

Teaching Buddhist Meditation: An Investigation into Self-Learning Methods

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Abstract : Meditation is in the process of becoming a globalized practice and its benefits have been widely acknowledged. The first wave of internationalized meditation techniques and practices was represented by Chan and Zen Buddhism and a new wave of practice has arisen in Thailand as part of the Phra Dhammakaya temple movement. This form of meditation is intended to be simple and straightforward so that it can easily be taught to people unfamiliar with the basic procedures and philosophy. This has made Phra Dhammakaya an important means of outreach to the international community. One notable aspect is to encourage adults to become like children to perform it - that is, to return to a naïve state prior to the adoption of ideology as a means of understanding the world. It is said that the Lord Buddha achieved the point of awakening at the age of seven and Phra Dhammakaya has a program to teach meditation to both children and adults. This brings about the research question of how practitioners respond to the practice of meditation and how should they be taught? If a careful understanding of how children behave can be achieved, then it will help in teaching adults how to become like children (albeit idealized children) in their approach to meditation. This paper reports on action research in this regard. Personal interviews and focus groups are held with a view to understanding self-learning methods with respect to Buddhist meditation and understanding and appreciation of the practices involved. The findings are considered in the context of existing knowledge about different learning techniques among people of different ages. The implications for pedagogical practice are discussed and learning methods are outlined.

Keywords : Buddhist meditation, Dhammakaya, meditation technique, pedagogy, self-learning

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