

About time

It's time to reflect on the most universal, most powerful truth. It is both real and true. It is real because it exists, right now: we are it. It is true because we experience it; without it we cannot experience anything. In fact, whatever we experience, it is always there showing how real it is to us. Whether we see it or not is the difference between happiness and suffering.

It is time—this is the answer: time. Time is the most universal, most powerful truth. It is both real and true. It is real because whatever exists must do so in time—whether it is a person (like us), or a thing (like your most prized possession), or an idea (like Buddha or God). They all arise in time. Otherwise, they do not exist.

There is, of course, a great and vital difference between the Buddha and God. The Buddha is human, or was human—like us. He was born amongst us, he died, but his teachings and methods are still with us. So, we can be fully free, body and mind, just like him, if we follow his teachings and practise them. Or, we can even choose to become a buddha.

Aspiring to become a buddha is not merely about taking a vow, or even meeting a future Buddha. It's certainly not about using strange grand words about some idea or action or thing. It begins with a clear understanding that time is everything. Hence, everything is impermanent. We can have all the wealth in the world; we can have all the pleasures the body and mind can give; we can have the most loving and richest family; we may even have everything.

We will lose them all. In fact, we have lost them already – because none of them are really ours. What is “ours”? What does it mean? Something is really ours only when we truly enjoy it. To really enjoy something is to be with it in this very moment, like being with someone we love and care about. Or, doing something good that we really love. It's not merely a meeting of bodies: two dead bodies can be piled together, too.

We can really and truly be together only when our heart (that is the feeling mind) is here and now looking into another heart. It's like two mirrors looking into one another: we see forever. When there is love, that moment seems eternal. This is boundless or timeless love: the unconditional acceptance of oneself and of the other.

If we love only one other, then we are only a couple. If we love only what we and our other have in common, we are only a family. If we love a bigger family sharing the same space in peace and prosperity, we are community. If we love the same planet, we are the world. But all these things are impermanent, no matter how boundless our love is. Yet, there is a greater love than this.

That love is LIFE itself. When we respect life, we accept it just as it is. Another universal truth is that we are all alive: who can read this and act on it. But, remember, life is to live, a conscious way to exist. To exist is to be impermanent. There is no other way to live. When we know this, we are learning. When we accept this, we begin to be wise. When we really live, then, we are truly and happily awakened to true reality.

This means that we cannot really die for another, no one can. Except perhaps in war, but war is the biggest mistake of the most powerful paid by our lives and liberty. Perhaps, there may be occasions when we save a life, or many lives, and lose our own. Other than a rhetorical statement, this is a truly noble human act.

But we can be more human – if we LIVE for those whom we love, for the betterment of our community, for global progress, for the greater quality of life. We die but once in a life-time, and we can do nothing after that. To live, learn, teach and free others is to live the moment, moment by moment, patiently connecting with others—like the very air they breathe in. And to show them compassion even when they do not deserve it, when they reject us—like the air we breathe out.

We may talk of supreme beings who live forever, of some paradise where there is eternal joy, of beautiful and powerful prayers, of great and noble saints. They all exist in time. Notice we say “exist,” not “live.” This is because they are all ideas or wishes that we have. These are the fruits of what we know, without understanding. Without understanding time and without accepting impermanence, they just remain ideas, our views, our prisons.

A view is a way of looking at time as if it does not change—the bars of a prison called the mind. The more we know or think, the more views we will have: the more we try to “fix” things. We are more concerned with the Grammar of words and language than with how they free us from the limits of knowledge. What we know defines us; what we understand frees us.

When we know time, it terrifies us: we have so little of it, we think. When we understand time and live it, there’s no time to think: we only feel it. We directly and truly experience life: we feel truth and beauty in what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think. We feel the truth and beauty of it all. We have conquered time: then, there is no time—we are no more in the clutches of time. We are beyond time and space. This is nirvana.

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