

DHARMA TEACHERS GATHERING June 2015

Sessions on Climate Change

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Questions to consider and things to reflect on:

- What is **wise action** in the face of climate change?
- What does the Dharma **uniquely** have to offer?
- Are we so focused on being 'happy' that we are not able to have the difficult conversations? (see the work of Joanna Macy <http://www.joannamacy.net/>)
- Is there some new expression or synthesis of Dharma and skillful action that needs to emerge?
- The history of exploitation of peoples around the world (e.g. slavery), and the degradation of people leads to an entrenched attitude that makes it OK to also degrade the environment. (Angel Kyodo Williams)

What the Dharma has to offer most powerfully:

...wisdom:

- The Dharma is all about *prajna jnana* – the **realization of wisdom**
- The **Four Noble Truths** – observation, cause, another way – truth-telling about suffering and not turning away from it
- The Dharma offers a **radical critique** of the notion of separate self.
- The Dharma is about the teaching of **conditionality and interconnectedness**. The teaching leads to understanding of no separate self, thus individuals are then able to understand and act according to universal connectedness.
- The Dharma teaches us how we can **train the mind-heart** , and develop our body and energy. There are the Lojong trainings towards unselfishness.
- The Dharma offers the **Bodhisattva ideal**, the compassionate spiritual altruist/activist whose practice is about one's own transformation & altruistic activity.
- The Dharma teaches **original goodness**.
- The Dharma helps us realize **qualities** of fearlessness, compassion, clear-seeing, equanimity, etc.

....in Dharma teaching contexts:

- Buddhist organizations help people transform personally. We can connect that personal path of **transformation** with social and global transformation.
- Dharma Centers can **address the 'wisdom deficit'** in our world.

- Buddhism offers tremendous skills in **adaptation to change**. These can help people be resilient to the changes already happening, and those to come. Practices help develop flexibility, resilience, responsiveness – all in contrast to reactivity.
- At a deeper level Buddhism can help us **understand change** process fundamentally.
- With the Dharma we can **hold the positive in our hearts** and emanate. We can develop equanimity, which forms a stable basis for the work that needs to be done.
- We can cultivate **compassion** – seeing in the ‘other’ our own interest as well.
- We can support people to make a personal **commitment** – we do it all the time in practice contexts – to learn more, to take action re. the environment. The concept of commitment is already part of what we do.
- We can learn how to see and practice **the Dharma in non-Buddhist sources**, such as Non-Violent Communication and science.

...and a bit more active:

- Buddhist organizations can help with much needed stopping and mitigation of carbon and methane emissions through individual and collective **education**, dharma talks, and bringing up the issues
- **Sangha building** is now a political act.
- We can make ‘**eco-vows**’. (explore what that means, what those might be)
- We can contextualize the teaching of **pratitya-samutpada, conditioned co-arising**, in relation to climate change.
- We can ‘**green**’ our **Center buildings** and facilities and encourage sangha members to do the same.
- We can cut through the addictive quality of **consumer-comfort-ism** through understanding that things pass away and through positive renunciation.
- We can **model and exemplify simplicity** in our Dharma centers (vs. luxury). Happiness is not dependent on material things.
- We can offer programs that encourage and develop **nature connection**.
- Through the Dharma and Mindfulness programs we can offer significant **tools** for anger management and emotional regulation.
- We can **teach loving kindness** to children (and their parents!).
- **Engage youth**.
- We can practice **peaceful witnessing** in violent places (all kinds of violence, including environmental).

Resources and links

<http://www.ecobuddhism.org/>

<http://globalbcn.org/> Buddhist Climate Action Network

<http://www.renewables100.org/>

<http://www.oneearthsangha.org/>

<http://www.blessedunrest.com/> book by Paul Hawken

https://www.ted.com/talks/matthieu_ricard_how_to_let_altruism_be_your_guide?language=en TED talk by matthieu ricard

<http://charterforcompassion.org/> compassionate community movement

<http://www.billmckibben.com/> Do the Math

<http://www.joannamacy.net/>

<http://www.davidloy.org/>