

Buddhism as a Science of Mind

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Buddhism is a journey into the depths of one's heart and mind, the inner reality of one's essence, an exploration of who we are and what we are. This spiritual journey is nothing more and nothing less than discovering this inner reality.

Buddhist spiritual teachings present a genuine science of mind that allows one to uncover this inner reality, the nature of the mind and the phenomena that our mind experience. When we say that Buddhism is a "science," we do not mean the dry science of analyzing material things. We are talking about something much deeper. We are talking about going into the depths of the reality of our inner world, which is the most powerful world.

The teachings of Lord Buddha Shakyamuni, which we often refer to by the Sanskrit term buddhadharma, set forth a path that frees one from disturbing emotions and fundamental ignorance. This dharma frees us from existence in samsara, defined by samsaric fear, and leads us towards the fruition of independence, the fruition of the state of complete freedom, the state of fearlessness, going beyond fear.

By closely looking at buddhadharma, or Buddhism, we thus find that it is a pure path, pure teachings, a pure science, a science of mind. In this sense, Buddhist spirituality is not what is ordinarily meant by the term "religion." It is rather closer to a humanistic science, a pure and genuine philosophy of humanity and science which works with the two sides of our samsaric mind, the negative aspect and the positive aspect of our mind. Fundamentally it is the science of working with the very basic nature of our mind.

"Nangpa" - Insider

The Tibetan term for Buddhism illustrates the nature of this inner science. What we call Buddhism in Tibetan is nang pa, which means insiders. It's an interesting term, insiders; it can have two meanings. Literally, it means someone who is within a certain boundary, within a certain fence, but another meaning of this word insider is the sense that we are working with our inside, our mind, our fundamental confusion, ignorance. Therefore we can see what Buddhism is fundamentally, from this term, insider: it is a science, working with our mind, a philosophy of humanity, a human science.

Is Buddhism A Religion?

Buddhadharma is not a religion in the everyday connotation of the word. We are not talking here about the sophisticated ways of explaining religion used by university Departments of Religion. Rather, the ordinary use of the word religion, our regular mundane understanding of religion, is somewhat simple: it's a belief, a dogma that we have about some superhuman beings outside our self, some supernatural energy outside one's being which has power, control, over our universe and over sentient beings. This mundane understanding of religion is a theistic view.

In this usual meaning of religion, it is as if a particular external being or external energy is holding our computer keyboard and is doing the programming for us; we don't have any power, we don't have any energy, we don't have any choice. We ourselves have to work with it; we have to wait and see what comes up on the screen.

Holding The Keyboard To Enlightenment

In Buddhism, however, we are holding the keyboard; we ourselves are the programmer. We program our software and we press the command keys on our keyboard. So depending on our own skill, our own energy and our own knowledge, we get what we want on the screen.

The reason why Buddha taught the dharma is to teach us the command keys. The Tripitaka is the manual, teaching us how to program, how to use the right command keys, and depending on this knowledge, we can have a successful progression of programs. Therefore there is no external energy or external being holding our keyboards in Buddhism; even Buddha himself does not hold our keyboard.

Buddha is a teacher, a human being with great knowledge, great wisdom, who can teach us the right keyboard, who can teach us how to work with it, who has the great compassion to share his knowledge, the great compassion to hand over the keyboard to us. Even though he has all this knowledge, he does not guard the copyright, saying: "Nobody can use it except me." So we can see his great compassion, his great knowledge, which he shares with us, giving us the keyboard, giving us the knowledge, giving us everything.

This path of buddhadharma is totally free from any theistic view and is totally free from any shape or color. It's like pure water; it has no shape, it has no color. Depending on the container that we pour the water into, the water adopts that particular shape. If you want to freeze this pure water, you can do it by putting the water into the freezer, but as soon as you take the ice out of the freezer, it will return to its natural state of pure water having no shape and no color.