

# **The Buddhist Attitude towards Water Consumption.**

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Every living being depends on air and food but water is taken to be more valuable than the above two resources. Though there is a vast quantity of water on the earth, about 90% of it is the ocean water. Although only a little amount of water is required for human consumption and other needs, water is, and has always been a rare resource.

Though man has to live adjusting himself according to his environment he has altered the environment according to his needs. This very fact seems to have created many problems, such as insufficient supply of pure water, pollution of water and competition among people to supply soft (mineral) water. In addition to these, man has lost the common water supply in natural ways. The tax collection for water has created some other problems in modern society. Today it has become a necessity to implement plans concerning the consumers' health, clean water supplies and low cost consuming methods. For human beings water is indispensable. The Buddha taught this more than two thousand and five hundred years ago. A person who likes to live a healthy life must consume clean water. We find references in the Buddhist literature to the importance of keeping the water clean.

In the ancient monasteries there were two kinds of water supply: drinking water (paniyam) and consuming water (Paribhojaneyodakam). The drinking water was always kept without being polluted. The Suttas mention that the drinking water (Paniyam) must be used only for drinking and washing mouth (Mukhavikkhalanattanceva pivanattanca). The water meant for consumption is used for day to day activities except for drinking. Every individual was supposed to use a water strainer to strain his or her drinking water. (Anujanami bhikkave parissavanam). If a person drinks water without straining, it would cause several diseases as water could be contaminated with harmful bacteria. It could also cause harm to insects living in the water. So the Buddha promulgated a rule for the monks to use a water strainer. (Yo pana Bhikkhu janam sappanakam udakam paribhunjeyya pacittiyam).

Buddhism has proposed a number of principles concerning the ethic of water consumption. Some injunctions relating to water consumption are intended to promote economizing of the use of water as a scarce resource. Others are intended to promote cleanliness and sanitation.