

LAW OF CHANGE

Long time ago there was a group of learned people walking and discussing various topics through a forest. They were very engaged in their conversation that they did not see their surroundings. One fellow straggled behind and did not pay attention to the conversation. As he is walking, he finds a hidden path. Curious, he began exploring this path. It was treacherous with many fallen branches and thorns impeding his progress. After awhile through the thickness, he saw a clearing. The path became less obstructed and finally came upon the grounds of a long lost temple with stately gardens. The temple grounds were untouched. When venturing inside the buildings, jewels and various ornaments still decorated the walls. What great treasure! The fellow, excited, ran back to tell his other compatriots what he found. Some of the learned people did not believe the story and continued their conversations. Some followed the fellow, but quit half way along the hidden path because it was too difficult. The last group did follow the fellow to the end to see and enjoy the riches of the temple.

We are fortunate to be on the path and found the temple. This temple area is vast with countless many rooms, gardens and paths to meander through. Just as Buddha's teaching is vast and all encompassing. In the process of walking the temple grounds we can get lost and disoriented.

Buddha taught many teachings over his 40 years of expounding the truth. He used expedients to ensure that the congregation was able to understand the message. Some were very simple, while others were complex. Later scholars were able to sort through all the teachings and separated them according to the level of the congregation's understanding.

So how do we weave through the temple complex or Buddha's teaching without getting lost or confused? There are many rules that can guide you, with one of the most important being the Law of Change. Everything changes all the time. Nothing stays the same forever. Nothing we do can stop change. The rose which looks beautiful when first plucked, withers away as time passes by. Some change takes many hundreds of thousands of years. Look at the mountains; some are growing while others are shrinking. Even the universe is not immune. The new power boost in the Hubble Telescope recently took new pictures of far off galaxies; some are still a bundle of gases trying to form stars, while others went supernova and the star has died. This change is all around us. We have to learn to accept this and try not to be attached to anything.

There are many "pack rats", those who keep everything in their house. Every spring we are supposed to clean house and get rid of all the unnecessary clutter. You would think once in a few decades would suffice, but every year we are cleaning out the house, the attic and the garage of all the old stuff we do not need. We must learn to live with less. Some people are afraid to let go of their favorite t-shirt from high school or the plate set used only when "company" comes over. This kind of attachment is burdensome, otherwise known as suffering. The attachment acts like a weight, weighing us down. Let me tell you a story to help illustrate this point.

One day a man went on a journey. This journey would take him all over the world through various terrains. After several weeks trekking through a valley, he came upon a raging river. He had no way of crossing. There were no bridges or boats around him. So he decided to build his own raft to cross the river. He cut trees, pulled vines to use as rope and fashioned a simple raft. After awhile he was finished. Now he could cross the river.

He put the raft into the river and with the aid of a long stick was able to navigate across to the other side. This raft was useful so he strapped it on his back and continued on this journey, for it may be of use down the road. This raft was heavy but manageable.

After awhile, the valley began to get steeper and steeper. Now he was entering the mountains and forest. With the heavy raft on his back, it quickly snagged on any low hanging branches, jolting him as he continued on his way.

Soon the path became difficult to pass, but he persevered and kept on going. Suddenly another man appeared and inquired, “My friend, why do you have a raft strapped to your back? Is it not a heavy burden as you climb this mountain? Why not throw it away to ease your travel?”

The traveling man replied, “Oh, I cannot get rid of this raft. It proved to be useful when I crossed the river down below. The next time I reach another raging river, I will use this raft to get across.”

“That is true,” replied the stranger, “But there are no rivers on this mountain path. Why not get rid of the raft and fashion a walking stick to aid with the ascent of this mountain. The raft will only hamper with your efforts in completing your journey. Plus, if you ever reach another river, could you not fashion another raft out of trees and vines?”

The traveler listened to this stranger and heeded his advice and threw away the raft and fashioned a walking stick. Wow! The traveler noticed that he could climb this mountain faster. Low hanging branches were no longer hindering his journey.

As we travel through life, we pick up many tools to help us. Most of these tools are only used sparingly and some build the foundation of our knowledge and character. We all have gone to elementary school and middle school where we learned the basics.

For me to keep a textbook on how to write the alphabet is useless. I have already master writing so I may hand it to a friend with small children so that they can learn how to write. Same with our stuff that we keep and the emotions attached to it. When it becomes useless to us, we must throw it away, recycle or donate it to someone who will find it useful. When we let go of our attachments, we become free. We can easily continue on our journey, just as the traveler dropped his raft and switched to a walking stick.

Just remember the Law of Change will always be there. When we understand that the tools learned in the past will not always be needed in the future. We must discard when they hinder our progress or we will be continually bogged down. Let us be free from attachments.