

How to die famous

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In a consumer market, we have a lot of choices. There is competition: the best product wins. This seems to work well with products for consumption.

In fact, today, we tend to see Buddhism as a product, too. We have a lot of choices, and there is a lot of competition. Every teacher has his teaching, which is implicitly, politely, subtly peddled as the best. Even when a teacher says: Try everything, but makes sure you end up with me and my teaching.

Harvest of teachers

For some, the way is just that: go to as many teachers as possible, from different traditions, and learn what you can. However, since we want to try so many Buddhist products, we need a time-frame or window for each product (the teacher we go to).

There is no gold standard regarding how long we should spend with a teacher before we can claim to know all he knows. Anyway, often enough, having spent just a bit of time with a famous teacher, we are able to gauge his intelligence (or not) and attainments (or none) surely. As a consumer, we should have an eye for a good product.

The great pilgrimage

At the end of our long journey, we can quote we have followed the way of Sudhana in the Avatamsaka Sutra. The fact that no such story is found in the suttas taught by the Buddha does not matter. That story is well known and comes from the Great Vehicle, which should be sufficient for approval as an excellent product in a competitive market.

Are we forgetting something? What about the Buddha and his teaching in the suttas. Oh, we can easily purchase the whole set of Nikaya translations from Wisdom Publications, and read them in one summer or monsoon season. We can refer to the footnotes later when we do resort to these volumes while teaching.

Self as teacher

The point is to gain recognition that we have made that journey, that pilgrimage, that shopping tour, and collected the best products, even consumed them. Now is time to sell our own Organic Branded Buddhism. After all, it can be confusing, and unfair, to pour all the different teaching products into a common cauldron.

We need to concoct our own formula which works better than the others. Indeed, there is a Chinese saying: Green comes from indigo (the pupil will outshine the teacher). This is often true in academia, and may be true with teaching products, too. After all, many would be simply impressed that we have learned from so many teachers (in such a relatively short time). What is bracketed may be ignored, or merely implied without need of mention.

Renunciation

What about those who do NOT want to be caught in the consumer trap. We see the path of renunciation, of freeing oneself from teachers, teachings and our own views. This seems so difficult, even impossible, for most of us. It is definitely less fun to renounce anything than to collect and consume teachings, and be with well-branded and well-marketed teachers.

Yet, once we take this quiet open path of renunciation, we cannot but be amazed at the spacious freedom of truth and beauty that we discover as we move along. The Buddha does just this. He meditated and awakened to true reality, and teaches for 45 years. These are handed down to us as the SUTTAS.

Living the Dhamma

There's nothing to consume here: we cannot consume the suttas. We can only study them and learn how to renounce what prevents us from growing and being free. In other words, once we have the suttas, we seem to be on our own. It's like having our own cosy home. And there are others who love the suttas, too. They are our true family. Love for the suttas makes us true family members.

We look up to only one teacher, the awakened one, **the historical Buddha**. His teachings in the Suttas show us how to look within, and see oneself and work on that. When we look outside, we only see teachers who make products of our past karma, and we are caught again enslaved to our past.

A good death

The suttas teach us to let go of the past, the future never comes. This NOW is the real moment of learning: our journey is within where we build love, compassion, joy and peace. We know all this to be impermanent; hence, we need to keep on cultivating them until we reach the path of awakening.

Now, those who have milked the famous teachers, and made their own milk products, become rich, famous and glorious. They die famous. What a dreadful way to go!

Who follow the suttas, and reflect on impermanence, gain STREAMWINNING at life's end. We are reborn as streamwinners. What a delightful way to go nearer the Buddha.

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

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