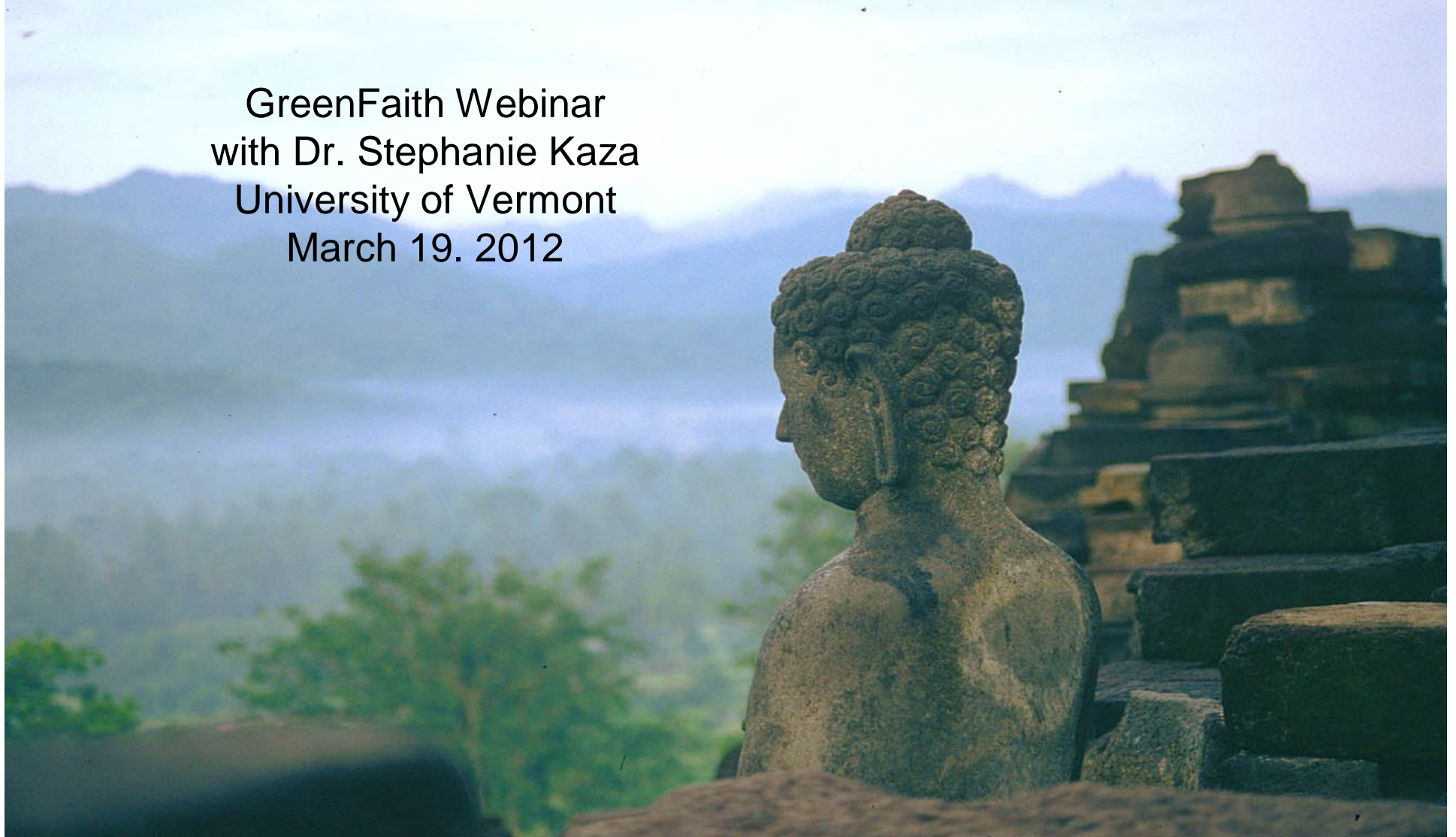
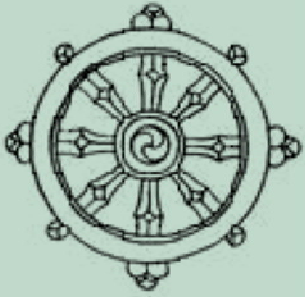


Buddhist Teachings and the Environment

GreenFaith Webinar
with Dr. Stephanie Kaza
University of Vermont
March 19, 2012





Introduction



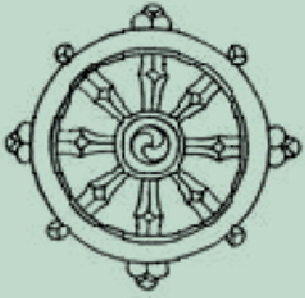
Stephanie Kaza is professor of Environmental Studies at University of Vermont and a scholar-practitioner of Zen Buddhism. Her books on Buddhist environmental thought include:

Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism (co-edited with Ken Kraft, 2000)

Hooked! Buddhist Writings on Greed, Desire, and the Urge to Consume (2005)

Mindfully Green: A Personal and Spiritual Guide to Whole Earth Thinking (2008)

“Once you take up the green practice path, you see that environmental caregiving is a lifelong task. We cannot do this work alone. We need the encouragement and inspiration of others to help us find our way.”
-- Stephanie Kaza



Introduction

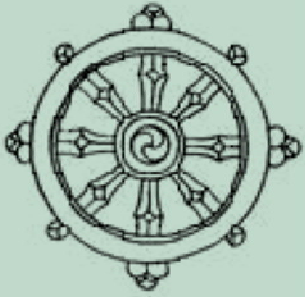
Offering of gratitude to my teachers:

- Robert Aitken Thich Nhat Hanh
- Joanna Macy Gary Snyder
- Sulak Sivaraksa Kobun Chino Ottogawa



“These mountains and rivers, the great Earth and its boundless oceans are continually manifesting the words of the ancient teachers, continually expressing the truth of the universe.”

-- John Daido Looi



Our Common Challenge

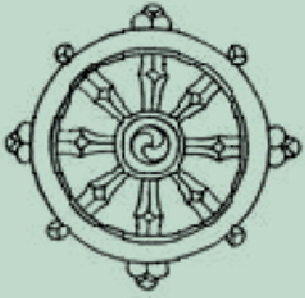
How shall we take up this work?

- Considering the riches of religious traditions
- Encouraging each other to raise concerns
- Working in dialogue across differences

Where to begin?

- Human population has reached 7 billion
- Climate-related disasters are at an all time high
- Japan's nuclear disaster is still unfolding
- Middle East oil politics are changing rapidly
- Occupy Wall Street protests highlight inequities
- U.S. Congress is mired in stalemates
- Global carbon emissions continue to rise





Our Common Challenge

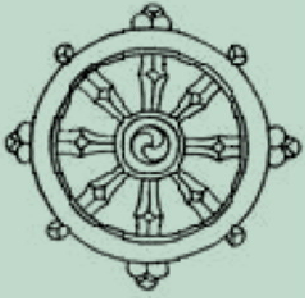
Rising levels of stuff deplete environmental resources.



- 75% of the Earth's biocapacity is used by China, India, Europe, Japan, United States.
- Americans make up 5% of the global population and use 25% of the earth's resources.

People everywhere struggle with the moral dilemmas of waste and consumption.





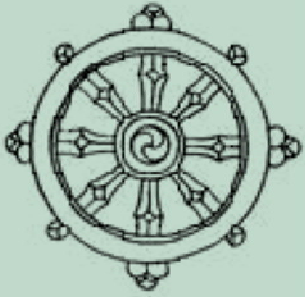
Our Common Challenge

Different views of nature cause deep conflict.

- Nature as resource for human use
- Nature as spiritual home
- Nature as set of ecosystem functions
- Nature as evolutionary legacy
- Nature as enemy to be conquered
- Nature as our collective unconscious
- Nature as property to be owned



People everywhere struggle over clashing values and their political impacts.



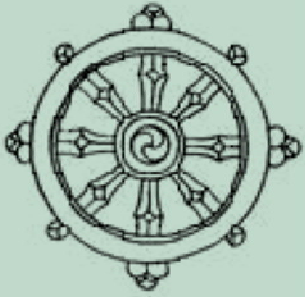
Our Common Challenge

The scope and scale of these challenges can be overwhelming.

- economic insecurity, unstable global markets
- sense of threat from multiple disasters and pervasive toxins
- excess stimulation, too much information, cyber overload
- difficult to share our fears and concerns
- debilitating emotional states in response to cumulative concern
→ helplessness, despair, fear, frustration, depression, discouragement

People everywhere struggle with uncertainty and rapid change.





Our Common Challenge

Much suffering

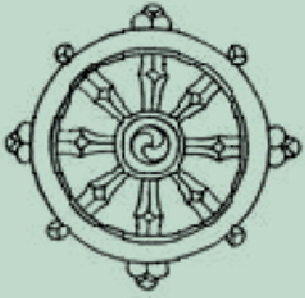
- Hard to grasp the full scale of human impact
- Global forces shaping future for all local systems
- Fear, hope, anxiety add to physical hardships
- Difficult to discuss and find appropriate action

A tangled web

- Economic, social, environmental systems intertwined
- Conflicting values, religions, governance structures
- Consequences of past choices are still unfolding



How can we find a way forward in the midst of so many challenges?



A Way Forward

Eight Transitions to Sustainability – a Way Forward

(From *Red Sky at Morning*, Gus Speth, 2004)

1) Stable or smaller world population

- Education for women, access to family planning options
- Increase family security and literacy

2) Elimination of mass poverty

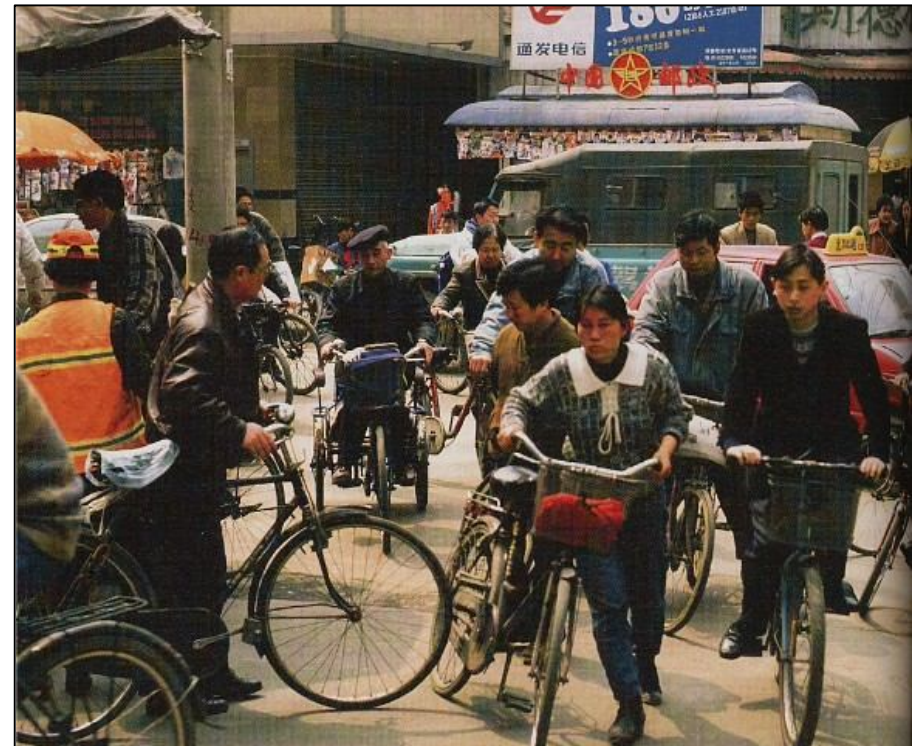
- Cooperative support from developed nations
- Stabilization of government structures

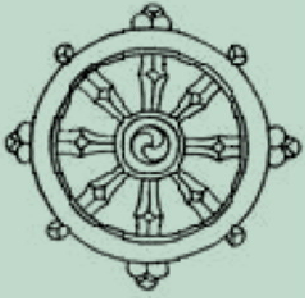
3) Environmentally benign technologies

- Cradle to cradle thinking
- Green building design
- Public transport (ex. BRT, bus rapid transit)

4) Environmentally full-cost pricing

- Include externalities
- Reform GDP measures
- Green taxes





A Way Forward

5) Sustainable consumption

- Product certification, green labeling
- Corporate accountability for production
- Safe chemicals in packaging
- Eat local, eat less meat

6) Green knowledge and learning

- Campus sustainability movement
- Environmental majors
- Green jobs training

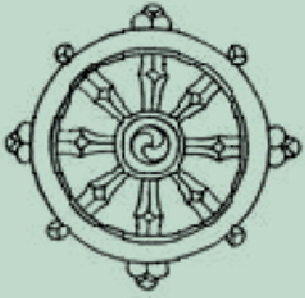
7) Global environmental governance & cooperation

- Work with China and India to reduce carbon emissions
- Meet new EU standards for toxics and e-waste

8) Transformation of consciousness

- **Valuing quality of life and well-being**
- **Seeking common ground for a paradigm shift**





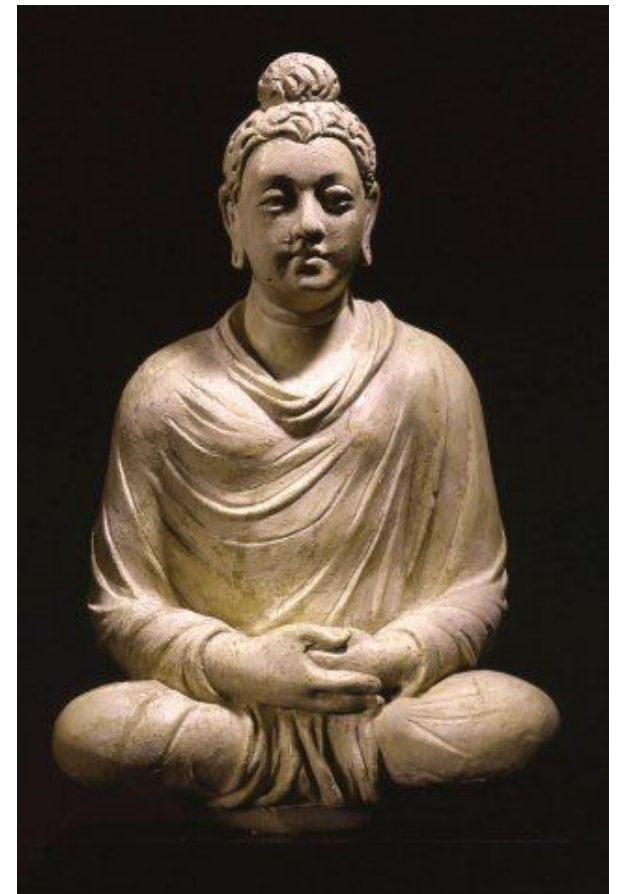
Role for Religion

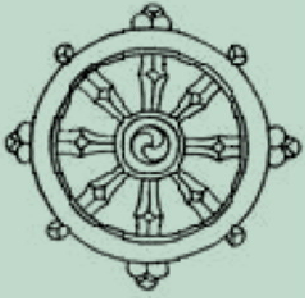
How can religion help meet this challenge?

Five capacities

(From Gary Gardner, *Inspiring Progress: Religions' Contributions to Sustainable Development*, 2006)

- 1) **Engage** members of faith-based groups
- 2) Moral authority
offer **ethical guidelines**, religious leadership
- 3) Provide meaning by shaping worldviews
consider **new paradigms** of well-being
- 4) Share physical resources
i.e. retreat centers, temple grounds, schools
- 5) **Build community** to support sustainability practices





Role for Buddhism

Where is Buddhism thriving today and contributing to moral conversations?

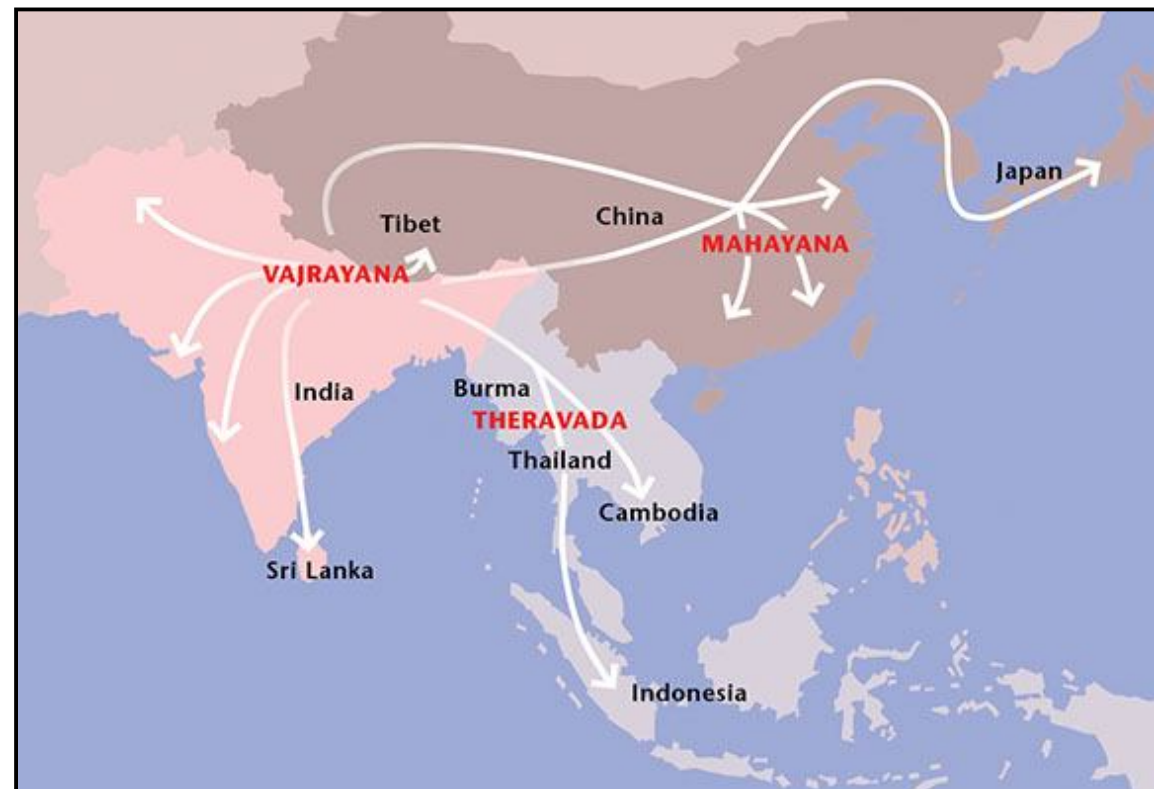
Originated in India, 500 B.C.

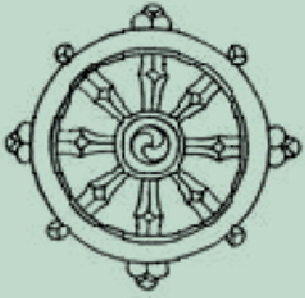
Spread through the East,
first to Sri Lanka and SE Asia,
then north to China, Tibet

Three major streams:

- 1) Theravada – SE Asia
- 2) Mahayana – China, Japan, Korea
- 3) Vajrayana -- Tibet

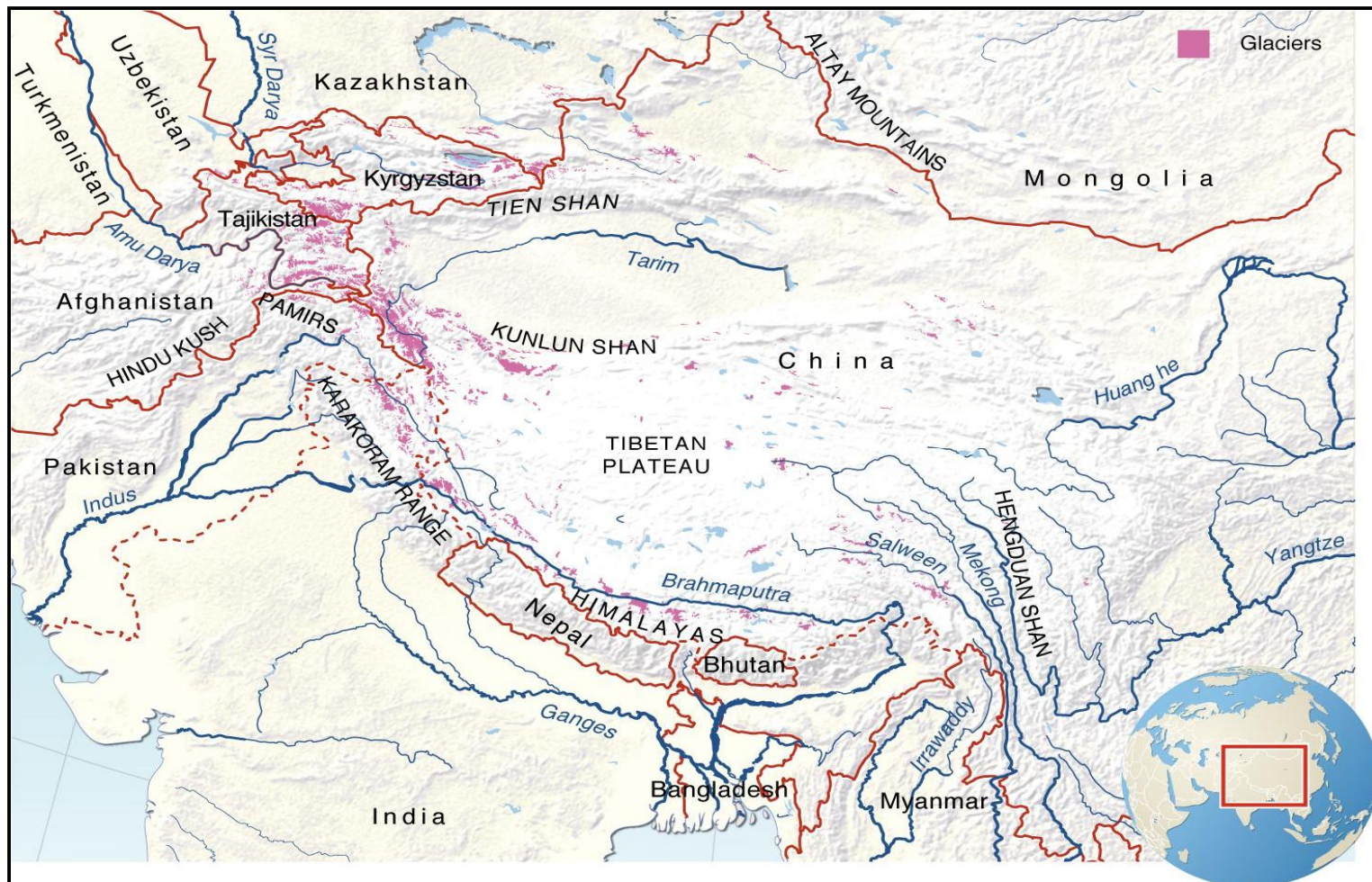
All forms have migrated west in
the 20th century.

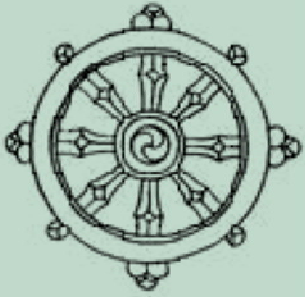




Role for Buddhism

Tibetan Plateau: glacial source of rivers for many Buddhist countries





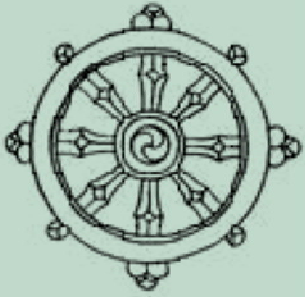
Role for Buddhism

Basic Buddhist teachings and practices common to all traditions

- 1) Moral guidelines based on non-harming
- 2) Central law of interdependence and causation
- 3) Belief in liberation from suffering through insight
- 4) Practices that strengthen intention and compassion

Traditions vary in emphasis on different texts, teachers, meditations, chants, rituals.





Role for Buddhism

What teachings can Buddhism offer on the environment?

1) Develop skillful means

- Cultivating mindfulness
- Non ego-based action
- Practicing equanimity

2) Follow ethical guidelines

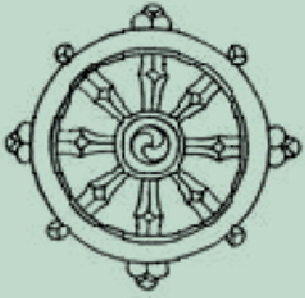
- Non-harming
- Practicing restraint
- Caring for other as self
- Taking the deep view

3) Take up new paradigms for well-being

- Relational thinking
- Practice path approach
- Seeking green wisdom

4) Build community for shared purpose





Engaging Skillful Means

I. Skillful Means

Upaya, in Sanskrit = using a range of appropriate techniques to relieve suffering or share teachings with different audiences and situations

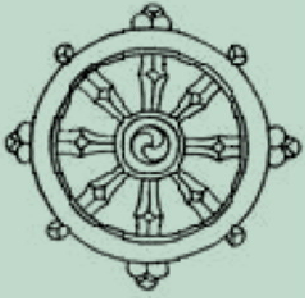
This is the heart of **compassionate response**, because it is based on what is needed and what can be received.

Setting one's intention to be skillful

Responding to the call

- What is needed? What can I actually do?
- What is effective action?
- What is meaningful?





Engaging Skillful Means

1) Cultivating mindfulness

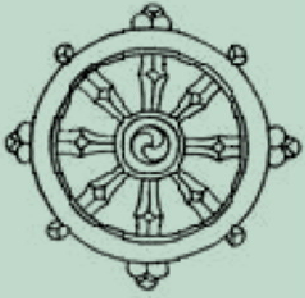
Medicine for the suffering of the world

- developing the capacity to be with each moment as it is
- mitigating chaos with calmness
- restoring the “natural inward measure”

“The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence.”
Nhat Hanh



Mindfulness builds capacity and calmness for approaching difficulty.



Engaging Skillful Means

→ Mindfulness in action

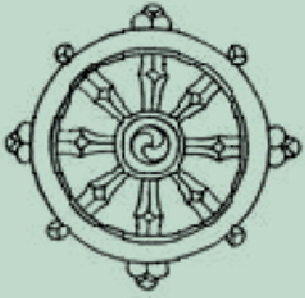
Examples:

- mindful eating (Jan Chozen Bays)
- mindful leadership training (Shambhala Institute)
- mindfulness-based stress reduction training
- mindfulness practice in the schools



“Mindfulness practice awakens appreciation of the miraculous beauty of our being.” -- Jon Kabat Zinn

Practicing awareness builds resilience in a world of challenges.



Engaging Skillful Means

2) Non-ego based action

Understanding interdependence of self and other

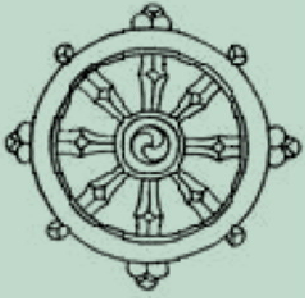
- becoming aware of triggers and personal needs
- observing the influence of ego and power
- refraining from polarizing around difference
- practicing self reflection as part of action

Selflessness in action

- Center for Whole Community diversity and conservation work
- mindful #Occupy (Buddhist Peace Fellowship)



Reducing self interest results in stronger shared outcomes.



Engaging Skillful Means

3) Practicing equanimity

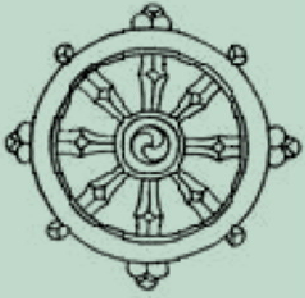
- being with the suffering of the world while still taking effective action
- developing the capacity to stay centered in changing conditions
- being prepared for environmental impacts on social support systems



“Because we all share this planet earth, we have to learn to live in harmony and peace with each other and with nature. This is not just a dream, but a necessity.”

– H.H. Dalai Lama

Stability and calmness increase the possibility for insight and kindness.



Ethical Guidelines

II. Living by an ethical compass

Choosing restraint based on awareness of others and commitment to social stability

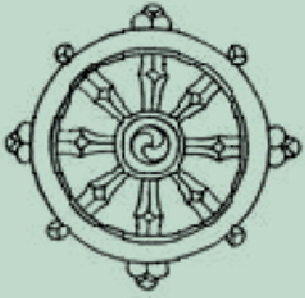
Rethinking priorities

- choosing where to invest time, energy, money, relationships
- Considering how to care for environment as self, self as environment
- examining abuse of all beings, human and other
- considering cultural conditioning that condones environmental harming

Investing time in regular self reflection to ask:

What is really important? What really matters?





Ethical Guidelines

1) Non-harming

Taking the Bodhisattva vow

- reduce harm by practicing kindness
- acting with restraint and awareness of others

Choosing contentment

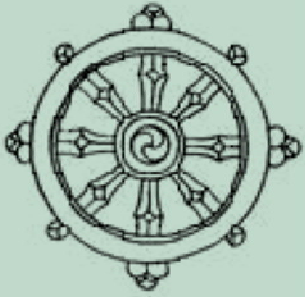
- support infrastructures of well-being
- the state of being not dissatisfied, the absence of craving
- recognize personal and social indicators of contentment

Examples

- food choices based on degree of harm
- mobility choices based on degree of harm
- parenting choices for a non-toxic household



Creating ecological, economic, ethical sustainability for the long term is the sum of these efforts.



Ethical Guidelines

2) Practicing restraint

Desire = grasping or craving after something, identifying with the craving, being “hooked” by addictive needs, focus is on short term gratification

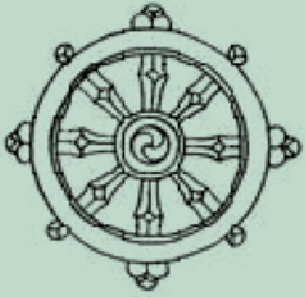
Three types of desire:

- Desire for more of something (greed)
- Desire for less of something (aversion)
- Desire for illusory options, fantasies (delusion)

Shenpa = “that sticky feeling” (Tibetan) that makes us insecure, uncomfortable, wanting to escape a world that’s always changing; the urge for relief, for comfort from food, alcohol, drugs, sugar, shopping, entertainment

Shenlok = refraining from acting on that urge, turn *shenpa* upside down, break open self-limiting patterns

Self awareness of desire and the practice of restraint can be personally and socially transformative, a foundation for ethical behavior.



Ethical Guidelines

3) Caring for other as self

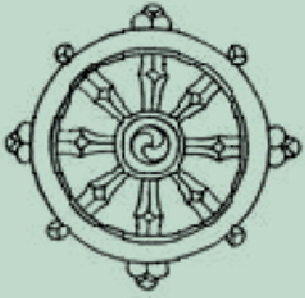
Buddhist precepts provide these primary guidelines:

- Not harming life
- Not taking what is not given
- Not participating in abusive relations
- Not speaking falsely
- Not using intoxicating substances or behaviors

All of these have environmental implications for personal and social behavior.

Ethical people create an ethical society; an ethical society creates ethical people.





Ethical Guidelines

4) Cultivating a Deep View

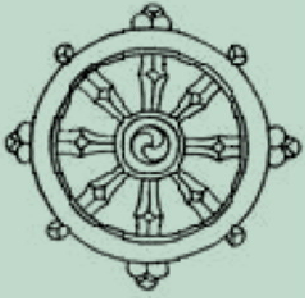
Observing time in order to practice a shift in perception

- the vast eons of time that created the earth and ocean, plants, and animals
in contrast with the very short period of human life
- understanding that the past is linked to the present
- a correction for short-term thinking

Ethics based on the long view of time and the human place in that long unfolding develops these capacities:

- patience
- perspective
- humility
- endurance
- serenity





New Paradigms for Well-being

III. Paradigms for well-being

Individual = good health, satisfying work, supportive relationships, and sense of internal control in your life

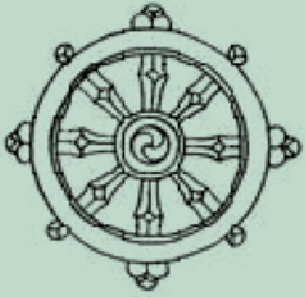
Social = safe and civil society, appropriate governance and market structures to support community well-being

Global = free from war, poverty, resource depletion; engaged in collaborative support for planetary well-being

Spiritual well-being

- right relationship with self and community
- right relationships with the natural world
- ethical clarity, capacity for restraint from harming
- tolerance, respect for other paths

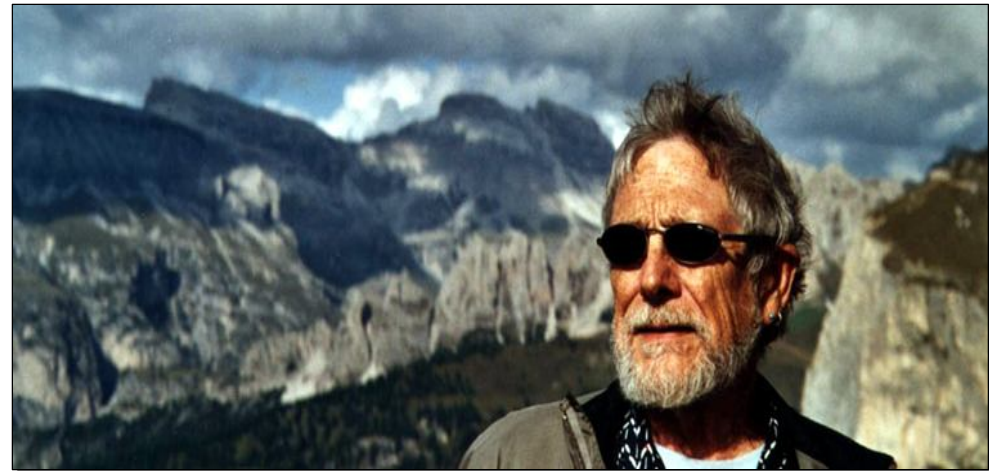




New Paradigms for Well-being

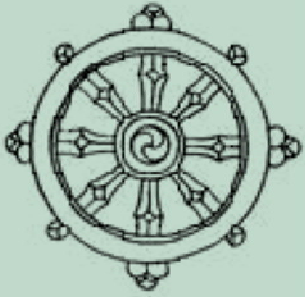
1) Practicing relational thinking

- Experiencing flux-balance,
the flowing ch'i of life force
- All beings relating to time and space
and to others around
them
- Perceiving from a systems
perspective
- Human life as relational, both socially
and ecologically



“The whole earth is a great tablet holding the multiple overlaid news and ancient traces of the swirl of forces. Each place is its own place, forever (eventually) wild. A place on earth is a mosaic within larger mosaics -- the land is all small places, all precise tiny realms replicating larger and smaller patterns.”

-- Gary Snyder



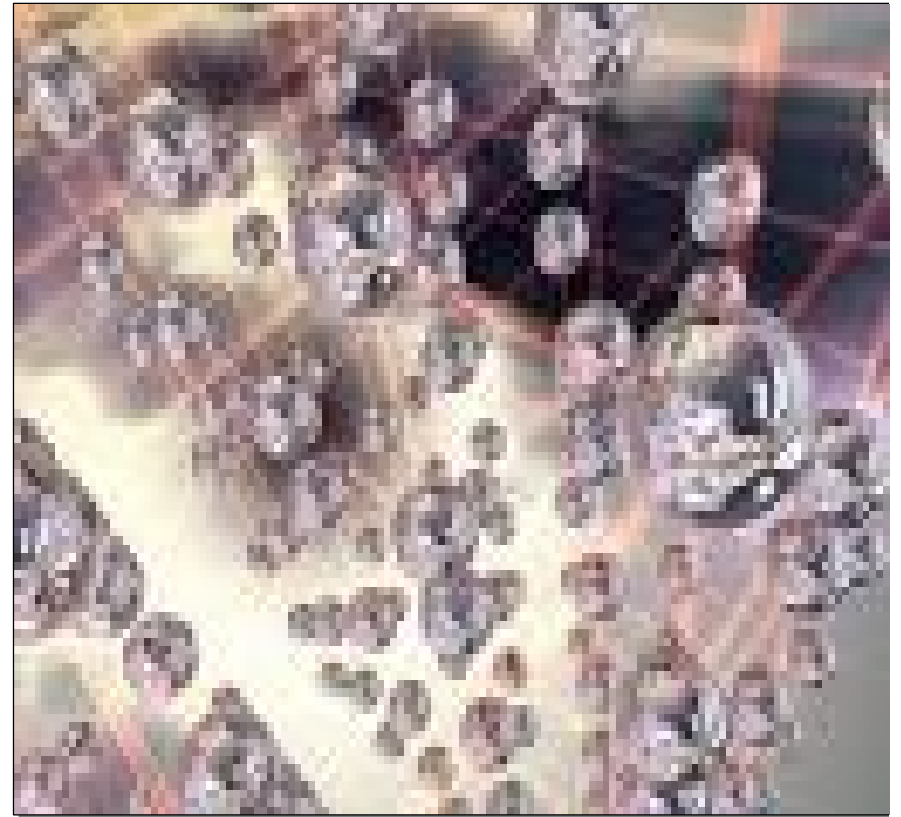
New Paradigms for Well-being

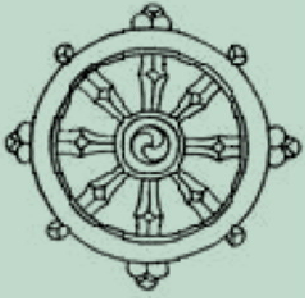
2) Understanding “self” more clearly

- Self as process rather than object
- Seeing ourselves in others, self-realization
- Ecological self, “interbeing”
- Self as agent in the web of life

“The most remarkable feature of this historical moment on Earth is not that we are on the way to destroying the world... It is that we are beginning to wake up, as from a millennia-long sleep, to a whole new relationship to our world, to ourselves and each other.”

-- Joanna Macy



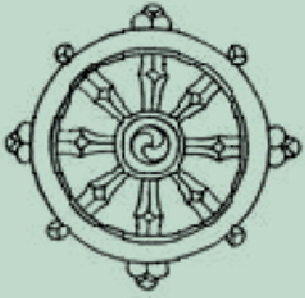


New Paradigms for Well-being

3) Taking a practice path approach

- Orienting toward well-being for all
- Starting where you are, going from there
- Reaffirming intention
- Practicing ethical guidelines with others
- Deepening from beginner to novice to lifeway, as life allows

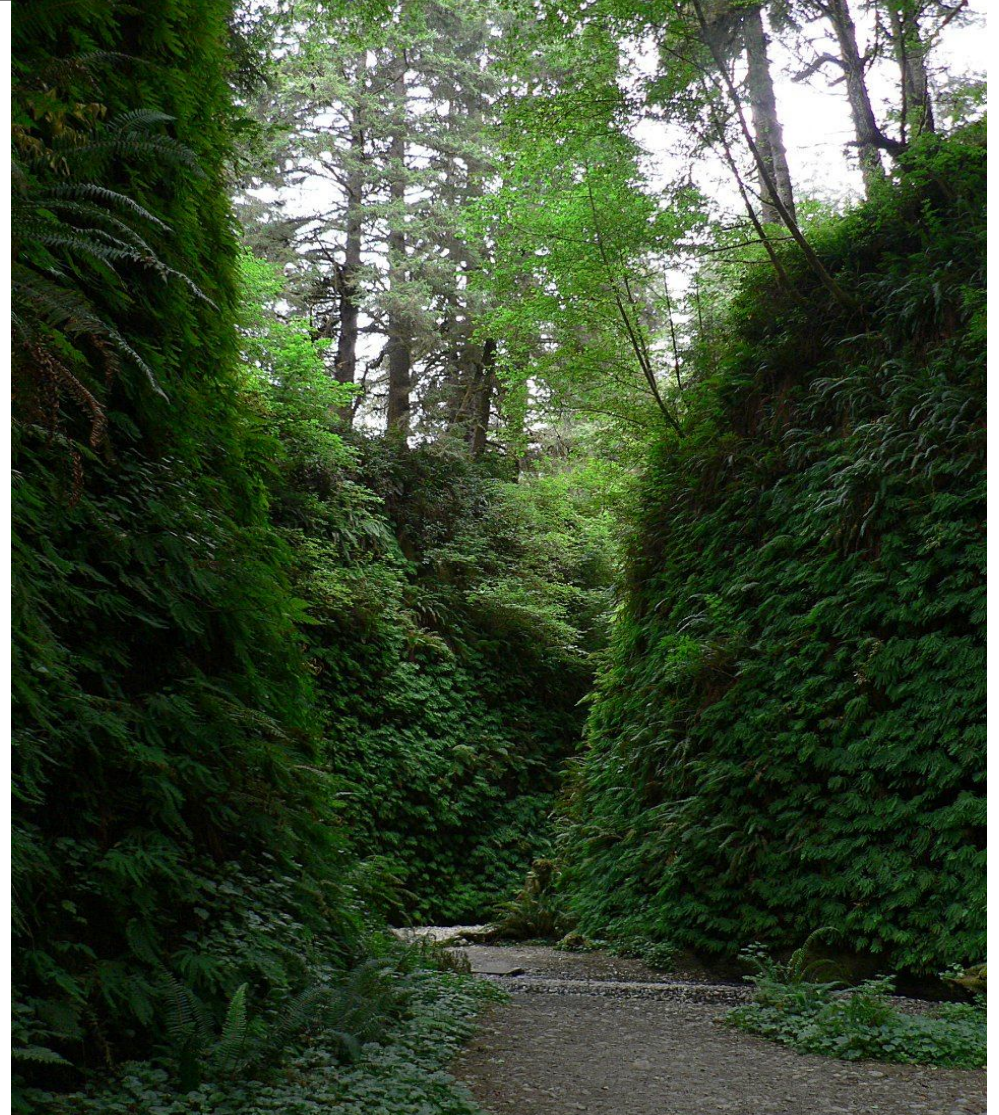


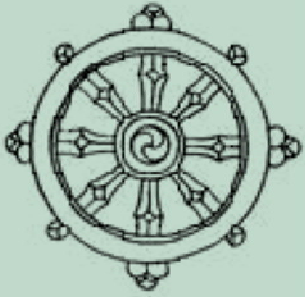


New Paradigms for Well-being

4) Seeking green wisdom

- From green mentors, trees, places, animal and plant beings
- Finding guidance and support, strengthening our intention
- Receiving the teachings of the all beings, people, and places
- Following paths laid down by others before us
- Practicing wild mind, the original face of life arising





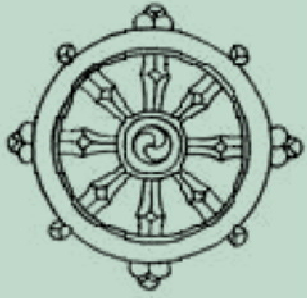
Building Community

IV. Building a mindful society is a community effort.

Three Jewels in Buddhist teaching:

- Buddha = the teachers
- Dharma = the teachings
- Sangha = the community of friends practicing together



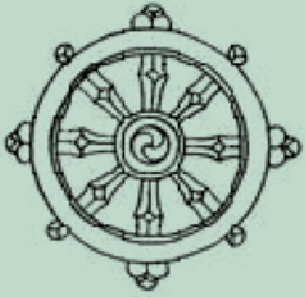


Building Community

Investing in community strengthens shared purpose.

- Living in place, being part of the local ecosystem, seasons, weather
- Supporting local governance and business, cultivating social networks
- Reclaiming time, caring for food, the healing work of gardening
- Reducing consumption, living simply with more direct experience
- Cultivating friendships, deepening awareness practice



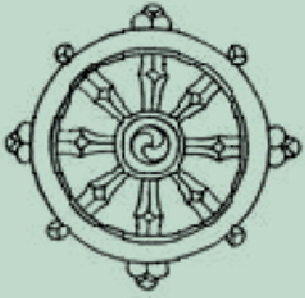


Building Community

Ethical guidelines stabilize community relations.

- Growing a new civility based on kindness and respect
- Influencing each other toward more sustainable social norms
- Choosing to be in the web of relations as an active agent
- Teaching children to develop social values based on non-harming



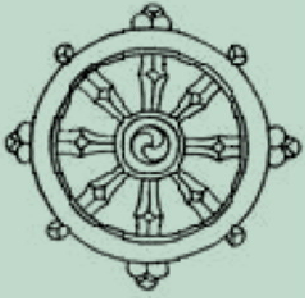


Building Community

New paradigms for well-being generate contentment.

- Recalibrating what matters through mindful awareness
- Celebrating the richness of experience and relationship
- Bringing full presence of mind and body to our interactions
- Sharing green wisdom with others on the practice path
- Taking the deep view of place, health, nature, society





Toward a Mindful Society

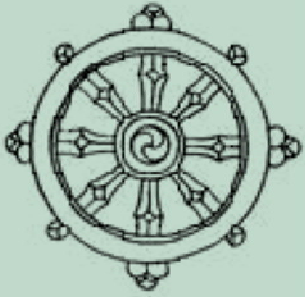
Aiming with intention toward a mindful society, based on a deep view of mind and nature

"We are all indigenous to this planet, this mosaic of wild gardens we are being called by nature and history to reinhabit in good spirit. Part of that responsibility is to choose a place.

To restore the land one must live and work in a place. To work in a place is to work with others. People who work together in a place become a community, and a community, in time, grows a culture. To work on behalf of the wild is to restore culture."

-- Gary Snyder





Toward a Mindful Society

Questions?

Our host Fletcher Harper will take your questions for further conversation. Thank you for joining us for this webinar event with GreenFaith.

May the merit of this auspicious event be of service to the earth and all beings --

