

*Messages from Buddha Heart Village*

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“I have preached the Truth without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrines; for in respect of the truth, the Tathagata has no such thing as closed fist of a teacher, who keeps something back.”

This is a very, if not the most, important message delivered by Buddha. It is important because it tells the basic nature of Buddhism - the Truth. An entity, a thing or a principle, which can be verified as truth is included in the broadest sense of the word “Buddhism”. Since the contents of Buddhism are not esoteric, it is, like science, a public treasure of knowledge for those who desire and have the ability to discover and understand.

What is truth? No one knows its definition. However, the lack of a definition did not and will not discourage people to search for the truth, nor will it diminish the hope of its discovery; as artists will not disappear because of the lack of a definition of good paintings; neither good paintings will stop bubbling up in the multitude of the bad ones.

We wish to know the truth though, sometimes, the apparent truth may even hurt us. Such strong willingness implies that we already accept, knowingly or unknowingly, two basic assumptions in our minds. The first is the assumption of existence; that is, truth exists, no matter how secretive or elusive it may be. This gives us the incentive to look for the ultimate truth. The second is the assumption of pragmatism; that is, the discovery of the ultimate truth will give us real happiness. This assumption limits our searching only to those which will be at least harmless to us, now and in the future. Furthermore, it established the foundation for compassion to all people and all living beings. Because of the pragmatism assumption, the scope of Buddhism is narrowed down to the ways which have been trodden and verified by Bodhisattvas and Buddhas, that will lead to real happiness in the end.

When the truth has not been found, we need some guidelines so that we will not search blindly and stray too far from our destination. Having learned from mathematics and sciences, we have a strong belief that truth, a true principle or a true way, must satisfy two conditions: condition of coherence and condition of correspondence. These conditions have been advocated for a long time by philosophers as the two theories of truth. However, I do not consider them as separate theories, but as complementary conditions which truth must satisfy.

Condition of coherence means that truth or a true principle cannot have internal contradiction. A principle with internal contradiction can at best be an approximation of the truth.

Condition of correspondence is not really a condition of the truth itself, but a relation between the truth (reality) and its representation (principle). This condition advocates that, if a principle is true, its deductions must have some correspondences to the reality. A true principle is, so to speak, an image or a print of reality. If a principle predicts N consequences, then these consequences must be found in reality. The more they are found, the more confidence we have in that principle. Newton’s law of gravitation is a good example.

When scientists studied the motion of Uranus, they found that its motion was “weird” and could not be explained by Newton’s law. Instead of discarding the law or ignoring the observed fact, Adams (in England) and Leverrier (in France) made the assumption that there might be another star

