

## Construct our own "Western Buddhism"

Our hope and expectation is that the Western Society will be able to establish their own version of “Western Buddhism”, instead of Chinese Buddhism, Indian Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism or Southern Buddhism.

Today, the Western world’s understanding of Buddhist Dharma could be described as similar to the Chinese early stage of learning by “analogical interpretation「格義」”.

Whether is due to “Chan Practice「禪修」” being translated as “meditation” and regarded as a type of medical therapy, or due to the original purpose of “yoga practice” to stride for liberation being altered into exercises for weight loss and skin beautification, these indications reveal there is still a considerable distance before the western world can truly grasp the contents of Buddhism.

The main reason for such a large deviation is that many of the basic concepts in Buddhism do not exist in western philosophy. Therefore, a multiplicity of obstacles emerges when attempting to translate the language and interpret the concept.

To construe by using directly what may superficially appear to be comparable vocabulary and analogy will easily result in deviation and misunderstanding.

For example, when “Koun「空」” is translated as “empty”. How can “empty” convey the ingenious and intricate connotations of “superfine existence within the subtlety of space-time void”?

If the western world cannot stop interpreting “Koun「空」” as “empty” or “Chan practice「禪修」” as “meditation”, then profound Buddhist thoughts, beliefs and culture will never stride into the western world.

At its best, “Yoga” can only be an exercise full of forms and movements and “Chan Practice「禪修」” can only be a medical therapy. They have nothing to do with the goal of “Liberation「解脫」” in Buddhism.

Therefore, if today’s western culture hopes for real assimilation with Buddhist Dharma, the first and foremost task is to completely abandon the rash, analogous, and presumptive “learning by analogical interpretation”.

Instead, the true meaning of the Dharma should be explored with an open

mind and a beseech heart, as well as undertake further steps of comprehensive analysis -- a “Cultural Anatomy「文化解剖學」” on Buddhism. We must understand that any crystallization of ideas is rooted in a deep cultural foundation.

If we cannot cautiously and respectfully observe the different natures between each other’s cultures and merely speak to it rashly with analogical interpretations, then magnificent waves of cultural assimilations would be impossible to generate.

However, it is only just a basic effort to comprehensively explore and analyze the Dharma. Next step, we have to apply “Local Thinking” to establish “Western Buddhism” where it belongs. As the western culture also has certain strengths and specialties which could surpass both Chinese and Indian cultures.

Thus, under the premise of not defying the truth of Buddhism, the establishment of local “Western Buddhism” would inevitably be glorious and fantastic. We do not aspire to a uniform, rigid and fixed “Single Buddhism” but a “Buddhism with distinction” which integrates and assimilates creatively with local culture and ideology.

Only in this way, the truth of Buddhism could flourish uninterrupted in this world displaying the splendor and glory of the Dharma’s diversity and harmony.