

Neat TV chefs

The neat masks we wear

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Not neat at all

When we watch a TV show or any movie, for that matter, we see how neat and well organized things seem to be. But behind the scenes are a real mess, the true state of things. When we hope to get the approval of the crowd, we wear the neatest mask we have. We try to hide all our wrinkles, warts and woes.

We may even evilly delight when others compliment our neatness or seem to be jealous of it. This mask deceives both parties: we are **not** what we really are, and the other party see only what we really are **not**. It's like pretending dung smells nice.

It's like the Emperor's New Mask: the child of wisdom sees through it all. We are insultingly naked and painfully wretched underneath. This wisdom child tells us to be true to ourself and to others. Perhaps in time, we will wisely listen and be our true selves, and people accept us just as we are, as we accept others as they are. This is **lovingkindness**.

Neat indeed

There is another way of reflecting on this Raeside's delightfully insightful cartoon. Despite our life being mostly messy (whose is not?) we work hard to present a happy face to others. Happiness invites happiness: we enjoy (share joy with) one another, and brighten up our lives and shine away our darkness together.

Our life's **darkness** is always messy because we cannot really see what is or is not there. So we make up problems and find others to blame; if not, we blame ourself. Blame is just another kind of darkness: we don't know it is going. Notice what we **hate** in others tend to be just the very darkness that we are and the desires we want fulfilled.

When the show is over, we turn off the camera. We happily keep the lights on and clear up the mess. We are born in a mess, remember? When we die, another mess. In between, we are really **clearing up** one mess after another. This is the 1st noble truth.

It's natural for the mess to be there: things don't get cleared up by mere **wishing**. We may, of course, visualize some kind of desirable neatness. Then, we work on it: we now have a **purpose** in life. The worst thing in life is perhaps not knowing our life is a mess, and so we do not work to clear it up, until it is too late.

It's even more fun when we are able to clear up our daily mess with another, one loved and loving. We see this a lot in a really "cool" sangha environment, where monastics happily keep to the Vinaya and respect the Dhamma. They work together like milk and water, often looking at one another in the eye to see that they are all right, and the mess is cleared up.

This is what we should emulate: it's called practising the Dhamma. We accept the mess. We don't blame anyone for it. We work to clear it up: it's called **renunciation**.

We close our eyes in peace for the day. In time there is no more mess at all to clear up: it's called **awakening** in nirvana.

R625 Inspiration 382

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Cartoon: The other coast (Adrian Raeside, 2019).

