

“Resistance is futile”

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Two very powerful manifestations of **delusion** are by way of memes and charisma.

Memes

Memes are usually physical objects like impressive buildings, golden images, sacred relics, holy chants, mesmerizing rituals, and so on. Such memes serve one major purpose: to impress us with their success and bigness, so that we are absorbed into their structure. Then, we think like them (we actually stop thinking), act like them; we become **them**. We are simply cogs and wheels of this massive structure that really has nothing to do with the Buddha’s teachings of renunciation.

The **Borgs** (Star Trek: The Next Generation) are cybernetic organisms, connected in a “hive mind” called the Collective. By process of “Assimilation,” they forcibly transform individual beings into “drones” by injecting “nanoprobes” (tiny robots) into their bodies and surgically transplanting cybernetic components onto their bodies.

“Assimilation” is another word of religious conversion, when we simply accept the views of a Religion, Group, Cult or Guru. We wear uniforms to identify with the Group or Guru. We think and act like the Group (the “Collective”). We have not changed for the better in any way.

Like the Borgs, the **Replicators** use nanites (microscopic robots) to invade our body and mind converting us into Replicators) (Stargate SG-1). Related to these Replicators are the Asurans who act like a plague against all life (Stargate Atlantis).

In simple terms, this is what happens when we join a Religion, Church or Cult. We do not “join” early Buddhism. It is a path of awakening that we must each **walk** for ourself (with others, of course) through self-effort and self-awakening, feeling peace, joy and wisdom step by step in our lives.

Charisma

In the Rūpa Sutta (A 4.65)¹, the Buddha warns us not to fall for teachers because of

- (1) their looks (*rūpa*),
- (2) their voice (*ghosa*);
- (3) their austerity (*lūkha*); or
- (4) their teachings (*dhamma*).

These are 4 ways or “measures” by which we “empower” a person to become **more** than he really is, or even what he is **not** at all. Psychologically, we are said to “attribute charisma” to

¹ Rūpa Sutta (A 4.65), SD 3.14(7): <http://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/3.14-Teacher-or-teaching-piya.pdf>.

the Guru or Teacher; to regard him as bigger or better than oneself, as God, Buddha, and so on.

To be attracted by “looks” means we like a person or Teacher because he is attractive, or we feel secure since he reminds us of someone who loved us (like a parent or lover). This often happens when we are emotionally insecure so that we are hoping to “transfer” our idea of a “love” or “security” to this person or Teacher.

To be attracted by “voice” means to like the voice of the Teacher or the sounds of religious music, songs, chants, rituals and so on. It may be a good start for us, but this is only a feature of the religion, like the packaging of a product. It is something from **outside**. It is our own true voice that we must understand so that we will better ourselves.

To be attracted by “austerity” means that we are moved or impressed by the external “holiness” or apparent strictness of a Teacher, or we believe his claims of strange experiences, or powerful meditation or attainments (such as being an “Arhat”). No matter how good the Teacher may be, we are **not** the teacher: we have to deal with our own self, and no one else can understand us better than we ourselves when we get down to it.

To be attracted to their “teachings” means to follow a Teacher because we think that his teachings are “holy,” “powerful,” or “perfect,” or because they agree with our own views. This would be like the blind leading the blind. The Buddha reminds us that even famous Teachers have wrong views.² We must discover what views we hold, and how these views work, and how we can improve ourselves by seeing and understanding our true self.

The path of awakening

We go to school and have teachers; we go to college and university, and have lecturers and professors. We do not follow them around or worship them, but follow their **lessons** and **teachings**. People don’t change us, but their actions and ideas help us see ourselves better.

The Buddha’s actions, teachings and awakening have been recorded in the **suttas**, which have come down to us over the last 2,500 years. They are like computer programmes that we need to run in our “computers,” that is, our body and mind. We run:

the programme of **moral virtue** by bettering our actions and speech (keeping precepts),
the programme of **mental concentration** by understanding our mind (mindfulness and meditation), and
the programme of **wisdom** by freeing our mind (understanding the impermanence of all existence).

When we do this properly as a **living experience**, we will reach the path of awakening just like the Buddha and arhats. We do this in our own time and ability, living happy and wise lives as lay practitioners or as monastic renunciants.

² Ahita Thera Sutta (A 5.88) SD 40a.16: <http://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/40a.16-Ahita-Thera-S-a5.88-piya.pdf>.

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

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