

## **Buddha Dharma is for all religions**

by Piya Tan

The historical Buddha teaches to everyone: to kings, nobles, brahmins, merchants, bankers, wanderers, courtesans, road-sweepers, outcastes, and of course the monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen. There is no designation “Buddhist” in the Buddha’s time and for centuries after that.

In fact, the earliest Buddhists are the arhats, and those who have become stream-winners, that is, those who:

1. have realized that there is nothing permanent in this body,
2. are not superstitious (not attached to vows and rituals), and
3. have no doubts about themselves or the Three Jewels in self-awakening.

Today, we tend to take the term “Buddhist” as a “name” (or nominally), but not always in practice. So it is a statistical term, a number. So, perhaps more than 50% of Singaporeans are Buddhists. But does this mean one out of every two people we meet are likely to be kind and compassionate? This remains to be seen.

Sometimes I wonder if people who are good and kind tend to turn to religion, or that religion makes them good and kind. We see little evidence of the latter: there is so much violence and materialism in religion in the world today.

But I know that Buddha Dharma, that is, the early teachings of the Buddha, has the power to make us good and compassionate. In fact, very often, I use the mind-healing and heart-warming self-help teachings of the Buddha changing people’s lives or at least helping them rise above their sufferings.

I find that teaching Buddha Dharma and its practices as a “non-religious” self-help method so rewarding. People from practically all the major religions join the TMC meditation courses, therapy sessions, counseling sessions and other courses.

Many in due course become Buddhists, but many, too, keep the Buddha Dharma as a living part of their lives so that they find practising their old faiths more enriching and meaningful because they have seen beyond religious labels.

Even the professionals (doctors, care-givers, entrepreneurs, etc) are finding that the Buddha’s meditation methods healing and fulfilling, making their worldly success more real and meaningful.

Buddha Dharma has become for many, the lifeblood for the dry bones of their shaky religious beliefs and routine secular lifestyles. It is such a fulfilling experience to see people at peace with themselves.

There are still many people out there who are unhappy, hurt or confused. Please reach out to them with your Dharma-moved happiness and self-healing, by for example

simply telling them that they can practise the Buddha's meditation and mind-healing no matter what religion they are, without having to "convert."

Buddha Dharma makes us rise above religion to the true peace within. It is the still centre is life's storm.

ASIDE: For more information on the current "religious" violence, you might like to read:

"Why are Nuns and Monks in the Streets?" (Parts I & II) by Jose Cabezon.

<http://religiondispatches.org/Gui/Content.aspx?Page=AR&Id=145>

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