

Jim Bronson 3-3-2010



BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS IN UNEXPECTED PLACES – Part 4 of 4

This four-part overview gives insight and inspiration from finding Buddha's 2500 year-old teachings in some possibly surprising aspects of our lives and culture

But first, some announcements:

- The Zen Hospice in San Francisco is preparing to reopen its Guest House. <http://www.zenhospice.org/guesthouse.htm>
- Andrea Fella will be holding a Memorial Day retreat at Jikoji in the Santa Cruz Mountains, on Skyline Blvd. in Los Gatos.: http://www.insightmeditationcenter.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/Jikoji_May_28-31_Center_Information.pdf
- Printed copies of Passing It On are now available at <https://www.createspace.com/3411350>

And now, back to our regularly scheduled program...

There is not yet a uniquely American or Western Buddhism, but a process of development and acculturation is obviously taking place. One of the indications of this is that Buddhist practices are appearing in surprising places, including Hip Hop: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtKhakSmwhA>

*As I develop the awakening mind I praise the Buddhas as they shine I bow before you as I travel my path
To join your ranks I make my full-time task For the sake of all beings I seek The enlightened mind that I know I'll reap*

--Bodhisattva Vow, the Beastie Boys

Several significant elements appear to be emerging:

- *Very early on, the American Buddhist trailblazers, particularly those working in Vipassana and Zen, made a vital break from Asian tradition: they opted against trying to replicate the Asian monastic system, where intense practice is left to the monks and the main devotion of laypeople is once-a-week temple offerings. "American people don't want to be monks and nuns," says Kornfield. "They want practices that transform the heart."¹*

¹ <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,987164-6,00.html#ixzz0hHYuBmUY>

- *In traditional Buddhism, withdrawal from the world's passions was often assumed to preclude political action (although heads of large Asian monasteries often set up de facto alliances with local power structures, for better or worse). Americans, however, were attracted to "engaged Buddhism" of the sort most eloquently championed by Thich Nhat Hanh, famous for his 1960s anti-war activism.²*
- *There are dozens of other innovations and debates, some small and some quite radical. A civil but ferociously felt argument has raged for the past few months around a book called *Buddhism Without Beliefs*, in which Stephen Batchelor, a former monk in both Zen and Tibetan traditions, suggests that Buddhism jettison reincarnation and karma, thereby making possible what he calls an "existential, therapeutic and liberating agnosticism." In fact, many American practitioners have already Batchelorized themselves by default.³*

One of the appeals of Buddhism to many Americans is its compatibility with science:

The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend personal God and avoid dogma and theology. Covering both the natural and the spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things natural and spiritual as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description. If there is any religion that could cope with modern scientific needs it would be Buddhism.

-- Albert Einstein

"If science proves some belief of Buddhism wrong, then Buddhism will have to change. "

- His Holiness, the Dalai Lama

In keeping with this compatibility, we are starting to see the impact of Buddhism in clinical psychology and neuroscience.

With mindfulness we are able to focus our mind in ways that literally integrate the brain and move it toward resilience and health.

It is the mind that is shaping our lives and brain growth within our evolving human societies. The good news about this perspective from science is that we can use an intentional attitude in our modern lives to actually change the course of our destiny and of cultural evolution in a positive direction. Cultivating mindfulness in ourselves and in one another, we can nurture this inner knowing in our children and make it a way of being in the world. We can choose to advance the nature of the mind for the benefit of each of us now and for future generations who will walk this earth, breathe this air, and live this life we call being human.

"Mindfulness - The New Science of Personal Transformation " by Daniel J. Siegel, M.D.

*Sow a thought, reap an action,
Sow an action, reap a habit,
Sow a habit, reap a destiny
Ram Dass, from "Be Here Now"*

² <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,987164-7,00.html#ixzz0hHZmR9Rh>

³ <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,987164-8,00.html#ixzz0hHavpxYG>

What is the greatest treasure in the universe, the most important thing to each of us which makes our lives rich and rewarding...?

It is the human ability to be aware and to choose a response... from that comes our freedom to live vital intentional lives.

We can take refuge in knowing that anyone can become a Buddha. When asked, “If you are not a god, not a magician, and not a human being, what are you?” Prince Siddhartha replied “I am awake” (“I am *Buddha*”)

We can take refuge in knowing the truth (*dhamma*): all things are impermanent; nothing is truly “mine”; and life is not perfect – dukkha exists.

We can take refuge in knowing we are all in this together. There is a community of sentient beings (*sangha*) committed to healing the pain we all share.

BUDDHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

I go to the Buddha for refuge.

DHAMMAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

I go to the Dhamma for refuge.

SANGHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

I go to the Sangha for refuge.

DUTIYAMPI BUDDHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

A second time I go to the Buddha for refuge.

DUTIYAMPI DHAMMAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

A second time I go to the Dhamma for refuge.

DUTIYAMPI SANGHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

A second time I go to the Sangha for refuge.

TATIYAMPI BUDDHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

A third time I go to the Buddha for refuge.

TATIYAMPI DHAMMAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

A third time I go to the Dhamma for refuge.

TATIYAMPI SANGHAM SARANAM GACCHAMI

A third time I go to the Sangha for refuge.