

The Grand Law of Healing the
PLANET
A BUDDHIST VIEW



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The Grand Law of Healing the Planet: A Buddhist View, 2025.**

Cover and Layout: Gonzalo Castellón Grime.



Opening

The need to heal the planet is not an abstract proposition. It is urgent to find new solutions. In this article, I would like to share a promising spiritual solution. Healing the planet is the greatest challenge we face today with climate change, global warming, biodiversity depletion, pollution of the oceans, water and air quality deterioration, the disappearance of natural forest and wildlife... Healing the planet is a collective moral imperative and responsibility because we share a common destiny. And, when I say 'common', solutions must include all human and sentient beings and nature. Healing the planet encompasses the healing of our outer ecology (environment) and our inner ecology (the self), simultaneously. To embrace this holistic collective represents a radical departure from the way we are approaching this challenge, which requires a unique blueprint for decisions within the public domain. In the end, a new civilization has to emerge.

My spiritual path has been greatly influenced by the teachings of Lord Buddha. I am deeply motivated to learn skillful means to transform ourselves and to reorient our meaningful interactions with all other forms of life. This calls for a special spiritual path, to change public decision-making everywhere; e.g., economics, politics, business, human rights, institutions, health and medicine, education, peace keeping, etc.

Buddhism can make a significant contribution to both healing the planet and transform our societies. This means that we must self-realize compassion (individual challenge) and, simultaneously, commit ourselves to the construction of a compassionate society (collective challenge). This means that, in order to heal the planet, our spirituality must have both breadth and depth, and have the wisdom to appropriately define the process, the means, and the realities accompanying attainment.

The Grand Law of Healing (GLH)

To heal the planet, we must self-realize that the Earth is a *living being*; a live entity that has energies, memory, behaviors, consciousness... This realization is at the core of the GLH, changing the existing notions of human welfare and transformation, both individual and collective.

GLH's fundamental premise is: "*in order to heal ourselves, we must heal the planet; and, in order to heal the planet, we must heal ourselves*". Nobody can be healthy if the Planet is ill. Thus, if the air in the outer ecology is polluted, then, the air in our inner ecology is also polluted. The same is true for water, space, earth and fire. GLH embraces a key spiritual law: "*the outer is like the inner and the inner is like the outer*". This says that, in the end, it is not possible to heal our outer ecology (the planet) without entering into a meaningful process of inner healing (the human self), and vice-versa. Another way of saying the same thing is: "*there is a need to heal the 'container' (the Earth) and to heal the 'content' (all living beings) at the same time*". Thus, it is not possible to heal the content without healing the container. Today, the emphasis is on healing part of the content (i.e., human beings). In the future, the emphasis must be on both: healing the content and container and, therefore, the very nature of healing is an interdependent process.

Healing will not happen out of material interventions only (e.g., recycling). Healing is not a physical phenomenon (a material thing) but a profound spiritual experience. Without spirituality, there will not be healing. This is why GLH will bear its fruits through the constant interactions of an infinite number of consciousness (including nature's consciousness). Consciousness is, and will be, the key intervening instrument and vehicle to heal the planet. There will never be healing if one entity is a live being, a conscious being, and the other is a 'thing', lacking of consciousness. Healing demands both entities involved be conscious. Healing will result from a meaningful inter-connectedness of two or more forms

of consciousness. Healing of the planet is a 'conscious process', guided by different forms of interdependence. It is not a "solo flight". Conscious healing becomes a collective experience, manifesting within infinite and limitless planes of existence.

A Buddhist View

Taking care of the planet is central to the Buddha's teachings. He shared very fundamental concepts, like: cultivating harmonious relationship with all living beings and nature, forming "bodhisattvas" as persons whose spiritual path is defined by the welfare of others, demonstrating that everyone and everything are totally interconnected, defining the notion of the right livelihood--key to address different life styles in our planet, etc. Let me illustrate.

First, harmonious relationships. We live in the world of relationships, which may work or not, and are responsible for specific outcomes. Numerous Buddha's teachings share the importance of the relationships between human beings and sentient beings (animals) and nature. He stated that progress in any society must be immersed in harmony. He saw harmony as a necessary condition to human progress, including economic and political progress. He warned us that the most important causes of disharmony are clinging and craving. In one passage, while teaching love and kindness, the Buddha said: "*Let none through anger or ill-will wish harm upon another... "Even as a mother protects with her life, her child, her only child, so with a boundless heart should one cherish all living beings..." "May all beings become happy in their heart of hearts! "Develop an unlimited heart of friendliness for the entire universe, sending metta (love)..."* (*The Karaniya Sutta*). Thus, clearly, GLH is not an anthropocentric concept. However, *a harmonious relationship with nature requires ever an higher levels of human consciousness, particularly to realize nature as a living being. This represents a major change in paradigm.*

Second, right livelihood. The right livelihood may be understood as a code of conduct in all aspects of human activities, including politics, economics, institutions and business. Here, we enter into the realm of ethics and morals, like doing no harm to sentient beings and nature, and taking responsibility over their innate rights. The right livelihood is influenced by the right action (i.e.,

actions that do not produce negative effects on others) and the right effort (to engage with the maximum skillful capacities to heal the planet). But, in order to get out of the “wrong livelihood”, and abandon it, demands a great deal of effort; individual and collective effort (material and spiritual). To abandon the wrong livelihood also demands a powerful level of awareness or mindfulness, because we first ought ‘to be mindful’ of the need to heal the planet. And, the right livelihood must be the fruit a right vision of a given future for humanity and all forms of life on this planet. A wrong vision will obviously lead to the wrong livelihood. The debates on the right livelihood are full of ethical issues and concerns. The Buddha expressed some of them stating that some forms of business and wealth creation are not acceptable: business in weapons, human beings, meat, intoxicants, and poison. We must find ethically acceptable forms of earning a living; a crucial issue in the world today. In this realm, he added the notion of a “*balance life*”, essential to healing the planet: we should not go beyond existing means and we should not be living in misery or extravagantly. A balance life is fundamental in redefining, today, the materialistic and individualistic nature of our economic systems.

Third, A Global Being: The Bodhisattva. Healing the planet demands a new ‘*global being, who is able to become the other without losing its own identity*’. The Buddhist notion of a “bodhisattva” approximate the notion of this global being: someone who understand the path to enlightenment including him or herself and the other. Someone who devotes its life to benefit others. A key to the global being is the self-realization of all forms of interdependence. This is totally opposite to the doctrine advocated by modern economics, where individualism and materialism carry the weight of most decisions and outcomes. It is time to practice “*the economics of the other*”, so that everyone is better off and nobody is worse off. An economics of equality, defined in its most holistic sense. If producers and consumers were bodhisattvas, economics will yield very different results. Today, ego drives producers and consumers, translated into extreme competition and exclusion.

Fourth, Governance. To heal the planet, it is essential to design and implement new rules of governance and politics. Buddha's teachings also address these two dimensions, stating that, independently of the specific form of government, the fundamental rule of the state should be the *law of righteousness*. Righteousness as the foundation of governance and government. To him, the highest form of authority is also subjected to the *law of ethics*. This ethical foundation demands that governments ensure both the material and spiritual welfare of all beings. It may be useful to share the attributes of governance based on the "Dassa Rajashama Buddhist Text", where in a conversation with a king the Buddha defines the following attributes essential to address governance. Specifically, the anatomy of a government leader possesses 10 key attributes: *generosity, morality, self-sacrifice, integrity, kindness, austerity, non-anger, non-violence, tolerance, and non-deviation from righteousness*.

Healing Through Economics

If we are to heal the planet, we need a new form of economics. A system that provide the spaces, conditions, instruments and opportunities for all beings to transform themselves and reach full enlightenment through the practice of such economics. I call this "**Transformational Economics**". The term "transformational" is not random; it comes from the purest forms of Buddha's teachings. The attribute of being "transformational" must be *the influencer* in the needed process of transition to a new economics, which will happen by elevating human collective consciousness. With today's level of consciousness, there will be no healing whatsoever. It is time that economics produces happiness and peace and becomes the fundamental framework to the attaining a conscious, compassionate and fulfilled planetary society.

Important Attributes of Transformational Economics. We have to transition to this new economics now. This transition may be sought as a ladder: from private-material economics to politics of the common good, from the politics of the common good to the rights and justice of all, from the rights and justices of all to the social concerns of the community of all beings, from the social concerns of the community to the human dimension of planetary transformation, and from the human dimensions of planetary transformation to all forms of consciousness. Each step has its challenges and demands very specific forms of action. Today's economic system is only geared to transform matter into matter: the creation of material wealth. Contrary to that, **Transformational Economics** demands to go far beyond matter, and become an instrument to inner transform all beings. Otherwise, we will always be in a lower level of vibration and welfare. It demands the economics of love, compassion, generosity, caring and sharing, dignity, justice, solidarity, inclusion, and the like. The self-realization of these transformational values of economics is the inseparable path of individual and collective transformation (mutually interdependent).

Lack of Spirituality. Because today's economics focuses on matter only, this form of economics does not liberate us, it does not enlighten us.... In *Transformational Economics*, the process of "wealth creation" and the patterns of "wealth distribution" must take into account both the expansion of material and spiritual wealth. The greatest paradox confronting the economic world of today is to equate gains in material income and happiness. Many people confuse higher income with more happiness. But, we know they are not correlated at all. The term "development" must include the "human factor", so that we are clear about "who", and not necessarily "what", are we to develop and transform.

A Fundamental Question. What is the ultimate transformation? For the time being, today's material/individualistic economics gives us only an apparent and 'transitory joy'. This is a major source of attachment, greed and emotional desires to have more and more. In *Transformational Economics*, we are in search of 'profound joy'. We all know that profound joy is far beyond matter and material gains. To experience profound joy, we must transform and transcend, where the capacity to transcend depends on our levels of awareness and consciousness. The higher our level of consciousness is, the more we are able to transcend: to go beyond. Thus, *Transformational Economics* must be embedded and governed by high levels of consciousness. The big question is how do we get there and go beyond the immediate experience of transcending the material world. One of the principal objectives of *Transformational Economics* is to create the conditions not only for material welfare but also ensure an ethical, moral and spiritual welfare.

Thus, *Transformational Economics* is organized to eliminate suffering, to simplify human desires, to promote non-violent activities, to be conscious of caring for all human beings, sentient beings and nature, and to self-realize compassion, generosity, love and kindness, and the like. Today's economics is set to create more desires, convert those desires into material needs, and implement a path where "more is better". An economics that promotes self-interest instead of collective interest. Self-interest is a major cause of suffering, because of our mistaken belief that

we are separate and independent entities. This is a delusion. Advocacy of self-interest and not collective interest will bring us to a collective failure, because by maximizing self-interest, we will never attain collective interest. *Transformational Economics* is the economics of together. It is the economics of everything and everyone. In traditional economics, we equate competitive individualism with freedom. Freedom of choice and freedom to do anything. This form of understanding freedom because of individualism, is the source of its own destruction.

Material wealth creation and alternative forms of wealth must be carefully studied to avoid unnecessary creation of poverty, concentration of wealth, and social and environmental degradation in our societies. All notions of welfare and wealth must be understood as shared in an interdependent way. Thus, in an interdependent world, the notion of the greatest social good makes more sense than in a society where materialism and individualism rule the system. In *Transformational Economics*, one must embrace the Buddhist concept of “moral discipline”, so that neither economics nor politics may be practiced within an ethical and moral vacuum. Today, economics is violent. Violent with human beings, sentient beings and nature. This has to stop. *Transformational Economics* is non-violent.

Conclusion

The time has come to build new and appropriate instruments to transform and support a true planetary spiritual awakening. This demands a shift from doing and having to being and becoming. Healing the Planet demands that shift. This is why I propose a new form of economics—Transformational Economics--and a new Eco-Morality.

A renewed understanding of nature, natural law, and all living beings is needed, as they play a fundamental role in our material and spiritual transformations. In the past, we have emphasized the linkages between the state of nature and our material wealth and betterment. Today, we must also see the linkages between the state of nature and our processes of spiritual transformation. Only a new collective consciousness will enable us to heal the planet.

Let us heal the planet now.

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