

~ Carbon Karma ~

Karma is a beautiful metaphor for carbon

Karma comprises the entire cycle of cause and effect. Do good, and somehow, through the turbulence of the universe, good comes. Kindness begets kindness. Karma is the sum of our consequences – the tally sheet of the East and cash in the West. Karma is what we have done, who we are now, and all we have to experience. It is always there, yet invisible. Karma shapes who we are, and is who we are.



Carbon is a beautiful surrogate for karma

Carbon is in constant cycle, shifting with the retreat of glaciers and factories' advance. The sixth element on the periodic table is the currency of the biosphere's tally sheet. Carbon gauges how much air the planet inhales, and how much air is exhaled. Like karma, carbon shaped and shapes who we are. Fluctuating carbon-dioxide and methane levels have dictated climate and weather. Climate and weather have formed every being. Carbon really "is" us, in more than a metaphysical sense. Carbon is the foundation of all vegetation and living matter; all beings use carbon as an elemental backbone.

It depends

There are two very different types of karma for carbon. In one sense, the two states, or types of carbon, are the same "thing." Both are the same element that moves freely through the air, the rocks and the sea. A single carbon molecule that started deep in the granite of Earth might later be Mozart's ear wax and pass through Carl's Kentucky Bluegrass. The base physical entity is neutral. Manifestation is everything.

Like everything in the universe, carbon karma can be positive or negative. By examining our own lives for good and bad carbon karma, we will answer the eternal question: "If a tree falls and no one hears it, does it make a noise?" The answer depends on you.



Breath in, Breath Out

Living Carbon (Good Karma)

Vegetation, biomass, plant material. It's all built from the 6th element on the periodic table, carbon. Carbon clearly infused with positive karma. Carbon manifesting as vegetation springs from a mystical marriage of solar photons and carbon dioxide gas. Photosynthesis somehow combines solar power, an invisible gas and the color green to produce growth—to sequester growth from thin air.

If carbon in living matter can possess both good and bad states, carbon in tropical forests is the pinnacle of spiritual evolution. The apex of enlightenment. Tropical forest carbon has a karma account through the canopy. It is the product of frenzied photosynthetic frolicking.

Tropical forests have 200 billion tons of carbon in their vegetation. They cover a small percent of the Earth's surface, yet harbor almost half of all the carbon bound up in Earth's vegetation. Tropical forests are the heavyweights of carbon storage, the Buddhas of good carbon karma, the Chariots of [Chi](#).

If you've never seen one, tropical forests take your breathe away. They literally turn the air liquid green.

Tropical forests are filled with many things you see nowhere else. They hold nests of insects that have never been seen with human eyes. Things crawl in their canopies at enormous, unbelievable heights without ever knowing the ground below them. When intact, tropical forests are good, holy, and a great place to see gorillas.

The higher they come, the further they fall

It only takes a small axe to bring down big trees. When destroyed, rainforests raise a hell of a racket. The noise is a series of explosions. Trunk dislocated from trunk (SNAP!). Branch from canopy (thw-wack!). The explosions last minutes because lianas and

branches in the great green forests are intertwined. Never just one tree falls. The whole tribe goes down, cathedrals dragging down other cathedrals. When a tropical forest finally lands on the ground, it stays there for the count. In the past, small clearings would fill over time. Nowadays, the clearings grow. Fallen, with fire or decay, the consecrated carbon that was in the trees is oxidized. It floats from one state to another on the wings of two oxygen. The karma changes state. The carbon becomes a menace.



Greenhouse Gases (Bad Karma)

Modern greenhouse gases are clearly imbued with negative carbon. Imagine. Humans grew up on the only blue-green orb we've been able to see in space. A beautiful, delicate thin film of life on a fragile planet. What did we do with such a glorious gift? We dug up everything and burned it. Burning hydrocarbons from below the surface and nature's biotic bounty on top, the carbon balance fluctuated and created a small problem.

Recall from 9th grade physics class that our atmosphere blankets us from intense solar radiation while keeping us warm. A biophysical trapeze act. If you go out beyond the atmosphere without a space suit, it is cold and harsh and barren. By altering the Earth's carbon stores and fluxes, we have begun to alter the atmosphere. We are having a discernible impact on the air above us. As we begin to change the atmosphere, it will change us. For better or worse. Well, probably for the worse.

How out of whack are we?

Right now, human greenhouse gases have raised the average Earth surface temperature slightly less than 1^o Celsius. That's all? Well consider this: Humans have a temperature of 37^o Celsius, or 98.6^o Fahrenheit. When we get a small fever, say 2^o C, (up to 102.2 F), we're probably not going outside to play [kickball](#). If the Dr.'s thermometer adds 4^o Celsius to our temp (up to 105.8 F), the situation is going critical fast. Death would not be unreasonable. Really bad stuff has *already* happened. The body's metabolism can't take the heat. At a planetary level, the same prognosis means melting ice caps, higher sea levels, more intense hurricanes and other types of extreme weather, and shifts in vector ranges that won't be good. West Nile Virus. Malaria.

So it is just a mild fever for now. But humans have burned so much stuff, and we are already committed to burning more. Greenhouse gases last in the atmosphere for a hundred or two hundred years. We're going to be warm for a while. Central projections by international climate change experts suggest the Earth is likely to heat up by between

1.5 ° C and 4.5 ° C by the time CO2 levels double sometime this century. If you believe the wizened folks in white suits with thick glasses, we're in the early stages of a large scale [planetary fever](#). In other words, climate change caused by negative carbon karma could easily be a life-foiling event. Probably not in our lives, but maybe in the lifetimes of our children.

Carbon's karma in the modern world has gone awry. Carbon is everywhere being converted from positive stuff to negative stuff. It's so bad that even vegan, bicycling nomads are now implicated in the Earth's ills. Humvee owners hopefully have an interesting past life history.

If only there was a way to trade good carbon karma for bad, to do something good and selfless given how much we've all fluxed (carbon) up. If only we could draw some of the negative carbon we've emitted back down to Earth. Imagine if we could somehow magically sequester carbon back into tropical forests. Wouldn't that be a good thing?

Humans can do whatever we set our minds to, including restoring harmony. In the case of carbon karma, it is easy. First, we have to stop turning positive stuff into negative stuff. More than anything, this means that we must reduce our fossil fuel habit, our oil addiction. Stemming the flow of good-to-bad carbon also means destroying fewer forests in the first place. Prevention trumps cure every time.

If we want to atone for our inevitable emissions, we can rebuild positive carbon by planting trees. Native trees in places they belong. The Karma points glow brighter when the trees are a natural part of ecosystems and human systems already in place. Planting monocultures of carbon may help the atmosphere in the short term, but it can lead to other karmic conversions. It's best to stick sticks in the ground where they belong.

There is a serious on-going debate, a debate with planetary and spiritual implications. The question is whether wealthy countries should help less wealthy countries maintain and grow tropical forest. There will be good reasons to say no. To point out the possible faults.

But that is not where the Tropical Forest Group stands. We think that saving and restoring tropical forests is a damn good idea. And we're going to do something. We hope you'll join us.

For those of you that want adjust the levels in your Universal Carbon Karma Bank Account, TFG suggests six things to do to honor the 6th element. But do something **now**. The present is an axe blade, a sharp edge between the past and the future. It's already happened. No wait, it's happening all over again. Let's get to it.

- 1) **Email the President**. Yes, that one. He's been depleting his positive rainforest karma by boasting when betterment would really have been better. He'll understand. He is the most powerful man in the world with a legacy to consider.

- Tropical forests are not political. Karma is above that. He needs to come clean and go green.
- 2) Tell a friend about Carbon Karma– spread the love. If we generate 1,000 emails to the President, he might hear about it. 10,000 and he'll probably hear something at a morning briefing. Imagine 1,000,000 emails. But that'll require you using your forward button. You get the message. Make sure he does, too.
 - 3) Plant a tree or stop a bulldozer. Cliché, but hey, they work.
 - 4) **Find out where** the **soy** you consume, or the soy your meat consumes, **comes from**. And then act according to principles of carbon karma. Really simple. And it sends very powerful message, considering soy is tearing up more Amazon than anything. Life is busy but 'where was that bean born?'
 - 5) Offset your emissions by supporting projects that save or restore tropical forests. Tell your congress person to be nice whenever possible to tropical forest, especially concerning carbon markets. Read stuff, speak thoughtfully.
 - 6) **Give TFG a hand** financially so we can continue our good work. It has been a really bad century for tropical forests.

