

Perfect timing

The Buddha arises in the world because we are imperfect. Perfection must and can only arise from imperfection. Without imperfection, perfection is meaningless. Yet, in the Buddha we see perfection itself, free from the world's imperfection. Such a being does not belong to this world any more, and as such does not return to it. But there is nowhere else to go, too. It is also meaningless to speak of the Buddha "going" anywhere. We use the word "nirvana" for this.

The fact that we are imperfect means that we need to reach for perfection, and that we can and must move towards perfection. This is the natural order of things, in the sense that there is no other direction we can really go. If we do try to, or is forced to do otherwise, then, we will feel pain and suffering. They are unpleasant to us because they are the consequence of the unnatural state we have fallen into: this is called "bad" or "evil."

Its opposite is "good," which means we flow in harmony with the nature of our being – towards perfection or awakening. This is the longest journey that we can and must take. This journey begins right here and now, by our recognizing and accepting that we are imperfect. We may know things, but these are simply the labelling and linking of our senses to sense-objects, and what we do with them. This is "knowledge."

Knowledge can only be that of sense-objects. Yet, we can never directly experience any sense-objects, except through our mind. But our mind is the cumulative experience of our daily experiences, and how we have been conditioned to see and do with such experiences. Those who have created us, raised us, schooled us and influenced us, as a rule, do so to keep us within the loop of how they experience the world. In this way, we are all defined by what we know, and our knowledge limits us.

We can only be free by standing on our knowledge and rising above it to see beyond its limits, beyond our senses, even beyond our mind. We can only do this by our own efforts. We can have all the world's knowledge, but still we will not be able to rise beyond it. Knowledge is the world's way of chaining us to itself. Only in giving up that knowledge, even momentarily, we can and will rise out of our present loop and rut of sense-based existence.

However, there is a kind of knowledge that can help us as the first steps towards understanding what perfection means. We need to understand that whatever we can know means that what we have known before is all wrong. "Wrong" here means they are not what is before us now. They were of the past. Whenever we do something wrong, it means we have not learned: we are living in the past. This is unnatural, and what is unnatural brings us pain.

When we do not know what *pain* really is, we then suffer. To "suffer" means to think about that pain and not know how to deal with it. This is called ignorance. When we are ignorant of what pain is, we suffer. To suffer then means that we are making this experience of pain bigger than what it really is. The pain is a moment of being out of sync with the present, falling back into the past. We keep thinking about this experience, and so give it a new but virtual life. Because it is not real (only virtual) we suffer – experiencing something that is not there.

So, we need to take a step back and look at ourselves again. Everything we are doing now is a mistake. "Mis-take" literally means not taking it properly: we see one thing but experience

another. We do one thing but experience something else. We think we know what we are doing, but we do not really understand what it is. So, we keep on doing it because we never really understand what we have been doing before, or why we are doing it again and again. This is called “craving.”

Whenever we do something wrong, we always think that it is “right” – because we know it. But knowledge is self-limiting: it can only make us do what we already know. The way out of this is to notice how this is a “mistake.” It is not really there, so why are we pretending as if it is really there and making things with it, and wanting it. To want means we think we can have it: we are always seeing something out there. It is always “out” there.

We have to leave what is out there, right where it is. When we do this, we begin to notice what is “in” here – how we create that knowledge of “things.” Nothing we have created exists: there is only the process of creating, of thinking, of feeling. To “create” is to try to stop something that is changing and not there to become fixed and forever. Then, it just disappears because its existence is only possible in time, and we cannot stop time. This is called “impermanence.”

We need to return to seeing our “being” as moving with time. All our actions are simply that of trying to stop time. All our efforts of “wanting” and “having” are the result of seeing time as something fixed that we can always see, hear, smell, taste, touch or think about. But all these 6 senses are nothing but how we “feel” time. To see is to feel and fix time as light. To hear is to feel and fix time as sound. To smell is to feel and fix time in our nose. To taste is to feel and fix time on the tongue. To touch is to feel and fix time on our body. To think is to try to stop time. We can never *think* time; we can only feel it in our senses.

As we feel our senses – seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking – we begin to understand that there is really nothing there. We have created that sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and thought just the way we know it. Our knowledge has created all these “experiences.” Now we must free these experiences, as it were, by feeling them for what they really are. We feel them simply as time itself. This is one easy way to understand what we really are: this is called “life.”

To understand life, it is best to begin with its “visible” aspects, that is, our body. The living body is nothing but seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. Yet, again, they do not really exist in themselves. It is our mind that makes all these “experiences” and defines them, and decides whether we want to be happy or sad or be bored with them.

Our task is to see these moments of our life. It’s like watching a sunset. We cannot do anything else but just watch. Anything else is not the sunset. Yet, that sunset cannot remain still for a moment: a photo, even a movie, of the sunset, is *not* the sunset. A sunset then is moments in our life spent in a certain way: to feel time, feeling how the day ends, if you like. But that’s putting into words what we can never know, what we can only feel.

Finally, let us imagine (feel) we are going on a journey – this is no ordinary journey, but one of feeling our own life. The seconds, minutes, hours, days, weeks and years pass – actually, it is only the moment that passes, all else live only in our imagination. We cannot even stay in the moment. Imagine it as the steps we take on a journey. We walk the path, but the path is not the journey.

The journey is the steps we take: the time we make. We can never know time, we can only feel it. Then, it works for us. We are moving. Only by moving, never stopping, do we understand how time ends. It is the end of the path, or more properly, the end of the journey. There is nowhere else to go. We are now the path, the journey itself: neither that nor therein, neither here nor beyond, nor in between.¹ This is as far as we can speak of it: let us call it “nirvana.”

R472 Inspiration 305

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¹ See **(Arahatta) Bāhiya S** (U 1.10,17), SD 33.7: <http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/33.7-Arahatta-Bahiya-S-u1.10-piya.pdf>.