



The Dispersion of the Buddha's Teachings to the West
The Attraction of Westerners, at Buddha House in Adelaide, to the Buddha's Teachings

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My interest in Buddhism, its development in the West, and especially its development in Australia, derives from a series of questions. Why has it been the fastest-growing religion in Australia, as shown in the latest census (ABS, 2007)? Why do large numbers of Australians of non-Asian background go to local Buddhist centres? Why is the general public being exposed to Buddhist information in the media? How is it possible and relevant for an ancient Eastern religion to become popular in the lives of modern Australians? How have they translated these beliefs into their everyday life? Questions like these began my investigation into Buddhism at one of the Tibetan Buddhist Centres in Adelaide. In doing this, relevant questions were asked in an interview with 20 members. Using the collected data from the interviews, which contained open-ended questions, was the second resource to support and prove, or disprove, what others have found in related global research and in literature reviews.

The results of my study clearly support the hypotheses 1) most people who come to Buddhism at the Adelaide Buddhist centre do so because of the self-help psychological counterparts of Buddhist teachings and contemporary psychology; 2) Most of the 20 randomly-selected interviewees—Western Buddhist converts—in this study have a higher education level than the general populace.

Buddhism in the West is on the rise. On a global scale, hundreds of thousands of Westerners have adopted Buddhism in its different forms and many more of them have incorporated Buddhist beliefs and practices into their daily lives. This study has identified a number of factors which will be mentioned in the paper. However, regardless of what happens in the future, Buddhism in the West has made a significant contribution to and has had an influence on its people and its cultures. The range of people who have made contact with, and continue to be involved in, Buddhist temples and organisations will grow in various ways and create possibilities for its further adaptation in Western countries leading, in time, to a true 'Western Buddhism'..