

Your friendship and support have happily brought us thus far to welcome a great year 2020 and a new lunar year of the Rat. Sadhu.

May this year bring you a calm and clear mind to make right and good choices that will better your life and of those near and dear to you.

## May all be free

A radiant heart for all renunciants  
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Unless we are awakened, it is not easy not to dislike some people, especially those we see as doing wrong, saying bad things, and we know are thinking wrong things, too. Often, for various reasons, even out of **guilt** (which is odd for Buddhists), we pretend not to dislike anyone. We even euphorically declare: “Everything is all right! Everything is beautiful!” The reality is that we are afraid to be seen as negative in any way: our **image** seems to matter more to us than truth and reality.

Such pretences are more common amongst the better known Buddhist teachers. In fact, the “higher up” they are (or think they are), the more likely they are to cling to their masks of supersweet pretences on account of **self-righteousness** or arrogance (*māna*).

Often, it comes to a point where we no more understand what they are saying. We hear all their words, but we simply see no heart to the matter. We only feel lost and sad about this. They seem more troubled than we ever were, and this is most troubling.

## Dependence on others

Since we are not even on the path yet (we may be Bodhisattvas or certified Bodhisattvas by non-Bodhisattvas, but we are not yet even streamwinners). Hence, we are surely caught up in some level of **narcissism** (a modern name of self-identity view, *sakkāya, diṭṭhi*).

This means that we tend to depend on **rituals and totems** for self-affirmation: we need the approval of others. This is a modern reality of “attachment to rituals and vows,” *śīla-b, bata parāmāsa*).

Ritual as a fetter means repetitive behaviour which we believe or hope will become real or true, like doing ritual bows or burning lots of joss-sticks.

Totems are things (objects) we keep or use in ritual (like a Buddha pendent or some holy object) thinking that it has its own power to help us. This is a serious false view.

This fetter refers to our tendency to think that when we **ritually** repeat something, even a lie, people will see it as a truth. When we merely show that we have **vowed** to live as monastics (the way we look and behave) is good enough. What we do in private does not matter to them.

## **Love and acceptance**

After all, people love appearances and charisma. People tend to respect and believe us when we **appear** to be respectable, not because we **are** really respectable (on account of keeping the precepts, being mindful and wise). This is the way of the unawakened world.

Such weaknesses make us **doubt** the Buddha Dhamma, so that we are caught in the world. May we, as renunciants, not spend too much time on social media, but spend more time searching the suttas and learn to calm our hearts to see the path in this life itself.

## **Breaking the fetters**

When we are caught in deep admiration and attachment to **gurus** and teachers, may we remember the Buddha's practice and advice of putting the Dhamma above us and above the teacher. It is our duty to remind the teachers to keep to the **Dhamma-Vinaya** since they are or should be more respectable than we are.

May we all see the Dhamma within ourself.

We are bound by the **3 fetters** of narcissism, superstition and doubt. We begin to break them by keeping to the Dhamma-Vinaya. We don't need jhana to do this: only diligence in the precepts, mindfulness of impermanence, and cultivating the wisdom of the suttas. Just as the Buddha taught us in the (Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta (S 25.1), SD 16.7.<sup>1</sup>

## **Remember the Dhamma joy**

We all began Buddhism with a heart radiant with joy and faith. Please join me now to inspire all our Dhamma friends to enhance their radiance of joy and faith, especially in the face of so many challenges in the world today.

May everyone reading this, and those whom we are thinking of, **be well and happy**, and walk closer towards the true path and reach it in this life itself.

## **True renunciants**

We rejoice in those who have left behind their **loving family** and great wealth for the true sangha life: may they reach the path this life itself.

May those who consciously or unconsciously seek fame, desire respect and popularity, gain even greater fame and respect so that they value solitude and reach the path in this life itself.

May those who think in terms of class and status see how poor and lowly they are to be so narrow-minded. May they have a **big heart** to accept others unconditionally and see the path in this life itself.

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<sup>1</sup> See SD 16.7 at <http://dharmafarer.org>.

### Let us renounce truly

May those who claim that they neither touch money nor have wealth, but control great wealth and property, have the Dhamma wisdom and strength to understand how all this will affect them. May they see the path in this life itself.

May those monks, especially of Sri Lanka, who see little importance in **the vinaya**, see its true value, to see their own potential to reach the path in this life itself.

May those monastics who wear the robes of renunciation but are engaged in gainful employment in all kinds of work, religious or secular, realize how they, too, can truly renounce for the path in this life itself.

### True culture

May those monastic working in *race*-based temples and organizations understand the true culture of Buddha Dhamma, and inspire locals to grow the Bodhi tree in their own land, as has happened in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand and now in the west.

May those monastics who preach violence and hatred against other races and religions, remember the great arhat Angulimala, the parable of the double-handed saw (Kakacūpama Sutta, M 21)<sup>2</sup> and such teachings to feel more secure, and see the path in this life itself.

Living under pretences and doing bad is really silly and painful. We think that others do not know, or will never know.

In the **Ādhipateyya Sutta** (A 3.40)<sup>3</sup>, the Buddha reminds us:

Alas! Sir, you, the witness  
Look down upon your own self!  
How can you hide from the bad that there is  
In your self from the self?  
The devas and the tathagatas [buddhas-thus-come]  
See the fool living falsely in the world.

May we who love the Dhamma above everything else, have the **wisdom and courage** to see true reality and attain the path in this life itself.

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

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<sup>2</sup> See SD 38.1 at <http://dharmafarer.org>.

<sup>3</sup> See SD 27.3 at <http://dharmafarer.org>.