

Changing tires

[Previously published as fb190911 piya]

I wonder how other septagenarians (70-year-olds) think when they have reached thus far. For me, each birthday is a countdown: **1 year less to go**. That's why I think scholars publish festschrifts and "iho" (in honour of) commemorative volumes for aging scholars: they are going to die. So let's write their eulogies now.

And for us lesser beings and "squints," we only get bigger cakes, sweets and spices, lots of cholesterol for shortening our journey. I actually enjoyed them as my health so far allows me to eat anything (almost) that I want.

But when it comes to birthday countdowns, it's the happy smiling presence of Dhamma friends who celebrate with what else: a special sutta study (as merit-making; then, aspiring for streamwinning).

Regarding posterity with compassion

As you know by now, if you have been following my reflections thus far, I try to be intimate and true in them. It's a blessing to be able to clearly, joyfully and usefully express ourself. Often, I envision people in the next generation and after-centuries reading these reflections. What will they think of us if we should fail them now?

At the beginning of the **Bodhi Rāja, Kumāra Sutta** (M 85), Ānanda declares that: "The Tathagata regards posterity with compassion." (SD 55.2)

Don't be an insect

Anyway, as a septuagenarian, I am feeling ever more **tired** of tiresome people, which actually covers a lot of Buddhists. (No need to mention non-Buddhists.) I feel tired just watching how they crawl to temples and talks time after time, like insects in a cycle. Yet, they do not change for the better. Are they afraid to change or cannot: does change tire them? Perhaps the tires of their vehicle need a change?

We keep looking for that Teacher who will change our life. All we are doing is following the crowd, and thinking that the bigger the crowd, the more enlightened the Guru. And if the Guru smiles at us, responds to our jokes and small talk, or better, hug, us: Wow, that must be an Arhat or even a Bodhisattva! That's what Buddhism is mostly today: samsaric transference.

A few good people

Notice how the Hongkong rebels were raising the British flag and the US flag (I'm only using the imagery here): Asians love foreign things; we still think that foreigners, white-skinned or not, are our salvation, our nirvana. The good thing is that we are embarrassed to say this nowadays; but I have heard this said when I was younger. We have improved slightly.

Anyway, the suttas and the goodness of the teachers I have known, remind me that there is always some good in people: they are clouds with silver linings; fireflies in the darkest nights.

I have been able to work fully with the suttas, unsalaried, with my own house-library of the Tipitaka and translation work, is because of the constant support the handful who truly love the Dhamma and respect the suttas.

Local monastics

Another good sign is that there are more local monastics who are good sutta teachers and Dhamma practitioners. Just a handful, but a very good start from a generation ago. These few good local monastics are clearly better than the foreign Buddhist missionaries and high priests of our times.

They do not regularly remit thick wads of local currency over the bank counter. They do not delude us with the ability to “transfer” merits to the dead who are no more there. Their retreat centres do not look or feel like high-class motels. Rich and poor alike can visit them since we do not have to pay a lot of money so that “they” can “pass it on” to our future avatars (what if we are subhumans?).

Win friends, influence people?

These are not easy things to say, but terribly true. Saying such things are a cry from the Dale Carnegie “win friends and influence people” approach of Vihara Buddhism. What do we when our house is on fire?

My questions are: Do we really know what we are learning from “Buddhism”? Do we really know where we are heading as “Buddhists”?

Questions

Can we fairly answer these questions? What questions? We do not even understand what they are. We will not be able to understand, much less, answer these questions, when we only see a nice well-bound thick volume of Suttas, commercially published, and worship it as a fetish.

Commercial translations leave out significant parts and pieces, many passages are shortened, “monk/s” are omitted by the thousands; they profit by the millions. Yet, commercial translations may still be useful as holy tomes for worshipping.

The lion roar

We will only rightly understand what is really going on, when we aspire to know every sutta, to seek and search the suttas. To do this, just begin with any one of them.

In due course, we will become that brave and wise young lion on high, seeing the excited crowd of jungle creatures all stampeding towards the great ocean. We can only roar loudly so that they stop in their tracks. Then, they must work to discover what has caused the stampede in the first place.

Read the **Duddubha Jātaka** (J 322), but don't stop there until you hear the lion-roar from the Buddha himself. Meantime, don't get lost in the crowd: look for a beautiful safe tree, give it a good hug; then, sit peacefully under it: close your eyes and **see more**.

R646 Revisoning Buddhism 252

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

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