

Stand up for the Dharma

by Piya Tan

After the third time meeting evangelists (probably Mormons) at bus-stops, buses and trains over a period of a few months, I decided to write this letter. The first time was at a bus-stop in Pasir Panjang, another time was in a train East-West train, and the third time in a busy bus on Bukit Timah Road. I notice that they always work in pairs, neatly-dressed and wearing a name-tag.

If I stood near one of them, or if I were sitting, one of them would sit beside me, and start a friendly chat (Where are you going? The weather is a bit hot, isn't it? etc). I also noticed how they would chat with other, usually English-educated, locals, and after a while would either give the obliging listeners their cards or take down their addresses (obviously to visit them for further evangelizing).

Having experienced decades of such evangelizing, and as a practising Buddhist, I immediately recognised them and told them I am not interested to chat. The reason is simply it will always be a dead-end "sinful" talk which would benefit neither side.

On two occasions, however, the evangelists were somewhat overzealous. After I said, NO, he continued to prod: "You must be a Buddhist..."

Only after repeatedly telling him, to my great embarrassment, that I do not wish to carry on the conversation, only did he stop. However, on another occasion, the evangelist, started with a Hello, and I said that I'm not interested in chatting at all, he curtly remarked, "You must be deeply hurt inside!"

That's it, I thought, and took my stand: I told the Indian commuters around me (it was Deepavali): "They are Christian evangelists, and want to convert you!"

Then he retorted, "Why can't I talk to them: they are my friends."

Turning to the Indian nearest him, I asked: "Are you his friend?" A gentle smile broke on the man's face and a gentle shake of his head.

Finally that section of the bus was peaceful, with the people chatting amongst themselves privately. No, I did not feel good, but it was much better not harbouring anger in the heart.

My advice: If you are approached by these evangelists (or any evangelist): simply say NO! and just walk away. However, this should in no way negatively affect our natural and local friendliness, and our respect for another's religion, but especially respect for our own.

PLEASE JOIN ME IN THIS INTERESTING STUDY:

A handsome young monk is approached by an earthbound deity, who tries to seduce him. The wise young monk brings the deity to see the Buddha, and he gives an interesting teaching on "the here and now" (on Akalika and Sanditthika).

Samiddhi Sutta (S 1.20): The Dharma is here and now.

To download the paper on "Money and Monastics," click here:

http://dharmafarer.googlepages.com/S1.20_Samiddhi_S_sd21.4.pdf

or go to <http://dharmafarer.googlepages.com>.

Then go to "Samyutta Nikaya" and click on the Sutta title.

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