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25 December: “Buddhist Renewal Day”

The religious situation today, especially in Singapore and Malaysia, is very similar to that in the Buddha’s own days. We are exposed to many religious influences. As such, we often find the Buddha using terms very similar to the brahmins and other people of the times. For example:

- (1) The Buddha uses “God” (Brahma): the brahmins claim only they can communicate with God, but the Buddha declares that “God” is within all of us. When we cultivate the 4 divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*, that is, lovingkindness, compassion, altruistic joy and equanimity), we cultivate these godly qualities. (See [Tevijja Sutta](#), D 13)
- (2) The brahmins claim that only their prayers work, not any other prayer; but the Buddha charges that if we are not morally virtuous what is the point of prayer, meaning that even evil people will have their prayers answered! Constantly reflecting on impermanence of all things in the world, the Buddha guarantees streamwinning (the path to ending suffering) here and now (see *Saṃyutta* ch 25, eg S 25.1 = [SD 16.7](#)).
- (3) The brahmins claim that purification comes through baptism (*nahataka*), but the Buddha declares that his disciple, through mental stillness, baptizes themselves in the waters of mindfulness and comes out dry! (That is, free from suffering) (Sn 646, 705).

Considering the prevalent influence of evangelistic teaching on our loved ones and friends, especially in educational institutions, infusing them with their own religious values, let us work together to apply the Buddha’s open wisdom in seeing the True Dharma in the world.

Simple Joys

In this connection I would like to propose and declare 25th December as “Buddhist Renewal Day,” when we should recite the Namō tassa, the Three refuges (and the Precepts, as you choose) (and do more, if you like). Let us from now on, as Buddhists, forever associate “25 December” with “Buddhist Renewal Day” or “Tisarana Day,” if you like.¹

Buddhist Renewal Day is a day for Dharma-spirited personal reflection or communal sharing on the challenges we face as Dharma practitioners, how we can strengthen and deepen our Dharma commitment as individuals and as a community.

Let us celebrate the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, as the brahminee Dhananjani does in Dhānañjānī Sutta (S 7.1 = [SD 45.5](#)).

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¹ See how Christmas was originally a “pagan” festival, especially the winter solstice, and “converted” into Christian festival: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas#_ref-5