

SQ21™

Buddhism Glossary

Belief System: A worldview that explains the origin of the universe, how to live a good life, and the meaning of life. Everyone participates in a belief system, whether it is a traditional religion, a secular worldview, or something else. Once made conscious, we can choose to adopt a belief system that fosters the growth of our spiritual intelligence.

Blessings: Good karma, the results of accumulated moral merit that may appear as helpful accidents or coincidences. Good things happen, teachers appear, etc. when the necessary causes and conditions to come together.

Boundaries: Limits, guidelines (as in setting a limit on someone else's behavior toward you). We teach other people what is "not okay" with us by setting limits on how they treat us. One of the Ego's key jobs is to help us set boundaries that keep us healthy. Insufficient Ego development can lead to an inability to set proper boundaries with others. In this case basic healthy Ego development is needed before any "surrendering of self" is advisable.

Centered: Grounded, stable; able to feel pain and joy deeply but not be fundamentally bothered or knocked off balance; equanimous. Seeing and acting from the Higher Self and/or Higher Power moment by moment. In sports, an athlete or dancer learns to operate "from their center" so that they are not easily knocked about and do not lose their balance. To "feel centered" is to have this sensation emotionally and spiritually.

Conflicting: Two things that seem on the surface to disagree, but are both true; paradox. For example, "Conventionally, I am an individual person separate from other individuals in the world." and "Ultimately, no substantial, independent self and other can be found." You can lean too far toward either truth and become unbalanced. The wisest, most complex thinkers can hold both things as equally true simultaneously.

Effortless Dance: When the dance and the dancer are one; when who we are is what we do. This is also the experience of supreme equanimity: all perceptions are seen to be empty and things are allowed to spontaneously happen of their own accord, without the interference of grasping or pushing away. This is the state in which the Ego and Higher Self are working in complete harmony with each other and our behaviors are direct manifestations of the Higher Power, moment by moment. The universal "dance" of creation is dancing itself through the dancer in a direct way requiring no effort. Although we can temporarily Peak Experience this state, it can also be more permanent. Synonyms: wei wu wei – the "action of non-action," flowing gracefully with impermanence, being in the zone, inspiration, when we feel like we're truly alive.

Ego or Ego self: The sense of being a separate, individual person and “doer”, the process of making meaning in the world, and the part of us which is self-concerned. The Ego is an integral part of the human being because it helps us to fulfill our basic human physical and emotional needs, but it is only a small part of the totality of who we are. When we live primarily from the Ego we often feel and act with selfishness, fear, or anger. Spiritual development includes realizing that we are more than the Ego and replacing harmful Egoic patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior with healthier Egoic patterns that work with the Higher Self. Synonyms: personal self, personality self, separate self, small self, instinctive self, lower self.

The Golden Rule: This rule is stated in a variety of ways in traditional Buddhist texts. In the Nalaka sutta of the Sutta Nipata, the Buddha says (referring “to beings moving and still”) “As I am, so are these. As are these, so am I.’ Drawing the parallel to yourself, neither kill nor get others to kill.”* – the Golden Rule appears in some form in all the major religious traditions and in many philosophies.

* “Nalaka Sutta: To Nalaka” (Snp 3.11), translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu. Access to Insight, 8 August 2010, <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.3.11.than.html>.

Higher Power: The ultimate foundation or nature of existence; ultimate reality. Synonyms from different strains of Buddhism as well as some theistic religions: Emptiness, Buddha-nature, impermanence, dependent origination, Rigpa, pristine awareness, God, Spirit, Allah, Brahman, Jesus Christ, YHWH, the Tao.

Higher Self: The Buddhist ideal is the enlightened or nirvanic person, but before we are enlightened the Higher Self is whenever we are motivated by the virtues of generosity, compassion, and wisdom. The virtuous intentions of the Higher Self are inspired by a vision of the Higher Power: impermanence or emptiness. The Higher Self is also that aspect of us which is intimately concerned and connected with all living beings; it’s the part of us that recognizes that there is no fundamental separation of “me” from “others”. Possible synonyms: moral or compassionate self, Buddha-nature, Atman, the Tao, Soul, the light of the Divine within me, Christ consciousness.

Humility: The honest recognition of our own Strengths and Weaknesses and the willingness to stay open-minded and learn from the opinions of others. Humility is a necessary component in the development of spiritual intelligence. Asking for help when we need it, reflecting on the vastness of the universe, and recognizing that we are always growing and developing are all ways to strengthen a healthy humility.

Integrity: Honesty, truthfulness, authenticity, “I walk my talk.” Aligning our words and actions to the values of our Higher Self. If our inner life is not aligned with our outer situation, we will live in disharmony and confusion. For example, if we only practice some aspects of the eight-fold path, such as right intention and right concentration, and neglect others, such as right livelihood and right speech, then our spiritual practice will not be embodied in all aspects of our lives. Likewise, if our spiritual aspirations are not

accompanied by action, then our spiritual practice will lack meaning and usefulness. We must apply the Spiritual Principles we learn through meditation and study to our daily lives in practical ways.

Intelligence: The ability to respond skillfully in real situations. A latent ability, such as a natural talent for music, does not become “musical intelligence” until you study and practice and develop the skill to actually play music well. Similarly we are all spiritual beings, but we are not all Spiritually Intelligent until we study and practice and develop our spiritual skills.

Intuition: Direct experience, insight. Knowing something and yet not necessarily knowing HOW you know it. Synonyms: gut feeling, a sense of direct knowing, a hunch, bodily response, inner wisdom.

Larger Reality / Larger Perspective: Thich Nhat Hanh comments that the Diamond Sutra says, “where there is perception, there is deception.”* Since the human perceptual process is limited, a fully inclusive perspective on what is real includes that which human eyes may not be able to see. With regards to spiritual development, adopting a larger perspective requires learning to see beyond the surface of things through insight in meditation. We also need the support of our community (sangha) and the teachings of mentors and experts (dharma), in order to perceive reality more fully.

* Hanh, Thich Nhat. The Diamond that Cuts through Illusion. Revised ed. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 2010. pg. 57.

Law of Consequences: Karma; the principle that, in some way, the universe “keeps track” of our intentions and actions and that we will see consequences from these choices. Whether you interpret the cycles and realms of rebirth literally, as in traditional Buddhism, or metaphorically, as the cycles of emotional reaction we go through everyday, the Law of Consequences says that the actions you take always have an impact on you and others, either immediately or in the future. Different spiritual traditions have interpreted this principle in different ways. For example, in Buddhism karma is seen as a completely impersonal force, like gravity, but in theistic religions this same principle is seen as being operated by a personal Higher Power who records our good and bad motivations and actions. Synonyms: moral cause and effect, living in the world of your making. (See Spiritual Principles for more information.)

Meanings: Interpretations, purposes, reasons.

Mission: Based on your Higher Self, your Mission explains how you wish to contribute to the world. Synonyms: life’s work, life purpose, calling, higher purpose, vocation, reason for being.

Mysticism: The pursuit of communion with, identity with, or conscious awareness of an ultimate reality, divinity, or spiritual truth through direct experience, intuition, or insight. Practical, meditative Buddhism can be considered a form of mysticism. In Islam the Sufi tradition is the mystical branch. In Judaism, one major source of mystical thought

and practice is Kabbalah. In Christianity it occurs in multiple denominations as the journey through the Dark Night of the Soul to “The Cloud of Unknowing.”

Non-judgmental: Keeping an open mind and heart. Being deeply understanding while maintaining discernment and the ability to take appropriate action as needed. At the highest level of compassion and non-judgment we see that we too might share another person's thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors if we were in his or her situation. This enables wise and compassionate responses.

Objective: Neutral, detached, evaluating something without preconceptions or filters.

Peak Experiences: There are many different types of peak experiences, but they are all temporary. Peak experiences often involve a moment of awe and wonder, an experience of being connected to, and part of, everything, an expanded sense of self beyond the Ego, or a feeling of timelessness accompanied by joy. They may also include experiential insights into the three characteristics of all things: impermanence, not-self, and dukkha. Peak experiences feel “different” from everyday perception. Some people report that colors are much more vivid and that everything – rocks, trees, clouds – seems “alive”. There is often a sense of profound peace and joy, and a sense of “everything is okay.” There is often a sense of deep compassion for and connection to all living things...a sense of being “at one” with everything. Sometimes people may feel transported outside of their body and sense themselves as Spirit independent of physical form. After a peak experience it can be a bit depressing or feel limiting to “snap back” into ordinary experiences.

Religion: A faith tradition, a specific set of teachings, beliefs, rituals, practices which belong to a group of people. These teachings and practices are designed to help the seeker connect with the Higher Power, in this life and/or the next. They will typically teach about how to live an ethical life; usually there is a founder and a sacred text(s). Hinduism has no known founder but many sacred texts. Most of the major religions have subgroups, denominations, or sects. For example, within Buddhism, Theravada, Zen, and Tibetan are three such subgroups, each with their own further sub-branches. (See the related definitions for Spirituality below, and Belief System above.)

Signals: A sign, things that change to alert me to a situation

Significant Others: Individuals you are close to whose happiness or sadness quickly affect you such as a spouse, children, relatives, or close friends.

Spirituality: The human need to be in connection with something larger than our Ego self, something sacred and timeless. Spirituality contributes to a fulfilling life and manifests in two ways: 1. with a “vertical” desire to be in relationship with the Higher Power; 2. a “horizontal” desire to be of service to other people, creatures, or the planet.

Spiritual Principles / Spiritual Laws / Universal Truths: Spiritual guidelines, rules, teachings or ideas that explain the right way to live, how human beings can achieve

happiness and inner peace, how our inner life shapes our experiences, or how things work in the world. For example, "craving (tanha) is the origin of suffering (dukkha)." Spiritual Principles are different from the laws of physics in that we cannot – at this time – easily measure them in typical scientific ways. Yet we can experiment with them in our own lives and see if they appear to work as taught. For example: Do moral behaviors create better relationships and more inner peace? Deep Change teaches that there are basically two levels of these: 1. simpler ones like the Golden Rule or various ethical teachings which explain what to DO in the world. 2. more complex ones that explain how to BE in the world, such as “be mindful of the present moment.” Synonyms: dharma, sage advice, life lessons.

Spiritual Principles - Basic: Deep Change defines a “basic” spiritual principle as one that is outer-world focused. Two examples are the Golden Rule and the Law of Consequences. The Golden Rule occurs in some variation in every major faith tradition and most philosophies: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”. Many of the first Buddhist precepts are elaborations on the Golden Rule. Outer-world focused spiritual principles discuss the consequences of our actions and whether they are ethical or not. The Law of Consequences says that the actions you take always have an impact on you and others, either immediately or in the future. Basic principles are usually taught before Complex Principles because they are more concrete and thus easier to understand.

Spiritual Principles - Complex: Deep Change defines “complex” spiritual principles as those that are inner-world focused. Because of this, the value of Complex Principles is generally more difficult to demonstrate than of Basic Principles, so it is important that we validate these principles for our selves, experimenting in our own experience. One example of such a principle is: “not resisting pain reduces suffering, and when our suffering is reduced we naturally become more compassionate.” Each of us must experiment with and validate complex principles in our own experience. The skill here is that you work to understand the inner world and the “rules” that govern the connection between inner world and outer world.

Spiritual Topics: Discussions of spirituality. For example: explanations or descriptions of the origin, meaning, or purpose of life and the universe, or of how to be a virtuous human being.

Strengths: The things we have a natural talent for or have learned to do well. For example, an area of comfort, confidence, expertise, or mastery, including in the skills of spiritual intelligence. Part of the spiritual exploration is discovering our particular natural gifts and talents and developing them. Knowing your strengths may help you discover your Mission.

Suffering: dukkha; mental or emotional distress. Suffering is created by our resistance to what is. We resist unchangeable facts (like our age) or we resist what is happening around us or to us. Suffering is somewhat avoidable, while pain, which is biological or neurological, may not be. Some challenges in life are inevitable. We can meet these challenges more effectively by not getting lost in upset (optional suffering). When we do

experience pain or suffering we can turn it to good by developing compassion for our self and others.

Transcendent Timelessness: The experience of stepping out of our normal perceptions of time and change and into the perception of eternity, or that which never changes. Paradoxically, this may also feel like being totally present in the now. Transcendent Timelessness may be one aspect of a Peak Experience, or it may be more stable. Repeated familiarization with this perception can dramatically alter our sense of ourselves and our relationship to life.

Values: Things, qualities, or principles that are important to me and influence the decisions and actions I take. Examples: family, health, work, success, honesty, compassion, generosity, devotion, dedication, meditation.

Weaknesses: The things I don't do very well, haven't learned how to do yet, or have no natural talent for. We all have skills that are underdeveloped, but we also have the ability to cultivate these skills and improve.

Worldview: This literally means "the way I see the world." Any worldview is made up of what we believe is "right" or "wrong", how we think things "should be," and what we think is true and false. People may agree with all, some, or none of someone else's worldview. Worldviews are shared by communities of people and based partly on geography, religion, age, culture, national citizenship, level of education, life experiences, and biological realities such as how our brains work. Our Worldview profoundly affects our perception of reality. We filter all the data we receive through our senses and through our Worldview so that we can make sense of it. Our filters inherently "leave stuff out" (especially what we don't understand or don't want to see), so each worldview excludes some information. Worldviews also "add stuff" by interpreting and making meaning out of what is being observed. Thus, by leaving out and adding in each of us can reach amazingly different interpretations of the same events. Worldviews, once made conscious, can be adjusted to be as accurate as possible. Synonyms: philosophy of life, belief system, personal filters, lens through which I see the world, my window on the world.

If you have any suggested improvements to this SQ21 Buddhism Glossary please email them to cindy@deepchange.com