

***Weaving the Sangha***

Collective Social Action in the Context of Buddhist Diversity

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### Design

This article is a proposed design for creating a social action network for Buddhists in the Santa Barbara area, understood as a three-stage development process:

1. Collaborative/cocreative project design for interested people – consider initial design hypothesis (this document) and add additional thoughts and make corrections/suggestions. Let’s work together to design and build this project.
2. Construct actual organizational structure through internet database
   1. Set up basic online database framework (in progress)
   2. List groups, websites, etc.
   3. Define philosophical framework and position
      1. How do groups differ?
      2. What universal principles of Buddhism do all participants generally share?
      3. What underlying Buddhist theology and teachings motivate this group to engage in social activism?
   4. List issues important to the group - for example:
      1. Homelessness
      2. Death penalty
      3. Climate change
      4. Economic inequity
   5. As appropriate, establish core agreement of group (“covenant”) – internal to the group and possibly in liaison with external groups (other religions concerned with related issues)
3. Pursue organizational development and activism as motivated

### Project details

1. Create a social action network for Buddhists in the Santa Barbara area
   1. Is the Buddhist Peace Fellowship the natural home for this project, or is it appropriate to build a model based on our own internal creativity, and then join or interact with BPF from there?
   2. Create list of organizations – contact information, basic descriptions, web sites
   3. Define specialization of each organization – what is their unique niche, how are they different, what does each one represent
2. Develop internet support framework: create system that enables participants to interact by internet (complete forms, respond to brief polls/questionnaires, send email)
3. Develop simple basic study of Buddhist symbolism – mandala, wheel (spoke and hub), yin/yang, wheel of dharma, Ashoka chakra
   1. Unity and diversity models
   2. E Pluribus Unum
4. Diversity in Buddhism article (cited below) classification of Buddhist schools, traditions and beliefs
5. Dalai Lama – universal ethics – “ethics for a whole world” – Thich Nhat Hanh, etc.
   1. *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World*
   2. *The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality*
6. Social action in Buddhism – what are the common dimensions? (see Ken Jones article)

### Links to core articles

We are putting together a small library of articles relevant to Buddhist studies, Buddhist social activism and diversity in Buddhism

1. Understanding Buddhist Diversity, by Alfred Bloom

<http://origin.org/docs/Understanding_Buddhist_Diversity.docx>

1. Buddhism and Social Action, by Ken Jones

<http://origin.org/docs/Buddhism_and_Social_Action.docx>

1. Treasuring Diversity, by Sokka Gakai International

<http://origin.org/docs/Treasuring_Diversity.docx>

1. Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World, Chapter 7, by the Dalai Lama

“Ethics in our Shared World”

<http://origin.org/docs/Ethics_for_a_Whole_World_CH7.docx>

*“The one is All and the All is One. It is a vast vision of the ultimate spirituality of the cosmos and self, expressing One Reality.”*

### Divisions in Buddhism

*by Alfred Bloom, Emeritus Professor,* [*http://bschawaii.org/shindharmanet/studies/diversity/*](http://bschawaii.org/shindharmanet/studies/diversity/)

The Kegon taught there were five divisions in Buddhism. Their interpretation begins with the fact that the Avatamsaka Sutra (Kegon) was first proclaimed by the Buddha, but it was so profound, no one understood it.

Consequently, Buddha arranged his teachings [into five levels] to accommodate their understanding.

1. Initially, there was ***Hinayana*** teaching aimed at dispelling the misunderstanding on the nature of the self. Early Buddhism taught there was no permanent, underlying self or the doctrine of non-soul with Nirvana being total extinction.
2. The second, early ***Mahayana***, taught relative emptiness of the self/phenomena and the elements making up the world. This level distinguishes emptiness and things as though one might strip away the phenomena and leave emptiness.
3. The third level is ***True Mahayana*** which represents the identity of phenomena-things and the principle of emptiness. Things as they are, are empty, having no self-existence.
4. The fourth level is ***Sudden teaching*** which is experience of truth directly, beyond language.
5. The fifth level is the ***Complete teaching*** or the total mutual interrelationship of all phenomena where every individual rock or blade of grass contains and represents the whole. It gave rise to the phrase: The one is All and the All is One. It is a vast vision of the ultimate spirituality of the cosmos and self, expressing One Reality. When contemporary Buddhists talk of Oneness, this is the underlying ideal.

### Tentative community agreement or covenant

*In the spirit of non-violent communications*

This statement introduces a simple co-creators covenant or agreement.

It is intended to support and sustain a global network of team players and collaborators who want to work together to address critical social and political issues at local or national or global levels in the world, and who are deeply committed to principles of collaboration, co-creation and resonance.

The covenant is an initial statement of core guiding principles. We presume and understand these principles will be respected at all times by all participants to the best of their ability, in a spirit of deep sincerity, humility and kindness.

1. I will treat all participants in this process with respect and kindness.
2. I will do my best to listen carefully and to fully understand what others are saying.
3. It is clear and obvious to me that there is a great diversity of viewpoints and perspectives in the world, and I do not expect "universal agreement on all issues", or on specific issues of interest to me. I understand many issues must be negotiated in a spirit of informed creative balance and I am committed to nurturing that spirit of balance.

