



The shimmering colours of the peacock,
symbol of transformation

Awakening to Sanity (letter 8)

Being non-sectarian

Dear friend,

Yesterday a young man asked me: “Are you non-sectarian now?” It seemed almost as if he was asking for my new belief system. His background was the experience of having been a practitioner in a Buddhist monastery where one would only hear about the views and beliefs of that particular tradition as if it were the only valid tradition in the world. Years later, he is now a confessed “Rimay” (non-sectarian) practitioner who follows the teachings of various Tibetan Buddhist schools. “Yes”, I answered to him, “if non-sectarian means being open to and cooperating with practitioners of various traditions”.

However, there is a deeper meaning to being non-sectarian and an answer cannot be given so readily. Being non-sectarian is a profoundly insightful attitude towards life and spirituality. The Buddha’s definition of it is “not holding views as supreme”. It is the deep understanding that so-called “right views” are simply remedies to less helpful views. Inadequate views are successively left behind and the practitioner on the path works with more helpful ways of seeing reality. Yet any such helpful view is still an artificial representation of reality and will never capture it. Even the best view will eventually become an obstacle if one clings to it. So in that sense being non-sectarian means not clinging to views: being at ease to leave all views behind and to experience life directly, without the filter of views or concepts.

This is the understanding that I have retained from studying the Buddha’s teaching and listening to masters like Gendun Rinpoche and others. Whatever the view or opinion might be, however well it might be expressed and however helpful and true it might seem, it will never be more than a conceptual representation of reality. Understanding this we will not cling to ideas or words and not identify with views or philosophies but see them as what they are: conceptual representations of what one feels to be true. Other people will cherish other views. None of them is the reality; views are simply helpers to open the mind or heart. When the heart-mind is open, the view drops away. Being non-sectarian then means helping each other by whatever helpful view or non-view to enter that liberating Openness.

All the best, Tilmann Lhundrup