

Say no, Say yes, Be silent

by Piya Tan

A very simple approach to Buddhist practice is this threefold training:

- (1) Say no,
- (2) Say yes,
- (3) Be silent.

Buddhist training begins by our learning to say NO, that is,

- (1) No to harming life and living beings;
- (2) No to taking the not-given;
- (3) No to disrespecting the body of others and our own;
- (4) No to falsehood and deception;
- (5) No to anything addictive (drinking, gambling, etc).

Whether you recite the precepts or not, karma still works on you. The precepts remind us that life can be even more fun when we follow these rules. What is football, or any sports, without the rules?

We should say NO to the evangelists because they are close-minded, and often have serious emotional problems of wanting to dominate others.

We should say no to mental distractions. In fact, this is the essence of meditation practice for beginners. Just keep bringing the mind back to the meditation object, gently and with kindness.

Say yes to lovingkindness and happiness:

Keep watching your breath: it's the only one you have.
Heal your own mind: it's the only one you can really heal.

When we were kids, many of us sucked our thumbs.
One day, we see it as all red, swollen and wrinkled.
We lose all desire to suck it any more.

When we have negative habits, we are in another way sucking our thumb again.
When we look carefully, we will see the redness, the swell, and the wrinkles.

Whenever you can, simply be silent, and let the stillness reveals the wonders of your inner goodness and strengths you may not realize you have.

The Buddha is constantly reminding us to look for our inner strength. From the time of his awakening to the final nirvana.

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