

SGI and Sects Legitimacy

Question;

Hi my name is XXXX, I really like your YouTube channel. I do SGI Buddhism but am I don't know If I want to be part of it at time I wanted to ask have you ever did SGI Buddhism and If so an you share with my your experience about it.

Answer;

This is an often asked question and a very important one. One thing is obvious in your question; the title of "SGI Buddhism" is absolutely correct in that this is a personal version of Buddhist teachings interpreted by Daisaku Ikeda and for the purposes of his organizations benefits; not the correct teaching of Buddha for the sole purpose of leading all beings to enlightenment. This is the unavoidable truth of organizations as they first seek to survive as organizations before the priority of members. It can also be said of sects of every form. SGI, Nichiren Shoshu, Nembutsu, Shinto, Tibetan Buddhism etc... all inculcate practices and folklore of cultural histories and traditions as well as outright falsehoods in order to promote certain superiorities or political positioning. It is very lamentable, but expectable in human behavior. The only safeguard we have to see through these egoistic perversions is to follow the exhortation of Shakyamuni Buddha to study broadly ALL Buddhist scholarship, not to simply believe him or his words, but to seek our own truth in the meaning if his teachings as well as all teachings in order to arrive at our own insights, our own innumerable ways of understanding and truth. It is critical to our correct practice and development of clear understanding that we NOT limit our study to one Sutra alone, to one author alone. Read and study Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Tien-Tai Zhiyi, the Vimalakīrti Sutra, Lankavatara Sutra, Perfection of Wisdom Sutras, etc...

Now that I have made this statement I must address it meaningfully and carefully. It is very clear from the scholarship inside Buddhist practice (meaning sectarian study) and secular scholarship (meaning University professorial and student scholarship) that the Buddha's teaching contain strict admonition of Buddhist speaking poorly or derisively of other Buddhists monks and laypersons as a grave offense. Gossip and manipulation is unacceptable behavior. However, these admonitions can be easily understood as speaking to contemporary disciples and all practitioners of the teachings of that period, since the Buddha himself would say in a later period of his teaching that everything he had taught previous to what he now taught was to be cast off

and no longer practiced. And further that those who continued in the old path were not growing and not practicing his teachings correctly. In fact, the teachings of the eminent scholar Nichiren suggests that any Buddhist person or Buddhist Order that is practicing incorrectly is positioned as an enemy of Buddhism with the potential to poison unknowable amounts of people and should be quickly and forcefully reprimanded and corrected. So it has always been of great curiosity to me that there are so many “inferior” sects that have chosen to read only the first 3 periods of the Buddha’s sermons and cast off all the later ones that clearly labels them to be NOT practicing the Buddha’s teachings correctly. My humble opinion is that it is a straightforward matter of culture, Karma, and time. By the Buddha’s very prediction of this defiled age of the saturated EGO-mind, of greed, anger and stupidity, a great spiritual revolution is in the making. After over 35 years of my own study I hope to stand on the correct side of the argument.

Question;

So what is “correct” Buddhism?

Answer:

Certainly any one of us can see the merit of spreading Buddhism throughout the world. However, if it is spread with false statements and misrepresents the benefits of practice and feeds an organization with financial profits and creates enemies of Buddhism by virtue of its questionable interpretations and practices, well, this is exactly what Nichiren cautioned of from the Buddha’s clear admonishments on “correct” practice and study.

In this definition, the SGI is far from alone in promoting ideas of self-enrichment, wish granting, and even that Nichiren himself is the original incarnation of Buddha (which itself is an irrelevant statement if you understand what “Buddha” is). And, as we now live in the midst of the defiled age, we can see vividly the Buddha’s prediction of a very polluted (mentally) time of Buddhist practice. In our day there are constant and powerful elements of distraction, surveillance, enticements, materialism, and vice. To practice a system of deep dis-attachment is supremely difficult and all the more reason to practice it with absolute precision!

Question;

Yes I understand the situation we are in, not different than previous periods of history but much much more intense. Personal identity today has become not

only the 24/7 obsession, but is totally transient to trends and fashions. So please tell me, how can I know my selection of Buddhist practice is the correct one?

Answer: Consistent with the Buddha's teaching throughout his years of sermons, Shakyamuni was clear that Buddhism would perish without scholarship. You could equate his words with the 3 Bodies of Buddha. To understand this you must first understand the meaning of these words as spoken by the Buddha and within the contexts of his teaching. "Body" is a term in Buddhism that refers to all manner of phenomenon from our physical body to our thoughts; even our actions are a body of reference. So when we speak of the 3 "bodies" of Buddha we are talking about the 3 aspects of Buddha experience. This is also why we understand that 'Buddha' is not a physical being but in totality Buddha is a state of "being" that includes intellect and its environment. So one could say that the 3 Bodies of Buddha are 1) a strong mind, 2) a strong practice, and 3) a strong determination;

1. Strong mind is a mind that realizes the true nature of all phenomena and thereby liberates one from all cause of suffering – The Dharma Body (a realized and fully awakened form)

2. Strong practice is the steadfast meditations and behaviors conducive to achieving that strong mind by disciplined application – The Reward Body (excellent student and facilitator form)

3. Strong Determination is a life condition that seeks correct information and teaching to deepen the understanding of practice – The Manifest Body (physical form)

What we know today from excellent scholarship both inside the Buddhist community and from secular study of ALL Buddha's sermons and treatises written by notable scholars of each, is that the correct transmission of the Buddha's exact words AND meanings have always been of utmost importance to the leadership of Buddhist practice. For more on the topic of legitimate Sutra, please read my essay on "Sutra Legitimacy" and "Errors in 8 Schools". Links for these two essays are posted on my study resource page at threefoldlotus.com/home/home.htm

All of this is to say that you must familiarize yourself with the most contemporary scholarship to date if it is to make any real relevance and meaning to you. As I quoted from the Lankavatara Sutra the text where Buddha speaks strongly about the tendency of philosophers and students to

attach themselves to the exact word of the teaching rather than to grasp the meaning of what is being said leads them astray and will accomplish nothing. It is like staring at the tip of a finger when a teacher is pointing out a wondrous event. The student learns nothing about the event and is lost in the admiration of the teacher's finger.

You must also apply yourself to study and do as the Buddha repeatedly instructed, to NOT rely on the person, but to rely on the teaching. To seek the words in order to discover the meaning. To utilize your manifest body (mind) to develop deeper and broad understanding (reward mind) to attain awakening (Dharma Mind).

The most recent Buddhist Scholarship of the true and correct teachings of Buddha from within the Buddhist order is Nichiren. And, as a premier debater he wrote many treatises and essay showing both his tremendous knowledge of all the Buddha's sermons as well as the erroneous ones, but also his well documented sources and respect for his previous masters and scholarship.

You would do well to inform yourself through Nichiren's scholarship and follow it where it leads you. If you find someone who is or has followed that path and has credible answers for you that you can also verify, then you have found a compatriot you can trust and share discoveries with.

Ultimately the "correct" form of Buddhism for you to practice is the one that is free from defilements and organizational or personal interests and represents the totality of Buddha's teachings. The only way to really know these things is to dive into the material and follow scholarship. Study, study, practice, practice, and stay determined. When things don't feel right, question, that is your responsibility. If I am a source of reliable information I will continue to

assist your practice in any way I can, but do not assume my answers are enough for your particular situation. Follow your heart and mind, for in many ways they are both the same thing.

With much appreciation and respect,

Sifu Sylvain Chamberlain,

Abbot Threefold Lotus Kwoon

Quantum Life Buddhism