

## **Change yourself**

Changing Buddhism, Buddhism of change  
[Previously published as fb211022 Piya Tan]

When we say, “Buddhism should change,” what do we mean? Do we mean that we should revise or reject:

the 3 characteristics?  
the 4 noble truths?  
the 5 precepts?  
the 7 awakening factors?  
the noble eightfold path?

When we change Buddhism, it is no more the Buddha’s teaching. It is called “Revisionism.”

We have revised Buddhism because of our greed, hate, delusion:  
because we want to profit from it;  
because we want to prove others wrong;  
because we have never really studied or understood the Dhamma.

Buddhism that we changed

Like it or not, Buddhism has changed after the Buddha’s passing. As Buddhism spread beyond India, it converted millions, and was, in turn, converted by the country’s culture. Hence, we have Chinese Buddhism, from which we have Korean Buddhism, Japanese Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, and so on.

We have Sinhala Buddhism, Burmese Buddhism, Thai Buddhism. Notice: the ethnic name comes first. This reflects the fact that the powerful people in those countries have conscripted and enslaved Buddhism into the serve of their culture. Chinese culture comes first, then Buddhism; Tibetan feudal lamas come first, then Buddhism; Sinhala priests come first; then, Buddhism. This is also called “Cinderella Buddhism” because Buddhism is not given the proper respect and treatment that it should.

How religion dehumanizes us

In other words, Buddhism is suffering a similar fate as Christianity, especially in western history. The Christians leaders and theologians quickly learned that God only speaks through them. They define God; hence, they see themselves as Almighty. This was how colonialism started during the Renaissance in the Roman Church. The Borgia Pope, Alexander VI (who was Spanish), divided the world between the Spanish and the Portuguese. Then, the European Protestant powers, too, decided to conquer the world: hence, you and I today are speaking English, Spanish, and so on.

Hence, today we see Catholicism still dominating the world but quickly waning away as human civilization continues to evolve. In real ways, we are still NOT fully civilized: we may have built cities and megapolises, but they are really urban jungles. There are many

dehumanized beings alienated and suffering in society's undergrowth, suffering because of religion (child molestation, etc).

We are rarely human

We may be civilized or civilizing, but when we look around at our world's politics, we see many cases where politics and religion are simply means of the few controlling the many, the crowd, and enriching themselves shamelessly. We must conclude that this is not a humanizing process. In fact, if we understand the Buddha's teachings: we may be civilized, but we are still **SUBHUMAN** in nature.

In such a civilization, we are still mostly **ASURAS** (leaders who measure and exploit others); **ANIMALS** (we helplessly depend on these leaders and systems, and do not mind or know that we are being herded and devoured by them); **PRETAS** (if we do imagine ourselves to be "free," we are caught in a uroboric (snake biting its own tail) cycle of being devoured by our own views and narcissistic habits. When social order breaks down, or when there are enough of us, we would act together in our own self-interest, as tribes, as herds, as swarms: we are **HELL-BEINGS**.

What the Buddha saw

The Buddha saw all this happening again and again in history, in society, in civilization—we are caught in these subhuman cycles—and what's worse is that we do not see the real disasters that are coming: **DECAY, DISEASE, DEATH**. The God-idea arose out of the common ignorance of the masses trying to explain away these 3 universal evils. We even turn these suffering states into **RELIGIONS**.

We have Body-based Religions that see the physical body as beautiful and desirable. There are Disease-based Religions, especially mental diseases, warped views of self and the world. Notice how the most powerful leaders in history are often also the craziest and most destructive. Then, most commonly, we have Death-based Religions, where this life is not valued. We must die, it seems, so that we are "born again," go to heaven, and so on.

How to evolve

Understandably, the Buddha teaches us how to counter and correct the madness of Decay, Disease, Death. We must first learn to be **HUMAN**: this means keeping the precepts: to respect life, property, freedom, truth and learning. Only when we are human, while we are in the human state (we need to cultivate it), can we better understand how our mind is shaped by our senses (what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think) into asuras, animals, pretas and hellbeings.

Through knowing our mind, we can free it from the senses, and become **DIVINE**, meaning we are happy and healthy in mind. But this is only a phase, a path, that we must take to gain further freedom, beyond the divine, to the **SPIRITUAL**. These are all conditioned states; hence, still subject to subtler forms of decay, disease, death. We must gain the highest

freedom, the unconditioned deathfree nirvana: this is like putting out the 3 FIRES of decay, disease, death.

Make the effort

When we understand all this, surely, we know better what needs to be changed. It is definitely not Buddhism, not the Buddha's teaching. We need to change what we have made of Buddhism. We have a deep well full of freshwater and where we live is dry and barren. Yet we throw rocks and rot into the well wanting the water to rise to us. Instead we should make pails with long strong ropes to draw out the water, or perhaps use a pump to pipe up the water.

Hence, we must make the effort ourselves. We must change how we view ourself, others, society and the world. Buddhism teaches us how to wholesomely change ourself; for, we are the world.

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