

Buddhism – continuity, change, globalisation essay sample

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Since Buddhism was established some 2500 years ago, much has changed and much has stayed the same.

Buddha remains the essential being of knowledge and faith, though some of his teachings have been modified. Though Buddha emphasised equality between the sexes, this ideology has changed throughout the centuries, as there is evident discrimination towards females and nuns. This has come about because of the seemingly natural predisposition of males to want to dominate. At the Nan Tien Temple, we did not see many monks around because they were elsewhere, doing more important things, the nuns were left to teach the school children and tourists. After visiting the Nan Tien Temple, and seeing the somewhat uptight nuns there, I suspect that this is also a change within the belief system. Buddha had taught tolerance and encouraged Buddhists to help and teach other people, though the Nan Tien Temple did not quite display this belief.

I feel that, from my personal experience (prior to studying Buddhism) that Buddhism has not had a great impact on the wider society. I think that this is immediately linked to the lack of knowledge about Buddhism. It seems that, while there are Buddhist groups in Australia, generally Australian society feels no great need for another religion to follow. Buddhism is, of course, a significant religion throughout the world, with many countries practising it as their “ official” religion.

When visiting the Temple, it was clear that globalisation has had a big impact on Buddhism. Firstly the fact that it has organised school excursions was a big hint. The gift shop was also one. The temple also has

accommodation for tourists – very modern and commonly seen hotel rooms, with televisions, radios and coffee jugs. In becoming commercially available to the public, the Nan Tien Temple shows that globalisation has an impact on everything, including religions we thought would not have succumbed to it.

Bhikku Bodhi says that “ From a multitude of loosely connected nation-states it has quickly evolved into a tightly knit global community linked together by rapid means of transportation and instantaneous media of communication ”

Bhikku Bodhi says that the world has become a “ global marketplace.” He believes that Buddha’s teachings should enable people to overcome the symptoms of globalisation – “ greed, hatred and delusion.” So in this way we see one Buddhist who refuses to be globalised, and thus proving that globalisation has had different impacts on Buddhism as a religion.

Venerable P. A. Payutto says that technology is positive if it follows 3 criterion : “ 1. Technology which is moderate.

2. Technology which is used for creating benefit.

3. Technology which serves to develop understanding and improve the human being. “

When visiting the Buddhist Temple I observed quite a few technological aspects that I wouldn’t have expected, though I believe that it matched Venerable Payutto’s guidelines. In the main shrine, the walls were lit with thousands of tiny lights, and the whole establishment was using electricity. Although my unenlightened reasoning would think that this would detract

from any genuineness of the ideology of light, the nuns and monks accepted it as the way of life, as technology is indeed a way of life for most of us. One thing that I did cringe at, though, was the mechanically rotating “Bathe the Buddha”. In the kitchen they used non-traditional cook-ware and heating trays for the convenience of a buffet style meal served hot for the patrons. This is where technology is a great help to the temple, as it can cater for its visitors while teaching them about Buddhism. In researching my assessment, I have come across many websites about Buddhism, by Buddhists, and this is clear evidence of the impact technology has had on Buddhism. The website “Buddha Net” sounds like it could be a joke, but interestingly enough, it is managed by Venerables.

Though globalisation and technology have certainly impacted on Buddhism, and there have been a lot of changes, the belief system of Buddhism, I believe, remains basically untouched. I believe that in this case, continuity has prevailed.