

Cyber Dharma

One of the most beautiful Buddhist teachings is **the Dhaniya Sutta** (Sn 1.2), a verse dialogue between the Buddha and the rich herdsman Dhaniya, in the comfort of his own home, 700 yojanas (789 km = 490 mi) away. The Buddha hears him through his divine ear or clairaudience, and later Dhaniya sees him hovering in the air (as a “mind-made body” or holographic image).¹ This is what we may today compare to a three-dimensional audiovisual digital communication.

Digital morality

Today, with computer technology, we are able to communicate with one another and learn Dharma online, as we have been doing on the “[Early Buddhism Page](#)” on Facebook. When we understand and observe the morality (*sīla*) of digital communication, we will have a similar, if not identical, effect as face-to-face teaching (which is, of course, irreplaceable). Yet, there is a further advantage, since such a means of religious instruction also keeps us safe from the hands of gurus (but they may still control the unwise in other ways). Hence, **digital morality** (**saṅkhyā,sīla*—a term I coined while writing this)—is vital for the proper application of holographic technology in the service of Dharma-training.

Hologram technology

Even as I write, this Star Wars technology is already available to us. In 2016, the I3D research group of Microsoft (the world’s largest digital company in the 21st century), after a year of work, introduced Holoportation (a 3D capture and algorithms technology) and Hololens (the first self-contained, holographic computer).

This will create greater distractions for the unwise to be more addicted to the quest for Pokemons. However, when properly used, it can be an amazing media of “massive open online courses” (MOOC), especially for sutta study and meditation.

Samsara more sophisticated

This is another step in digital technology, but a giant leap in the secularization of religion, eventually reducing it to cultish behaviour of individuals and small groups. Such a holographic technology will easily distract our unctuous modern clerics, always ready to update themselves. This is samsara becoming more sophisticated, rooting itself more deeply into our lives.

I suspect by the next 500 years (very likely less), traditional Buddhism (and religions) as we know then will lose their sting, and may even cease to exist. But ignorance and craving—the real roots of religion—will remain with us. So they will continue to bug us in a futuristic sense. We may have some idea of this in the Star Trek series (such as Star Trek Enterprise).

¹ Dhaniya Sutta (Sn 1.2), SD 50.20: <http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/50.20-Dhaniya-S-sn1.2-piya.pdf>.

End of religion?

In *Star Trek Enterprise* (3rd season, episode 12, “The Chosen Realm”), a cultish group led by a Triannon (a humanoid species) named D’jamat believe that deities called the “Makers,” constructed a huge network of immense spheres (like the *Star Wars* “Deathstar”) to transform the Delphic Expanse, their universe, the “Chosen Realm,” into a paradise. Sounds familiar? Looks like Technology will be our new God or Buddha.

One wonders what kind of Space Age Buddha will the future Buddhist theologians introduce? Will our new Paradise be relocated in the Delphic Expanse that the “Makers” have created for us? Personally, I will settle for the simplicity, safety and reality of the Buddha’s early teachings—with his holographic and face-to-face Dharma sessions.

Interactive holobuddha?

Perhaps, some inventive or imaginative Buddhist may, in the not-too-distant future, create first, a holographic meditating Buddha statue; then, why not give it speech to give teachings from the suttas or Sutras. Then, we have an intelligent, interactive, talking Buddha holograph. Will people worship this Galatea (Pygmalion’s statue that came to life)? What Sutras will they write for this image, and what teachings will they put into its/his mouth? We have done this before; so, it’s going to be a cinch.

Bamiyan Holographic Buddha

For the moment, there’s a silver lining. The *Daily Mail* (15 June 2015) of the UK reported that a Chinese couple, who had explored the world together, had used a 3D laser light show to restore one of the two sacred Buddha statues that were destroyed by the Taliban. The 1,500-year-old Buddhas of Bamiyan, which were carved into a cliff-face in Afghanistan, were blown up in 2001, after they were declared to be false idols.

But Zhang Xinyu and Liang Hong, a millionaire couple and full-time adventurers from Beijing, were so moved on hearing about the destruction of the ancient relics that they took it upon themselves to resurrect the statues.

The Bamiyan Holographic Buddha

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/peoplesdaily/article-3124580/Chinese-millionaires-create-amazing-175-foot-3-D-hologram-Afghan-Buddha-stature-destroyed-Taliban-bomb-blast.html>.



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