

BUDDHISM AND THE TRANSFORMATION TO SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIES

PETER DANIELS

*Senior Lecturer, Griffith School of Environment, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia;
E-mail: p.daniels@griffith.edu.au*

(Received: 31 October 2007; accepted: 12 December 2007)

A major premise of this paper is that Buddhism provides a logic and means to help resolve this tension between in-grained economic system imperatives and the changes actually required for achieving environmental sustainability. In this simple depiction, we examine the logic inherent within Buddhism's Four Noble Truths, and the means proffered in the Eightfold Path, and extend upon these basic ideas with knowledge and experience available from 21st century environmental science, economics and technology fields. The ultimate goal is to illustrate how this ancient wisdom can help inform and facilitate the successful transformation to sustainable human economies.

Keywords: sustainability; environment; economy; Buddhism

1. INTRODUCTION

After decades of convenient denial, it is now difficult to reject that the biophysical scale of human activities is having substantial impacts upon conditions for life within the ecosphere. A partial list of evidence includes the human-induced loss of fisheries, forests and wetlands, the unprecedented rate of species extinction (since Paleozoic and Mesozoic eras), extensive land degradation through desertification, soil erosion and salinisation, water quality and availability problems, and the ever-growing support for the imminent and severe potential of global warming and peak oil (Rees – Wackernagel 1996). These impacts all stem from the significance of the material or energy scale of human intervention in natural cycles and processes such as carbon, water, nitrogen, and phosphorous cycles and net photosynthesis (Ayres 1993; Bartelmus – Seifert 2003; Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Board 2005; Wackernagel et al. 2006).