

"How buddhism has been dominated by the monastic ethos of the east, and needs to be re-conceptualized from the ground up for our own cultures."

Is it our collective challenge to "reinterpret" the dharma, using our own idiom?

"In a sense, yes, but as soon as you set out to reinterpret the teachings, you risk putting a distance between yourself and the dharma. That's a danger." Stephen Batchelor

"Buddhism is not a property to be held or inherited in exclusivity, Batchelor argues, nor was it ever meant to be a fixed, static set of beliefs. "Buddhism, which teaches impermanence, contingency, dukkha (suffering) and unreliability, is itself also impermanent, selfless or inessential," he suggests. "http://www.huffingtonpost.com/james-rotondi/buddhist-backlash-stephen_b_521675.html

"The Buddha outlined these teachings in the Kalamas Sutra when a group asked him who they should believe when there were so many teachers around:

- Do not go upon what has been **acquired by repeated hearing**,
- nor upon **tradition**,
- nor upon **rumor**,
- nor upon **what is in a scripture**,
- nor upon **surmise**,
- nor upon an **axiom**,
- nor upon **specious reasoning**,
- nor upon a **bias towards a notion that has been pondered over**,
- nor upon **another's seeming ability**,
- nor upon the consideration, "**The monk is our teacher.**"
- **Kalamas, when you yourselves know: "These things are good; these things are not blamable; these things are praised by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to benefit and happiness," enter on and abide in them.**" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kalama_Sutta

To me, although Buddhism has a lot of teachings of the Buddha written in Sutras, it is not a religion based on a canonical book containing injunctions that stand for all time and must be obeyed. There are basic tenets such as the existence of suffering, no self and impermanence, but these seem so obvious that they do not need much in the way of proof or faith.

Buddhism changed as it moved to China and Japan by absorbing the influence of Taoist thinking, so it is hardly surprising that it should also change and adapt to Western societies. In particular, it is blending with psychiatric and psychotherapeutic techniques there. Possibly there could be a dilution of the power of the Buddhist teachings. On the other hand, each can complement the other. The old monastic model is no longer held to be the only or best way to practice. Lay practitioners are in the midst of busy lives facing all the stress and problems that involves, so perhaps Western psychology can assist in covering gaps not catered for in Buddhist forms of practice. That there could be such gaps was shown by the failure to deal well with the Western way of life by Tibetan and Zen monks who came to live in America.