

Against the flow

None of us who are sane would plan to do bad or evil, or enjoy a mistake we've made. If we are habitually good, we are at least embarrassed, even angry, that we have blundered. So, we submit ourselves for judgement and punishment – so that we can learn from our mistakes from those who are wiser and more compassionate.

We learn best from those who explain to us why the bad we have done is wrong. Others may think that we must be punished in some way because we have “sinned” (an unbuddhist but appropriate word here). For, such people are playing God. They think they have the right or duty to judge but fear that others would know they have judged. They only want to be perceived that they are right and good. The word for this is “hypocrisy” or perhaps “moral cowardice.”

Hypocrisy is wrong because the action it hides tends to benefit only a group, a few or a single person. While the powerful, the rich, the respectable and the holy are few, the simple good people are many. If we are silent, then we, knowing, have held back the truth from the masses who can and must benefit from it.

With silence, we are accepted, even blessed, by the powerful, the rich, the respectable and the holy. What kind of acceptance or blessing is that? We will be no better than the powerful, the rich, the respectable and the holy, who think that they have done no wrong, or can do no wrong, or can get away with wrong because they are powerful, rich, respectable or holy.

For a few of us who are privileged to understand the Dharma deeply and joyfully, are often compelled to say things as they are – embarrassingly so, painfully so. To be silent in this case is like being hammered on the thumb, and not making a sound of it. We must either lack feeling or it is a soft rubber hammer. Or, we are amazingly good in hiding our real feelings and the truth.

But when we do speak out – we, despite our frailties and errors; we who lack power, lack wealth, lack respectability, lack holiness – must face being ostracized and cast out as pariahs by the powerful, the wealthy, the respectable and the holy. They will not give us “face.” But why is the Dharma truth-teller set aside from the masses? It seems as if the liberating truth must not be told for the benefit of the many.

For, if the truth be openly told, then **you**, the individual amongst the masses, will move against the stream. You will leave the crowd. Without the crowd, there is no more or much less, power, admiration, respect and holiness for those who thrive on them. They will then show their true colours.

The powerful, the rich, the respected and the holy may think, even declare, that they can get away with any errors of their way. I would rather make my own mistakes and pay for them now, then think that I can get away with them. For, karma is our shadow – it is darkest when the light is brightest. Where can we hide from that shadow then? It reveals every action that we have done just as it is.

Only dead fish go with the flow. If we, the living, swim with the flow, we may fancy that we are good swimmers. It is those who swim against the flow who soon learn that they are better swimmers than they have imagined. The Buddha is one awakened to the liberating truth that goes against everything that is the world. He sees the crowd flowing the wrong way and steps out of the crowd, to walk the noble path. Many wise people follow him and become free and awaken themselves.

We are heading for the same path of peace. Let us stop shoving and leaving the fallen by the wayside. How then can we walk on the path of awakening? It is never too late to see our goodness within, that it is the same goodness in others. Or, we can wait until the good are dead, and share regrets. Why don't you write my eulogy now – rather than after I am dead – and together we can work for the greater glory of the Dharma so that it prevails for many generations to come?

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[an occasional re-look at the Buddha's Example and Teachings]

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