

## Answer for good

Social media like Facebook (FB) can turn loose the beast, demon or Gollum in us, or, with wit and vision, we can bring out the best in one another, especially when our common love is the Dharma of the historical Buddha. Many of us appear digitally on FB, a lightful screen of pixels, with some fixed views about the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. The reality is that we are only showing some “private truths” (*pacceka sacca*) that even we ourself don’t really understand.

However, with a calm mind and open heart, we can learn a lot of good stuff on FB, and more so, change for the better. One of the most fascinating realizations I’ve had after half a century of worldly, religious and Buddhist experiences is that what I know, my understanding of things, now will change in time. I am so sure that what I know now is definitely right. This was just what I thought, say 10 years ago. Since then, I’ve learned never to limit my knowing and learning to just knowledge.

KNOWING is an active experience, not a set of facts or information. That means knowing is a tool for us to engage the world and adjust ourself accordingly. This is called LEARNING. Hence, knowing is a vital basis for learning. To learn means to see the connections – the causes and effects – working together to make us understand things better.

Much of what we claim as “Buddhism” today, and what we practise as “Buddhism,” have nothing to with what the Buddha taught. They have been taught by some unawakened or worldly guru in India, or Central Asia, or China, or our own country, even our own temple or centre, and after excessive repetitions, we assume – by conditioning and correlation – that they must be right and good. A lie repeated over and over can appear as truth; ritual behaviour tends reinforce a habit, especially a bad one. That is why the Buddha warns us that “attachment to rituals and vows” is a hindrance to spiritual cultivation and awakening.

For this reason, too, I realize, after exploring all kinds of Buddhisms over some 50 years, that we don’t really need most of them. We don’t need the promises of blessings, fortune or paradise that the teachers themselves have not tasted.

What we need are teachings and experiences that reveal to us or remind us of CHANGE, impermanence, and how we can change for the better. Otherwise, we are just like dead rocks on the sea-shore, washed by the tide, burned by the sun, stuck with barnacles, covered by sea-weeds and crushed by the weight of others.

For that reason, I keep my Facebook page dedicated to EARLY BUDDHISM, the story and teaching of THE HISTORICAL BUDDHA. I am not out to remove other forms of Buddhism or other religions: they will be there as long as we do not or cannot think for ourselves, and we want something more than personal cultivation or self-awakening. My curiosity is in what the Buddha has taught that can really help us better ourself and to learn from others so that we can journey faster and closer to awakening.

For that reason, I do not bother too much with questions that do not concern our Dharma growth. I am especially excited by the TRUTH and BEAUTY of the Buddha’s teaching. The truth will free us from wrong views – ultimately, from all views –

because we can see things as they really are. Most of us are looking at only one side of the mountain and then showing around photos of it, claiming that that IS the mountain. We are not wrong, but we are not right either. It is only part of the whole truth. It's like when I say that you are tall or short, how good you look, and that is all I care about you.

The "whole" truth gives us the full picture: the common denominator, the "measure" of all things. Firstly, all things are IMPERMANENT, changing, becoming other. This is a great place to start learning. When we see the truth, we feel liberated – this the BEAUTY of the Dharma that evokes joy in us.

Secondly, what we learn will challenge us to let go of old ideas, our old "selves." We are not alone, even inside our heads. Our head speaks many voices; our heart wears many faces. We are good at pretending, even better at deluding ourself, especially behind the Facelessness of Facebook. We make Friends on FB but we rarely ever really know them.

If we can discuss or debate face to face in a public forum, I don't think many of us would have the courage or cunning to say what we dare to say on FB. There is the KARMA of words, and we become the kind of words we throw up or spit out at others.

Hence, I am guided by the principle of Truth and Beauty in learning and teaching Buddhism. Before I respond with a remark or answer a question, or even publish a birthday greeting, I ask myself: How can I make this person happy and perhaps learn something. Sometimes, by just being silent or terse, we are more effective in helping a person discover some vital truth about himself or ourself, or both.

We cannot really teach others when we are ourself are unawakened. We can only inspire one another to look within ourself to see our own goodness and joy, and not to be fooled by what is outside of us. So, I hope this FB page (<https://www.facebook.com/piyatan>), dedicated to the Buddha Dharma, will help us LOOK WITHIN and see the true light.

The truth is in here (the heart) NOT out there!

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