

Game rules

[Previously published as fb191020b piya]

Imagine when we have no access to the suttas; we don't even know that they exist. Then, we have no way of knowing what exactly the Buddha and the early arhats taught. We will be completely ignorant of the Buddha Dhamma.

Even worse, we will be blindly following the numerous Teachers, Gurus and Talkers of Buddhism today. With only our views and biases acting like a lightning rod in a dark sky clouded by the thunder and lightning (the Teachers, Gurus and Talkers), they will just zap into our lightning conductors and electrify our lives.

Properly grounded

Sadly, we have not grounded our lightning-rods in the earth that holds the Bodhi tree. So we are electrified and stunned by the enticing and inspiring Teachings of the Teachers, Gurus and Talkers. We think we have found the only true Guru and hid Teaching. We place him even above the Buddha, since we do not even know the Buddha.

We will be quarrelling with one another or hate one another because we are Buddhists! These are Cult Buddhisms each led by a charismatic personality who is adored more than the teaching.

Dhamma seekers

Dhamma teachers, monastic or lay, are only human. They sometimes promote themselves without knowing it, or we think they are promoting themselves. When we behave like their servants and slaves, we only encourage them to treat us so. We should all be Dhamma-seekers. At the right time, we should point out the wrong things they are doing or teaching; we should remind them of the Vinaya (many of the Vinaya rules were introduced because of complaints from the laity). These are our duties as lay followers.

If they are truly good monastics, they will listen to us and respect us. And we listen to them and respect them. This mutual respect is like a "social contract." The monastic almsbowl represents the "bond" between the monastics and the laity.

The monastics live in Vinaya and Dhamma, and teach the laity by example, and the laity support them respectfully. It is for this reason, true monastics do not need money: they are **renunciants**, working for awakening in this life itself.

Kind and right

We will be foolish to think that it is better to be "kind" rather than "right." We may then think of this as an excuse to accept wrong conduct and false teachings as being "all right." It is only proper to be both **kind and right**.

This is the Buddha's wisdom (right) and compassion (kind) which we should follow. The Buddha is both **kindly right** in showing us his example of Dhamma-living, and **rightly kind** in teaching us to gain the path in this life itself to attain what he has attained.

Basically, the Buddha is saying: Don't follow me, but follow what I myself follow: the liberating **Dhamma**. This beautiful teaching is found in, for example, the Gārava Sutta (S 6.2), SD 12.3. In other words, we do not, should not, follow any living unawakened or even awakened teacher. We follow the Buddha, which means that we should be like him who puts the Dhamma above himself. Sadhu.

The suttas are our gold standard and quality control. They teach us how to live our lay lives properly and happily so that we can reach the path in this life itself, even as lay followers. The Vinaya protects the monastics from worldly distraction, and keeps the laity safe from false or weak monastics

Temples and centres that love and respect the suttas become the protectors and propagators of the Buddha Dhamma to benefit countless people and generations. Otherwise, if we promote the teacher and not the Teaching, then we are encouraging disunity, and hastening the end of the Dhamma.

Rules define the game

A teaching is true not because a teacher says so, but because it is found in the suttas. We properly understand the suttas through our own practice of moral virtue, mental cultivation and wisdom, even on a simple level.

When we know the suttas, then, we will be informed and educated in the Dhamma, not helpless, not easily manipulated or confused by others. When we understand the Vinaya, it's like knowing the rules of our favourite sport. Football is not football without its rules. What is Buddhism if not for Dhamma and Vinaya?

R664 Revisioning Buddhism 261

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

Copyright by Piya Tan ©2020