

Truly professional

No one can know our inner space better than we ourselves. It is also unwise to allow any outsider into our inner space. This is like opening up a hidden treasure-house to the public before we even know what these treasures are. It is like letting viruses into our vital systems. A religion that thinks for us is the most virulent of diseases. Our mind, use it lose it.

The Buddha speaks of the 7 treasures, so called because they are more precious to us than anything else on earth or in heaven. These true treasures are: faith, moral virtue, moral shame, moral fear, learning, charity, and wisdom.¹ These are qualities which truly enrich us so that we are no more dependent any outside things for our true happiness.

Faith here means trusting no one, but to try the fare before buying it, so to speak. People who think they are successful or dream of success, often look for religions they think will measure up to them. The impoverished try to find something that would enrich them. Yet they very often miss out the most important place to look into, that is, their own hearts.

Choose religion wisely. Some say, “Believe that you may know”; the Buddhists say, “Know that you may believe.” Belief-based knowledge, or knowledge-based belief? The choice is so obvious, but often we choose the wrong one, especially when we put our remote control into someone else’s hands.

True faith begins with moral virtue, that is, the respect for our body and speech. When we understand and accept that our body, our person, is impermanent, we begin to value it more. We learn to keep it healthy and useful. But there are also other bodies, thinking and talking, like ours. Just as we feel, they too feel. And we talk and communicate with them, and we need to do so in a manner that is mutually beneficial.

When we mindfully observe ourselves and others, we see this common attitude. If we have faith in this mutual goodness, there is a greater chance for an inter-faith bond that conduces to personal development. True progress arises from wise faith in ourselves.

Two aspects of moral virtue are especially vital to human society, that is, moral shame and moral fear. Moral shame arises from self-respect, that is, understanding that we are capable of true goodness. Evil or “sin” is what prevents us from seeing or cultivating this inner good. When we are able to see our own inner goodness, we can inspire others to see their own goodness, too. This is the beginning of a good society.

Moral fear is the understanding that actions have consequences according to their nature: good begets good, and evil evil. This may not be apparent at first because the evil seem to prosper, and the good suffer. The point is that people commit evil because they are not truly happy. If we are truly happy, we are unlikely to commit evil (unless perhaps we are duped into it by others). We must rejoice in the fact that goodness always triumphs in the end. A healthy society is founded on this wise faith.

¹ SD 2.5: http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/2.5-Moral-shame-moral-fear-Kantha-Sukka-Cariya-Ss-a2.7-9-piya_web.pdf

Most evil is done by those with little learning or wrong kind of learning; or, by those who hate or disrespect learning. True learning is about discovering that we are good at something wholesome, and we go on to act with this goodness. Originally, we call this a “profession,” that is, an avowal that we love what we profess and have wise faith in it. If we keep on looking with wise faith in ourselves and in goodness, we will find our true profession.

If we take a profession as a wholesome belief in ourselves, or as an enjoyable occupation that we profess, then our hearts will overflow with charity. The true professional is by definition truly charitable, too. A false professional lacks charity. Charity is more than just being kind to those who deserve it (for, often, this is gratitude). True charity is being kind and generous to others even when they do not deserve it. It drops upon all alike, as it were, like the gentle rain, enriching them into goodness. Such a life-style would indeed be difficult if we lack a professing heart.

Wisdom arises when we are able to relate to others as they would to us. Our minds and hearts become more expansive and embracing. The faults that we see in others are very often a reminder of our own, which keeps eluding us. The goodness we see in others is telling us that we too can rise to such heights, or even higher. Yet a true individual does not measure himself against others. His heart is unbounded like the sky.

Copyright by Piya Tan ©2010 101106