

Look ... you shall find

[Previously published as fb 181203 piya]

According to the Puggala Paññatti Commentary (PugA 229 f), statistically,

- 2 out of 3 (over 66% of people) measure others by **looks** (rūpa);
- 4 out of 5 (80%) measure others by their **voice** (how they sound) (ghosa);
- 9 of 10 (90%) measure others by **holiness** (lūkha);
- Only 1 out of 1,000 (0.1 %) measure others by **the truth** (dhamma).

Attractive preacher

Statistically then, over 66% of us like a teacher or speaker, not because of the good that he teaches, but from how **attractive** he or she is. Or, rather, how much we are physically attracted to a teacher, a monk or a nun. There is the case of a “part-time” monk who wears the monastic robes only when he teaches his group of adoring middle-age women. His favourite sutras are those about demons and the merits of donating to him.

Recently, in Thailand a photo of a monk with superb 6-packs (with only his torso visible) went viral. Ironically, some young women and men, and those not so young, were motivated to take up exercising and physical training (but not studying suttas or meditating). The monastic elders were rightly unamused about the show-off. How does this help in body-contemplation?

Unmusical hymns

Then, there are those who promote Buddhist “hymns,” which are mostly offbeat songs with bad lyrics. Those who love classical music or good music often get goosebumps but keep them under a polite smile. Once when someone complained that we should raise the standard of local Buddhist music, a Buddhist music master retorted that he dreamed that the gods approved of his music. That was good enough for him!

Having a good voice and delivery are clearly great blessings when what is delivered is the Buddha word. The Buddha’s voice is so resonant and soothing that, according to a Vimāna Vatthu story, a frog enraptured by it, accidentally pierced to death by an unmindful farmer’s stick, was right away reborn as a beautiful frog-deva in all his radiance. He appeared before the Buddha to show his gratefulness.

FB ("Fake Buddha") Quotes

Notice from our FB, how many photos of Ajahn Chah (whom I deeply respect) and other noteworthy luminaries (not all Buddhist) with all kinds of sayings approved by the posters. When these postings lack proper citations (but merely attribute them to “The Buddha,” “Ajahn Chah,” “Albert Einstein” and so on), they are likely to be **fake**.

There are also blogs that discuss such Fake Buddhist Quotes. It's fun when someone actually takes the trouble to quote them correctly and give the right references, and such info is posted just below the Fake Quotes.

Holiness, or rather the look of holiness, is merely a measure of charisma (an inexplicable attraction attributed to God or Karma). We don't really know how holy the person is, if at all. Even when we piously declare "He is an arhat or arahat or arahant!" it either means we are one, too, or we are not – what does that say us?

Shadowing the light

Then, there are speakers who slyly relate how they meditated with snakes, spiders and scorpions, or how deep their meditation is, or how kind or how clever they are—meaning how stupid, etc, we are. Hence, it is not helpful when we start a Fan Club for such an icon: it will only slow down whatever progress they might have made, and upset us to read writes like this.

We, the Fans, would be more cool when we ourself meditate or at least be mindful of impermanence instead of shadowing the light. We don't even have a Buddha Fan Club, although there are many Buddha Bars out there.

Looking outside

Finally, the Commentaries wryly observe that hardly 1 out of 1,000 (or 0.1%) of us really listen to a teacher who actually teaches Dhamma! But we get hotly excited when we learn that Tina Turner or Richard Gere are Buddhists.

What we may not know is that Tina belongs to a "Buddhist" cult that only worships a Japanese "Buddha" and the apocryphal Lotus Sutra that degrades the Buddha and the arhats!

All these are cases of looking **outside** of ourself at worldliness. We fail to look at what is good and precious within ourself. Numbers, fan clubs and glamour do not count in the Buddhism that is the Buddha's teaching. That 0.1% makes your choice of Dhamma precious like a diamond among the Ganges sand.

Get real with Buddhism

This reflection should be read with the preceding one: "[Path without number](#)" (R587).

Recommended reading: [The teacher or the teaching?](#), SD 3.14.

R588 Revisioning Buddhism 227

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

Copyright by Piya Tan ©2019