buddhists choose vegetarian or vegan diets to reduce harm to animals and the environment. They see this choice as an expression of compassion and non-harming. Reference: Macy, J., & Brown, M. Y. (1998). "Coming Back to Life: The Updated Guide to the Work that Reconnects." New Society Publishers.

In addition to this they try to practise mindful consumption and sustainable living. These eco-friendly practices of course contribute to Buddhism being classes as an eco-friendly religion. More details are provided on both practices in previous chapters to avoid repetition.

In summary, the concept 'no self' in Buddhism is intrinsically connected to compassion and non-harming as outlined by the scholars mentioned. This connection inspires eco-friendly practices such as vegetarianism, mindful consumption, sustainable living, and engagement in environmental activism. These practices in turn reflect a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of all life forms and the environment, motivating individuals to act with compassion and minimise harm to the planet. This supports the argument that Buddhism is an eco-friendly religion and the concept of ‘no-self’ aids that ethics in a positive way.

In the Theravada tradition, 'no self' is interpreted as the absence of a permanent, unchanging self. The emphasis is on the individual's journey towards enlightenment (nirvana) by understanding the transient and conditioned nature of the self. It also acknowledges the interconnectedness of all life forms, however, the main focus is more on personal liberation from suffering through ethical conduct and meditation.

In the Zen Buddhist tradition, we learn that the concept of ‘'no self' is explored through direct experiential realisation, often discovered by meditation (zazen). Zen teachings stress the interconnectedness of all living beings, not just humans. The concept of 'no self' is closely tied to the idea that the individual self is not separate from the world but a part of it.

Though both Theravada and Zen traditions value the concept of ‘no-self’ the approach to it does vary. Theravada Buddhism places emphasis on individual liberation through insight into 'no self,' while Zen Buddhism focuses on direct experiential realisation of 'no self' and interconnectedness as a path to awakening. Though their approach varies, both traditions recognise the significance of interconnectedness of all life forms and emphasise compassion and non-harming as integral to their eco-friendly efforts.

## Chapter 7: Case Studies and Comparative Analysis

Having looked at the origins of the conception of no-self within different Buddhist communities and also analysing how environmental philosophy links with Buddhism, this fourth chapter will focus on

how the two come together. Through using case studies this chapter hopes to show how two different Buddhist communities/institutions integrate environmentally friendly practices into their teachings. One community focuses on the conception of ‘no-self’ whilst the other focuses less on this concept. Through studying both variations of focus this chapter aims to establish how much of an impact the concept of ‘no-self’ has on Buddhist eco-friendly teaching and living.

**Case Study 1: Plum Village**

One notable Buddhist community known for its eco-friendly initiatives is the Plum Village Community, founded by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. This first case study uses the concept of ‘no-self’ as an integral part of its set up. This establishment is an internationally renowned Buddhist mindfulness. Its origins and development are rooted in the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh. Some of these teachings include promotion of engaged Buddhism and mindfulness practices.

In order to understand some of the teachings that helped found Plum Village it is important to discuss some context. Thich Nhat Hanh first emerged as a prominent peace activist and a believer of nonviolent resistance during the Vietnam War. His beliefs lead to the creation of his teachings on mindfulness, compassion, and nonviolence. In the 1980s Plum Village was established as a monastic community where monks, nuns, and lay practitioners could live together, following a disciplined but engaged way of life rooted in mindfulness. Engaged Buddhism, as taught by Thich Nhat Hanh and practised at Plum Village, emphasises the application of Buddhist principles to address social and environmental issues. It encourages active engagement in creating positive change in the world. References: Thich Nhat Hanh (1996). "The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation." Beacon Press. This book introduces the concept of mindfulness and its application in daily life. / Thich Nhat Hanh (2013). "The World We Have: A Buddhist Approach to Peace and Ecology." Parallax Press. Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings on engaged Buddhism and environmental ethics are discussed in this book.

The next thing to evaluate are the eco-friendly practices and policies at Plum Village. First and foremost Plum Village practises Sustainable Living. This can include things such as organic farming, eco-friendly construction, and energy efficiency. In addition to this it is reported that they have adopted eco-friendly technologies such as solar panels and wastewater treatment systems to minimise their carbon footprint. Reference: Hanh, T. N. (2013). "The World We Have: A Buddhist Approach to Peace and Ecology." Parallax Press. In addition to sustainable living, at Plum Village they also practise living in a simple way. Through practising simplicity Buddhists are able to reflect on the attachments we form on material possessions and over consumption which are fueled by the idea of a separate and permanent self. By ensuring they embrace simplicity members can reduce attachment and ensure they live in accordance to 'no self.' Reference: Thich Nhat Hanh (1998). "The Long Road Turns to Joy: A Guide to Walking Meditation." Parallax Press.

Secondly is mindful consumption, where the community emphasises the importance of being aware of what they consume and its environmental impact. This includes reducing waste, conserving resources, and making conscious choices about food and products.

In addition to this Plum Village communities are often set in more rural areas in order for members to actively practise forest conservation. Members recognize the interconnectedness of all life forms and as a result of this they work to protect the ecosystems in which they are situated. Reference: Nhat Hanh, T. (2007). "The Mindfulness Survival Kit: Five Essential Practices." Parallax Press.

Members of Plum Village are encouraged to complete work that involves actively addressing social and environmental issues. Through completing this work, members believe that they are expressing their understanding of 'no self,' as they work to alleviate suffering and promote positive change in the world. Reference: Thich Nhat Hanh (1992). "Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life." Bantam.

In Plum Village they place a strong emphasis on recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings and phenomena. Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings emphasise the concept of 'interbeing,' which strengthens the idea that nothing exists in isolation. This teaching emphasises the essence of 'no self,' as it teaches that there is no separate, permanent self but instead there is an interconnected web of existence. Reference: Thich Nhat Hanh (1998). "The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching: Transforming Suffering into Peace, Joy, and Liberation." Broadway Books. According to Tich Nicht Than, through understanding this Buddhists gain a sense of responsibility and compassion for the environment. Reference: Nhat Hanh, T. (2010). "The Art of Communicating." HarperOne.

Another key teaching that includes the concept of ‘no-self’ is compassion and non-harming (ahisma). Due to the belief in the absence of a permanent self members of Plum Village view the absence of a separate self as a basis for treating all beings, including the environment, with kindness and care. This is the foundation to their eco-friendly practices as it recognizes the interconnectedness in all living beings. Reference: Nhat Hanh, T. (1998). "The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching: Transforming Suffering into Peace, Joy, and Liberation." Broadway Books. 3. cognizing their own interconnectedness with all living beings. // Thich Nhat Hanh (2010). "The Art of Communicating." HarperOne.

According to Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings, in order to be completely mindful one must be fully present in each moment. The renowned mindfulness practices allow members to practise this skill where they learn to let go of the ego and the illusion of a fixed self. This allows members to directly experience the impermanent and interdependent nature of reality, aligning with the teachings of 'no self.' Reference: Thich Nhat Hanh (1975). "The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation." Beacon Press.

Similarly to mindful practice, Plum Village members also practise mindful awareness. This is another central teaching to the community and it is taught that through achieving this level of awareness it can be extended to an individuals relationship with the environment and foster an appreciation for the natural world and a commitment to its well-being. Reference: Nhat Hanh, T. (1996). "The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation." Beacon Press.

In summary, the Plum Village Community is known for its eco-friendly initiatives, which are deeply rooted in the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh and the principles of 'no self,' interconnectedness, compassion, and non-harming. Their practices and policies reflect a commitment to environmental sustainability and mindfulness, demonstrating how Buddhist ethics and the concept of 'no self' can be integrated into practical eco-friendly living. Therefore to conclude, through this first Case Study we learn that Plum Village is an excellent example of practising 'no self' within a Buddhist context. This is a result of Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings and the community's mindfulness practices, emphasis on interconnectedness, compassion, non-harming, engaged Buddhism, and sustainable living. These core beliefs all align with the core principles of 'no self' and their practical application shows how ‘no self’ can be integral to the day to day life of Buddhists. Plum Village strengthens the argument that no-self is an integral part of eco-friendliness in Buddhism.

Case Study 2: The Tzu Chi Foundation

As previously stated, eco-friendly efforts and the perception and practice of 'no self' can vary among different Buddhist communities. While the core principles of Buddhism, for example interconnectedness, compassion, and non-harming, are all shared, the interpretation and application of these principles can vary among different traditions. This second case study aims to evaluate the differences and similarities in eco-friendly efforts and the perception and practice of 'no self' in a second community that does not hold the conception of ‘no-self’ as the centre of their practices. As evidenced in this dissertation the concept of 'no self' is a fundamental aspect of Buddhist philosophy. However, there are Buddhist communities that may not emphasise 'no self'. This doesn’t mean that they don’t engage in eco-friendly practices or environmental stewardship, it is simply done from a different perspective. As this dissertation is focused on no-self and Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion, this case study acts as an argument against needing no-self to create that eco-friendly narrative. For this second case study we will examine the Tzu Chi Foundation, which is rooted in the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism and focuses on humanitarian and environmental initiatives.

For context The Tzu Chi Foundation was founded by Dharma Master Cheng Yen in Taiwan in 1966 and is a Buddhist humanitarian and charitable organisation. Despite being based on Mahayana teachings, it does not emphasise philosophical concepts such as 'no self.' Instead, it focuses on compassionate action and social engagement. One way the organisation achieves this is through humanitarian work. The Tzu Chi Foundation is renowned for its humanitarian work, for example, disaster relief, medical missions, education, and poverty support. Tzu Chi has volunteers based around

the globe. The community also has a range of environmental initiatives in order to practice good stewardship. Reference: Tzu Chi Foundation (2021). "Environmental Protection." Tzu Chi Foundation Official Website.

Tzi Chi as a community places strong emphasis on environmental initiatives. For example, it operates recycling centres, promotes eco-friendly practices, and engages in tree planting and environmental education. The foundation's recycling efforts have received global recognition for their positive impact on the environment. Though this practice isn't directly linked to the concept of no-self, its practices do indeed show a positive eco-friendly approach. Reference: Tzu Chi Foundation (2021). "Environmental Protection." Tzu Chi Foundation Official Website.

Similarly to Plum Village, mindfulness and compassion are also key themes in the practices of this community. Contrastingly to Plum Village 'no self' is not a central theme in Tzu Chi's teachings, however, mindfulness and compassion remain integral to its practices. In this community all volunteers are encouraged to practise  compassion mindfulness as through engaging in charitable and environmental activities. This socially aware way of life places an emphasis on helping others and the environment. Whilst it is not linked to the concept of 'no-self' we do see a clear eco-friendly way of life. Reference: Tzu Chi Foundation (2012). "Jing Si Aphorisms." Tzu Chi Foundation.

Although 'no self' is not explicitly taught in this community, the foundation's compassionate approach acknowledges the interconnectedness of all beings and the environment. It is taught that compassion extends to all living beings, reflecting a deep sense of shared existence and interconnectedness. One way Tzu Chi practises compassion and interconnectedness to all living beings and not just humans is through the promotion of vegetarianism as a means of reducing harm to animals and the environment. This practice aligns with Buddhist principles of compassion and non-harming and reflects a commitment to ethical living. Reference: Tzu Chi Foundation (2012). "Eco-Friendly Vegetarianism." Tzu Chi Foundation.

In summary, the Tzu Chi Foundation's work is rooted in Buddhist values of compassion, mindfulness, and ethical living, although it does not explicitly emphasise the concept of 'no self.' While philosophical aspects of Buddhism may not be central to their mission, the organisation's practices are aligned with Buddhist principles and reflect a commitment to reducing suffering, promoting well-being, and fostering a compassionate and environmentally sustainable world. Furthermore, the case studies of Plum Village and the Tzu Chi Foundation exemplify how 'no self' influences the environmental ethics and practices of specific Buddhist communities. They illustrate how the recognition of interconnectedness, compassion, and non-harming, central to 'no self,' contributes to eco-friendly initiatives and a commitment to environmental sustainability within these communities.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion and Discussion

**Summary of Findings:**

Furthermore, to summarise the key findings of this research project we can see that though there are some challenges and it isn't undisputed, on the whole, Buddhism can be considered an eco-friendly religion. Buddhism's compassionate and considerate way of life alongside the concept of 'no self' play a significant role in harbouring environmental awareness and ethics within the Buddhist tradition. Here, we will recap how Buddhism, with its emphasis on 'no self,' aligns with eco-friendliness.

Through teaching interconnectedness and non-harming Buddhism emphasises a kinder way of life which ensures the fair treatment of the earth and its resources[71]. In addition to this the concept of 'no-self' challenges the egocentric view of ethical responsibility. Through teaching that harming the environment is akin to harming any other living being, Buddhists are motivated to act with kindness and non-harming[72].

Some Buddhist communities and individuals take part in environmental activism and conservation efforts in order to express their Buddhist values and understanding of 'no self.' As previously stated, Engaged Buddhism encourages active involvement in addressing social and environmental issues[73]. Through sharing teachings and advocating on environmental issues this also supports the argument that Buddhism is an eco-friendly religion.

As seen in the case studies, many Buddhists often take up eco-friendly practices such as vegetarianism, mindful consumption, sustainable living, and the protection of sacred natural sites. These practices reflect their commitment to non-harming and respect for all life forms[74]. In addition to this, living in harmony with nature is another practice that is emphasised through the concept of 'no self,'. Though there are some disagreements with the older settings, modern Monastic communities often reside in natural settings and engage in practices that demonstrate a deep respect for the environment[75]. Through teaching a respect for the environment and encouraging a living in a considerate and compassionate way with nature once again Buddhist teaching are seen to align well

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[71] Rahula, Walpola. *What the Buddha Taught*. Grove Atlantic, 1969.

[72] Batchelor, Stephen. *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist*. Spiegel & Grau Trade Paperbacks, 2011.

[73] King, S B. Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds. Harvard University Press, 2000.

[74] Kaza, Stephanie, and Kenneth Kraft. Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism. Shambhala Publications, 2000.

[75] Gutschow, Kim. Being a Buddhist Nun: The Struggle for Enlightenment in the Himalayas. Harvard University Press, 2004.

with being an eco-friendly religion further strengthening the argument for this and overcoming the challenges,

In summary, Buddhism, with its emphasis on 'no self,' can be seen as an eco-friendly religion due to its teachings on interconnectedness, non-harming, ethical responsibility, and engagement in environmental activism. These principles and practices align with the promotion of a sustainable and compassionate relationship with the natural world, reflecting a deep understanding of the interdependence of all life forms and the environment.

**Discussion of strengths and limitations of study:**

One strength of this study is the amount of literature available to support the idea of Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion. I have been able to collect data from first and secondary sources in order to support my view. Though there has been some literature available, one limitation is the lack of literature to challenge the idea of Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion. Some data was unusable due to not being able to cite from credible sources whilst others showed a complete bias and were not of direct relevance to my area of research. The next subsection on this chapter will outline future research recommendations for what would be useful in this field of study as proven from my writing and research experiences.

**Future Research Recommendations**

While significant progress has been made concerning the relationship between Buddhism and eco-friendliness, several areas warrant further investigation:

**2.1. In-depth Case Studies**

Research from this dissertation shows that there is a calling for more in-depth case studies of Buddhist communities worldwide to examine how 'no self' and other Buddhist principles shape their eco-friendly initiatives and ethics. In addition to this, it would be beneficial to explore variations among different Buddhist traditions and geographical regions.

**2.2. Longitudinal Studies**

Analysing key teachings is a good indication for the possibility of Buddhism as an eco-friendly religion, however longitudinal studies tracking the impact of eco-friendly practices and teachings within Buddhist communities over extended periods can provide insights into the sustainability of these initiatives and their long-term effects on both the environment and the communities themselves.

**2.3. Cross-Religious Comparisons**

More comparative studies that analyse the eco-friendly practices and environmental ethics of various religious traditions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and others, can highlight shared values and lessons that transcend religious boundaries.

**2.4. Interdisciplinary Approaches**

Employ interdisciplinary approaches that integrate environmental science, sociology, psychology, and religious studies to gain a holistic understanding of the eco-friendliness of Buddhism and its broader implications[76].

**Recommendations for Promoting Eco-Friendliness**

This subsection offers practical recommendations for individuals, Buddhist communities, and policymakers interested in promoting eco-friendliness within Buddhism. Additionally, it highlights potential routes for future research in this important and developing field.

**1.1. Individual Practitioners**

As highlighted in this dissertation. Many Buddhist key concepts can easily be applied to an eco-friendly way of life. In order to do this an individual Buddhists could take several steps to promote eco-friendliness in their personal lives:

- Embrace mindfulness: Incorporate mindfulness practices into daily routines to foster a deeper connection with the environment and make more conscious choices which will have a positive impact on eco-friendliness.
- Reduce consumption: Follow the principles of simplicity and contentment by reducing materialistic desires which will lead to a more sustainable way of life.
- Emulate eco-friendly role models: Learn from eco-friendly Buddhist communities and leaders, such as Plum Village and the Tzu Chi Foundation, to implement similar practices where possible.

**1.2. Buddhist Communities**

Buddhist communities should consider the following recommendations to enhance their eco-friendliness:

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[76] Gottlieb, R S. "Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Nature and Culture: A Conversation." *Worldviews: Environment, Culture, Religion*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2009, pp. 6–24.

- Incorporate environmental education into spiritual practices. Through teaching on environmental ethics, ‘no self’ and interconnectedness Buddhists can learn more on how to be eco-friendly.
- Implement more sustainable practices within monastic and lay communities, including organic farming, waste reduction, and energy conservation. Monasteries should also be mindful of land used to build these establishments.
- Through collaborating with local communities in environmental initiatives and outreach programs that benefit both Buddhist communities and the surrounding environment.

**1.3. Policymakers and Interfaith Organizations**

Policymakers and interfaith organisations can play a crucial role in fostering eco-friendliness within Buddhism:

- Support sustainable initiatives, for example, offering incentives and resources to Buddhist communities and institutions that engage in eco-friendly practices.
- Facilitate interfaith dialogue: Promote discussions and collaboration between different religious groups in order to collaborate and share eco-friendly best practices and strategies.
- Environmental policy advocacy: protest and advocate for eco-friendly policies and values in order to promote environmental sustainability within the wider community.