



by meaning and wellbeing within the great wisdom of immeasurable life.

Buddhist Economics

An economic paradigm based on the dharma would do the following:

- recognize the interdependence of all life
- mitigate harming
- benefit everyone rather than the individual
- encourage appreciation of and respect for the environment
- promote peace and harmony

Actions We Can Take

- be aware of consumer manipulation and our relationship to it
- reflect and start the conversation with others
- be mindful of what we already receive from life regardless of our imperfections
- make choices that cause the least harm and waste and provide the most good
- educate ourselves not only about the dharma but also about the systems that provide the framework for our society
- take actions accordingly to the best of our ability to change what needs to be changed
- act for the benefit not only of ourselves but for the benefit of all beings

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Southern District Temples

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Buddhism and Economics

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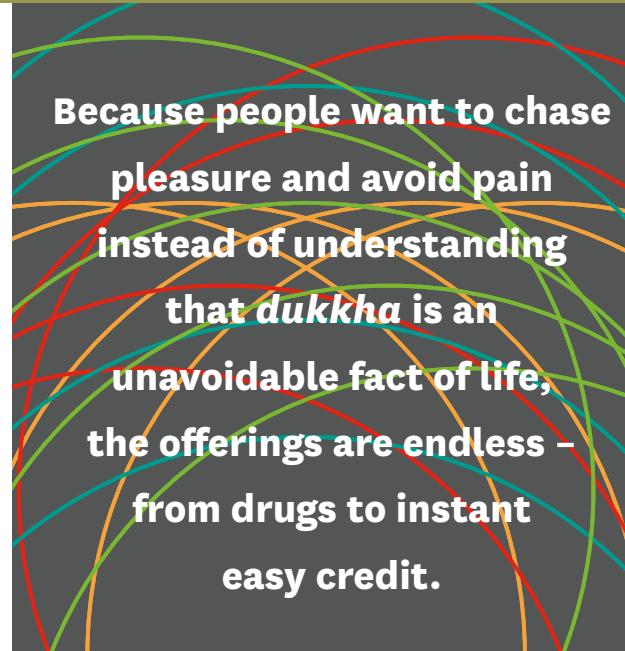
People might wonder what economics and the Buddha-dharma have to do with each other. In many ways, they seem to have different purposes. However, if we compare the tenets of the dharma with the economic paradigm that currently drives global society, we see that there are many links. For a clear picture, we can examine our own lives – our motivations, our place in the world, what's most important to us, and what makes our lives meaningful. Can we thrive in today's world and walk the path of our teachings at the same time?

Awareness

To study the dharma is to study the self. This necessarily brings us to become aware of our connection to the world, indeed to all life, past, present and future, thanks to the interdependent nature of all things. Therefore, we must learn to be aware not only of our own thoughts, feelings, and intentions, but also of the environment in which we interact. Though human nature has not changed in thousands of years, modern developments have magnified some of the challenges that people face as they try to lead satisfying lives. We must understand both the prevalent forces in our world, and how our teachings can give us a perspective that will help us to live sustainable and meaningful lives.

Shared Delusion

The purpose of this brief pamphlet is to initiate deeper awareness not only of oneself, but also of the global environment. We live in a world in which nations espouse the delusion that prosperity, and therefore flourishing, depends on economic growth. The success of corpora-



tions relies on unlimited growth, and in order to achieve this, they must create endless desire and discontent so that there will always be more consumers for more products, using more resources at the least cost for the greatest profits. Much is made of Gross National Product (GNP) but GNP does not include diverse factors that contribute to our quality of life, such as wellbeing, family relationships and caregiving, nature, community activities, donating, volunteering, and spirituality and religion.

On the contrary, in order to get people to consume more, producers intensify our senses of **greed**, **aversion**, and **delusion**. The Buddha-dharma names these as the causes of *dukkha* (suffering, dissatisfaction, dis-ease). By increasing the feeling of lack through such strategies as advertising, planned obsolescence, new (unnecessary) items, and even scientifically researched ways to stimulate craving in food products, society comes to believe that it can't be happy without these goods. Because people want to chase pleasure and avoid pain instead of understand-

ing that *dukkha* is an unavoidable fact of life, the offerings are endless – from drugs to instant easy credit. With the proliferation of technology, people everywhere see and crave the bounty that is endlessly promoted. Moreover, they are always ready to believe the delusion that there is nothing more important than the self.

Our consumer society comes at a high cost. Though one of the basic principles of the dharma is *ahimsa*, non-harming, our grasping is causing irreparable damage to the ecosystem for plants, animals, and humans alike. All kinds of living beings are displaced, exploited, abused, and needlessly killed. Poverty and income inequality leads to suffering, frustration and anger among people, giving rise to crime, war, and even terrorism. Though we may turn a blind eye, nobody is insulated from this growing tragedy, for all life is interdependent.

Nembutsu: Mindful of the Great Compassion

We need to take a moment to pause in our daily actions and reflect on our relationship to the world we touch. It may seem simple to purchase an item, but if we think about the unseen related costs, we may be brought to realize how much unconditional compassion we receive from the infinite web of all life that makes the product available to us. If this gives rise to a deeper sense of gratitude, our actions may become more skilful so that we will be brought to make choices that benefit not only ourselves, but also others. Rather than the pursuit of elusive personal material happiness, our life process will be characterized