

Change your wife in 30 days

How not to be a Vesak Buddhist

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In the US, a book entitled “How to change your WIFE in 30 days” is reported to have sold 2 million copies in a week. When the careless author discovered the typo, she made a bigger bummer: she corrected it to “How to change your LIFE in 30 days.” Only 3 copies were sold in a week.

At first blush, we must imagine that, if someone can really change his life in such a short time, he would not need to sell a BOOK! Moreover, if you are a good Buddhist, not a Vesak Buddhist, you would know that life itself is CHANGE: you don’t need to read about it, much less read a book.

Most local Buddhists are ILLITERATE anyway, in a compulsive way: they can read words, but they are not inclined to read any books bigger or thicker than their smartphone: that’s why they (the phones) are called “smart.” And when we (I’m a local Buddhist, too) do read, it is, as a rule that it is written by someone (usually some monk or nun worried about money) who knows that we are illiterate but have deep pockets.

There is a growing belief that in such bad times, it is most profitable to invest in religious priests, especially those who do not touch money (“We do not touch money with our hands,” they declare: please think of the subtext yourself). “You can’t take it with you,” they piously preach with a Money Smile, “Why not send it ahead!” Just give our money to them, and we even get merits (a Buddhist work for “interests”). Interested?

Now VESAK is here. It’s not as bad as Christmas, but it is quickly catching up. You can even hear Christian sounding songs during Vesak. It is a precept day, by the way, when we do not sing or dance. But then, how many of us keep such precepts? Yet, there are those of us who gather together peacefully to listen to suttas or meditate.

In fact, the lockdown, curfew and social distancing rules are ideal conditions to celebrate Vesak. Māra must have brought the Covid pandemic upon the world, but he fails to realize that it is actually helping us to practise the Dhamma better. But Vesak crowds will quickly spread the plague agent, unless (they say) we recite some Parittas (Suttas, it seems, do not work here). We who follow holy priests believe that just by reciting these Parittas, the Pandemic will go away—they have guaranteed us that it WILL go away!

In past Vesaks, we used to free fishes, even crabs, into our local ponds and waters. Now we understand that these are not actually acts of merit because these fishes and crabs may simply die in the new inconducive environments. Or worse, they eat up the local species and upset the ecosystem, and our piety is the cause of it. Don’t worry, some clever Bhantes will explain to us that we are judged by our own karma: we have done good. Those fishes and crabs have done bad karma, and it is their own fault when they harm the environment!

We also used to “free” caged birds during Vesak. A clever boy or girl then asks their clueless parents in the Vihara: “Where do we get these birds from, Ma Pa?” “Oh, they have to be

caught! You see, children, the catchers and the catches both gain great merits. It is good karma for the bird-catchers. The birds are lucky to be caught.” “Ma Pa, we want to be bird-catchers when we grow up!” That’s when the parents realized it is not a good idea after all: they want their children to be lawyers, doctors, engineers or other “high class” jobs.

The same clever children then excitedly go to the “Baby Buddha” to bathe him. “Why do we pour water over the Baby Buddha, Ma Pa?” “Now, children, the more water we pour over this beautiful little statue, the more money will come to the priests who own this beautiful and comfortable Vihara! Notice, we use the same water over and over, we are recycling. We recycle because the Vihara saves money.”

“But, Ma Pa, our Dhamma teacher told us that pouring the water means we purify our own actions, speech and thought. And the Baby means that even when we are young, we can and should learn to be good. The Baby Buddha’s 7 steps represent the 7 awakening-factors ... ”

“Stop, stop! Children, you should not know such things! You are not Bhantes or Venerables! They tell us what to believe and what to do! When we pour the water, we TRANSFER merit to our dead relatives!” “Pa Ma, I mean, Ma Pa, you mean MERITS are like the money we put into the 1,000 donation boxes all in a row here? Ma Ma Pa Pa, you don’t need to work any more: we will TRANSFER millions of merits to you right away!”

“Oh my goodness, are you joking? Who taught you all this?”

“Our local Dhamma teacher, Ma Pa!”

“Oh no! Don’t listen to them: these local teachers know nothing. We must listen to the Foreign Bhantes they know everything!”

Moral of story

This Vesak say NO to false teachers and fake teachings.

Let Vesak be blessed that we may be blessed, too.

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

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