

No change

Do we really understand and accept change?

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Watching people I'm familiar with over some 50 years (since I was 20), I notice that most have not really changed for the better. Those who have changed the least, if at all, are the narcissistic individuals: people who put themselves first, and look up to those they see as power figures, even God-figures, and exploit and look down on others they see as lesser or lower, no matter how good we are, even in Buddhism.

Those who were strongly LUSTFUL tend to mellow down with marriage. Those with the opposite tendency of anger and HATE, too, tend to be kinder with new generations of family. It is those who are characterized with alienating DELUSION, the 3rd unwholesome root, tend to deepen and harden in their self-view and dominance over others. They expect us to idolize them, slave for them, be subservient to them as authority figures.

Delusion type

In a way, the delusion-character type tends to be stronger personalities than before, with stronger but subtler views. It is more difficult to know how they think even when we are with them. They seem to be caught in a time-warp of adolescence. Their body ages but their mind is that of Peter Pan, still chasing after their own shadows.

They are adept at saying what (they think) we want to hear. Or they try to look good in our eyes (whatever is the reason, we should wonder?). But their actions with others (especially those who look up to them) reveal other interesting aspects of their hidden personality.

Crowd appeal

The kind of teachers that these individuals have been groomed by, seemed to powerfully mould and shape their insecure character. Those who look up to the Sinhala missionaries, for example, tend to continue to look up to authority figures, or build up their charisma so as to attract respect and repute from others. Buddhism is merely a tool for worldly security of titles and entitlement. Notice how they live and lead by Titles—what are these titles?

The irony is that most such cases of personal projection of power and charisma betray a deep sense of emotional insecurity, compensated by an attitude of “winning friends and influencing people.” There is a strong drive for crowd approval and crowd control, to look good in the eyes of others so that we may control and lead them.

God-figure

An interesting symptom of deep emotional insecurity is their habitually seeing the Buddha as a God-figure (O Buddha, please forgive us, bless us, protect us! And so on). When we look closer, we may also find words addressing the God idea, such as: “O Buddha, My Spiritual Master and Refuge, I seek Your Blessings, Guidance, and Protection! With my Lord helping

me, I solemnly declare before Thee and promise. I pledge that I will faithfully be, With my Lord helping me.”

This only shows the kind of “Missionary” Buddhism that they have been conditioned by, preached by Temple Buddhism that idolizes a Great Person (the Chief High Priest) rather than respecting those who have really worked hard for Buddhism—the simple local folks. Sadly, this Missionary Buddhism also promotes “merit transfer” Buddhism (that merits are negotiable things) and Monks are Priests from whom we get “Blessings,” like in Brahmanism. The Buddha teaches us to reject all this.

It’s odd that after a century of Missionary Buddhism, Buddhists in Malaysia and Singapore are still divided into communal camps, each financing, employing, promoting foreign monks as “in-house priests” like the Brahminical purohita of ancient India. This Buddhism is dependent on Priests instead of self-effort; on lip-service, not inner commitment.

Professional Buddhism

Buddhism is open enough to embrace all kinds of Buddhists local and from overseas, but more effort must be made by local Buddhists to work together. Instead, most of our leaders have become Professional Buddhists more concerned with their worldly success, families and occupations: Buddhism is only a veneer for marketing and assuring their success.

Furthermore, we can see the worldliness of such Professional Buddhists in their excitement over CHRISTMAS, which has become a strong marketing force. So now we have Christmas Buddhists, which describes many of these Professional Buddhists, too.

It is difficult to understand how we can be Buddhists and yet still look up to Buddha as a God-figure (O Buddha, bless and protect us!) and Christmas as a high point in our year. What has happened to Vesak? (I’m not against Christmas amongst westerners and the westernized, just drooling silly at those who awkwardly ape them.)

Bodhi tree in our garden

If what you read here seems to make no sense, it probably means that you have been well groomed or well sold by the Professional Buddhists. A time will come when you start asking questions that matter: then, read this again, and it will all make better sense! It is never too late to change in Dhamma: we cannot allow this darkness to become a legacy.

These are troubling issues we must deal with. There’s nothing “nice” about them. They fester in our silence and grow beyond COVID. Since our leaders, the Professional Buddhists are more concerned with their own wealth, their own success their own Buddhism, it is left to us individual Buddhists who truly love the 3 jewels--the Buddha, the Dhamma of the suttas, and the sangha of the noble eightfold path--to live the Dhamma. Perhaps, we will see the fruits of our efforts to grow the Bodhi tree in our own garden in the next generation.

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

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