

## **The Buddhist Broadcasting Foundation: Authenticity in Spiritual Programming**

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In the new millennium we have witnessed a resurgence of interest in religion, spirituality and philosophy of life. Unrestrained materialism, consumerism and individualism seem to have reached their limits and after decades of marginalization, religious questions about the nature and meaning of human life re-entered in both the public as well as the private sphere. It is evident we have now entered a post-secular era.

This religious and spiritual renaissance is not just a rebirth of orthodox faiths and institutions but marks an almost bewildering transformation of the whole religious domain. On the one hand we observe a return to extreme fundamentalist positions while on the other hand we can also distinguish new individualized patterns of finding meaning and religious development. Religious organisations and media function as an authentic beacon for meaning and values. Within this complex field Buddhism continues to enjoy an ever-increasing growth of interest and practitioners because of its peaceful, tolerant, rational and non-theistic nature. Consequently, we distinguish an increasing worldwide need for authentic Buddhist programming.

The Buddhist Broadcasting Foundation started broadcasting Buddhist programs via television, radio and internet in January 2001, at the dawn of a new millennium. BOS is part of the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) NPO in the Netherlands. The distinguishing characteristic of the public broadcasting system is that it operates independent of commerce and government. The primary objective of the BOS is not to aim for the highest ratings, but to offer added value to the field of broadcasting and to strengthen the cohesion in society by producing and airing programs focussed on the practical application of Buddhist insights in society at large, without religious dogmas. BOS airs programs for a wide audience, aiming at different target groups:

- *At all viewers and listeners, with programs illustrating the Buddhist influence on and affinity with Western science and culture.*
- *At all those who are interested in spiritual and mental growth, with programs which contribute to a healthy, enlightened society with spiritual practice.*
- *At Buddhists and all those interested in Buddhism, with programs presenting authentic teachers and insight from all Buddhist traditions.*

- *At diverse groups within the Buddhist community, with programs of a multicultural nature: Tibetan or Vajrayana Buddhism from Tibet, Mongolia, China, Nepal, Bhutan and Indonesia; Zen/Ch'an/Mahayana Buddhism from China and Japan; Theravada Buddhism from Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, India and Sri Lanka.*

The Buddhist aspect of the BOS has to manifest in the programming. The most important insights are: interdependence, karma and compassion. These are expressed by criteria, derived from the paramitas or virtues, which are touchstones for the form and content of the programs:

– *Generosity:*

Be open to others, not sectarian or dogmatic. Show respect for all living beings. Don't focus on your own narrow interests. Take responsibility for others by giving a voice to the oppressed and those in need.

– *Discipline:*

Respect and support general human moral values, above all the principle of non-violence. Persuade by being reasonable and avoid extreme positions. Keep in mind present needs and concerns.

– *Patience:*

Be consistent and persistent, and don't get discouraged when results fail to materialise immediately.

– *Exertion:*

Be inspired and inspiring, but without a missionary attitude. Don't get stuck in idealism, but find practical applications.

– *Meditation:*

Be open to yourself, strive for clear insight, try to put things in perspective and approach them with humour.

– *Insight:*

Contribute to the development of insight into the true nature of reality and appearances, individually and in their interrelatedness, and thus to personal development and that of a society in which insight and compassion are realised.

The BOS is the first independent Buddhist Broadcasting Foundation in the west to produce and broadcast Buddhist documentaries within a Public Broadcasting System. This means that we (co-)produce high quality programs that are not just about Buddhism but are developed and made from within Buddhist insight and perspective. This makes the BOS a

pioneer, both in the world of Buddhism and in the field of broadcasting. This position implies special responsibilities. We have to develop a way to transmit authentic Buddhist insights in accordance with the professional standards of quality of public broadcasting, and at the same time aim for a general audience. It is a big challenge to carry the responsibilities that are inherent with that. We are grateful to everybody who contributes to achieve this.

By this merit may we contribute to the realization of an enlightened society and the liberation of all sentient-beings.

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