

# You Can Still Meet the Buddha

by Piya Tan

The Suttas often tell us how a person meets the Buddha and his whole life is changed. A serial killer (Angulimala) becomes a monk and arhat. A high-class prostitute (Ambapali) gives up her lucrative life and becomes a nun and an arhat. Countless people just like you and I meet the Buddha and join the stream to nirvana.

Ever since then, countless millions of lives continue to be changed into great happiness. You don't read about such people in the newspapers or glossy magazines, but they are more real and happier. If you chance to get lost in the villages of rural Thailand, Myanmar, or Yunnan, or Sri Lanka, or Tibet, Zanskar, or Bhutan, you might meet these happy, friendly and generous people.

In fact, we need not go very far to meet simple happy Buddhists. I once met a young man on busy Orchard Road in Singapore. He had drawn a large circle around himself and sat meditating inside it, and on the pavement he had written a short message inviting others to join him. It's a great way to advertise the Buddha's Teaching!

I started off by saying how meeting the Buddha can change your life. If we cannot meet the Buddha, you could meet one of his disciples, that is, a very peaceful monk or nun with his almsbowl without a dollar or cent to his/her name, but is a radiant and wise person, whose sight or very tone of voice is enough to bring you peaceful joy.

When I was a young monk in Wat Sraket, Bangkok, some quarter-century back, I once sat sidewise Thai-style all alone blissfully listening to Ajahn Sumedho in Section 5 (the abbot's quarters) as he spoke to me for a straight 2 hours just on the Vinaya. I do not remember the words but all that time spent with him I don't remember moving a muscle either. It is as if he knew I was going to do Buddhist work for a long time to come.

So if we cannot meet the Buddha, meet one of his true disciples. Even if that is difficult, says the Phagguna Sutta (A 3.56), we can meet the Buddha by listening to the Buddha's Teaching.

Or, by investigating the Dharma. This simply means constantly reflecting how impermanent everything is inside us and all around us. (I had this terribly painful lumbar sprain last week (again!), but it is now gone. Ratna fell running after a bus the following week, and she sat on the pavement until I arrived to help her up! She too is healing fast. Two aging folks working together, I thought, and smile at us.)

Pain arises when you grasp at THINGS and fail to accept CHANGE. In other words, suffering is optional.

Notice how the boring things tend to repeat themselves. Notice how the good and happy things pass away quickly. Notice how quickly our mind changes.

When we accept change, we are at peace with pain. Suffering is optional.

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