

Eyes wide shut

Some things about Buddhism we must remember

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As devout Buddhists, we are likely to obsequiously accept the words and ways of priests and gurus. We often accept what they say as sacred, and what they do as exemplary. As long as we do not really know the suttas, we faithfully shadow and slave for the guru-figure in every way. This is the way of the ideal faithful believer (true of all religions).

If we see religious priests through tinted glasses of faith, it is likely that we also believe that we cannot be free from suffering nor gain good *here and now*. Being an **arhat** is impossible these days (we think); don't even think of becoming a "lowly" streamwinner.

The high priests of religion tell us this; Mahayana gurus, too, claim that it is not even worthwhile to become arhats, not to speak of streamwinners. Who are we lay followers to question such authorities? Is this right?

As long as we do not know the suttas, we will never know what is really right or really wrong.

Are merits things?

For example, we are conditioned to think that we are unable to **be** good here and now. Instead, we should accumulate the merits of our present acts but can only harvest their fruits in the next life.

However, they tell us, we can "**transfer**" our merits and wealth to the dead (whether they need it or not, whether they can get it or not). It's like remitting money to a foreign country: the deal is that we must "donate" remittance fees to the priests and gurus.

The guru claims: "You can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead!" Give your money and wealth to us gurus, and you will get back even more in the future! This is called Tartuffism, the roots of which are our own greed and gullibility.

No joke!

Religious gurus who are desperate or cunning enough may take this further. When a thinking or intelligent follower questions them: Is this what the Buddha taught? They may gingerly reply: Oh! It's just a **joke**!

We may then think: All right then, this is not meant to be taken seriously. The obsequious faithful, however, tend to take such words *literally*! They actually believe they can and have to send their money ahead!

All these wrong practices can only **end** when we know and understand that they are **wrong and bad**. They make Buddhism look like a religion (a system of beliefs), even a *sophisticated system of superstitions*.

Righting our attitude

We deserve the kind of Buddhism we get. We deserve the best: we deserve what the Buddha teaches. Here are some **key points** of the Buddha's teachings:

- (1) Our problems are **mind-made**. Look within our mind to find the answers.
- (2) We can be happy **here and now**. Start by smiling in our own hearts.
- (3) Our goal is the **path of awakening** as streamwinners now: just aspire for it.
- (4) **Renunciation** means giving up wrong views, bad desires and laziness. It starts here.

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

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