

Dharma moves

Every religion has its stories about how its founders, prophets and followers are moved in some way to have faith or find the wisdom to work against overwhelming odds to tell the world that it needs help, and that help is right here and now. We only need to come and see, and follow the path to faith, joy, wisdom, and peace, to salvation, to awakening.

Most religions claim it is God or some external agency that moves them beyond themselves, to go way out to show others the errors of their ways, and to set things right. Such prophets are often ridiculed because they are different and threaten the mainstream. Such bringers of good and change are often ostracized, harshly punished or cruelly killed. But they keep on coming.

In our own day of mass media and cyber knowledge, prophets are rarely heard or heard of. Often enough, we speak of that which we have neither knowledge nor experience. We accept as right and true whatever agrees with our views or whims. We speak and act in clever, dramatic, appealing, and cunning ways to attract crowds and followers. We work to change others and the world as if we do not need to change ourselves. The point is that we have no choice but to do these things that we do.¹

We have no choice, but to work to boost our image and ego. We work to project and market our selves in ever bigger and more profitable ways, and growing numbers are blinded and blinkered by our play of genius, glory and gab. The point is that they, too, have no choice but to believe and follow. At the end of the day, the great show ends, as all shows do. We exit life's stage, and start all over again. This is a show that never ends. It is still going on right now, and will go on and on.

So, we are caught in the wheel of life like caged hamsters running in our Sisyphus² wheels. We actually find it fun, going in circles. Going by statistics, we are achieving a lot if we don't stop running and keep the wheel spinning. We even feel a sense of achievement and religiosity.

These are the wheels of views and beliefs, spun by craving and spurred by ignorance. Wheels just keep on turning if we keep pushing them, or where the ground descends. But when the ground climbs, it feels even more challenging, more fun. Then, we reach the peak, we congratulate ourselves, what an achievement! The wheel stops for a while, and then rolls down the hill again.

We run after it, shouting passionately, finding it fun because we are doing it, and people are watching. We have been doing this so often, for so long, that we have become experts. We know we can do this, we can do anything, we can only get better at it. Uphill, peak, downhill, bottom, uphill again, and so on. Like Sisyphus, we find it fun. After all, we have nothing else to do. We know no other happiness.

Then, something out of the way happens to us. We suddenly realize we are simply caged hamsters running in our Sisyphus wheels. These wheels are our own views and beliefs that we're so sure about that we're unable to see beyond them. The wheel suddenly stops, or breaks down, leaving us in a lurch. For a moment, if we allow it, we must face ourself.

Our wheel of life starts breaking down, or stops spinning, when we start to look away from it, and look within ourselves. We don't need any prophet or Sutra here. We only need some honest insight. As long as we look within, we will see what is there, or, at least, what can be

¹ See Reflection, "Dharma trains," [R381](#).

² On Sisyphus, see [SD 23.3 \(1\)](#); [SD 48.3 \(1.2.2.2\)](#).

there. We realize that we actually feel better when the wheel stops spinning, and we are standing on safe ground in the clear light.

Looking away from the spinning wheel begins as a small act of letting go, of renunciation. We must flee from the big-city religion of numbers, flee to the ancient hills, shady trees and safe forests of truth. The view before us is breath-taking, literally: we begin to notice how more peacefully we breathe. The Dharma, true reality, has touched us. It is such a loving and healing touch that we wonder why we have not sought it before.

The Buddha speaks of the suffering world, but he did not make it so. He is simply pointing out an obvious fact that most of us seem to ignore or are distracted from. The Buddha's message is an unequivocally happy one: there is a way out! Out of the many, one. Out of the one, no thing, neither this nor that.

We can claim to have been inspired by God, or touched by angels, or moved by prophecy, or spooked by demons, or seen the end of days. For the early Buddhists, just a vision of the one Dharma is enough to get all these thrills and traumas that any religion can claim. There is, however, a vital difference between the many claims of religion and the Dharma vision of oneness. That is why we need only one Buddha, no more.

Such religious claims arise from not really knowing the historical Buddha, from looking for some God out there, some angel up there, some prophecy somewhere, the end of days not here yet. The Dharma vision is an inner vision. We see within ourself that God or godliness, that angel or divinity, that prophecy or promise, that demon, those end of days. As within, so without, but if we know ourself, we can heal ourself. Then, we are better at helping and healing others, too.

Our days of spinning wheels are ended! Our epiphany is a self-transcending space of light that brightens the universe within and shines outwards. This inner space is vaster than all the outer space: for, we can envelop all outer space in our hearts, and that space is still spacious. We have been touched by the one Dharma, true reality, without beginning, without end; neither here nor there; free from coming, free from going; neither moving nor still.³

We are touched by the Dharma when we learn Pali as its freeing agent, or simply spend time with the suttas. This is more than being an unloving language expert, or a great Buddhist theologian, or an upscale guru, or a champion of parochial Buddhism.

We learn Pali to free the spirit of the Dharma from the letters and words, to see the Bodhi despite the forest of trees.⁴ When we taste the spirit, our eyes truly open, so that we really awake with wisdom and compassion. Wisdom is the vision of true reality that empowers and guides us to see and tap true goodness in us and in others. Compassion is our unconditional love for others, accepting them as they are, treating them as our own children, preparing them to see the Dharma-light for themselves.

When we do not see this unconditional love and readiness for others, we simply do not know how to save the people and beings out of the burning houses. We have been fooled into trying to entice them out of proverbial and theological burning houses with empty promises of all kinds of expensive and fabulous vehicles and gifts. Bribery, especially religious bribery, does not really help, and should not be encouraged.

We simply need to shout out the truth really clearly and loudly, pointing to the danger, "Your houses are on fire! Get out now!" There is no need to lie, even righteously: the truth

³ See Ariya,pariyesanā Sutta (M 26,30), [SD 1.11](#) & Nibbāna Paṭisambhuta Sutta 1 (U 8.1/80), SD 98.1.

⁴ See Dhammapada 283.

works better. We have to tell them the truth that saves and frees. We need to point to the fire (that is, not to underestimate the wisdom of others). Or, just call the fire-brigade, and get others to help.

We must stop sugarcoating our words, stop making pious promises and grand claims, but would not even lift a finger when others really need help, and not even be kind and friendly to our own fellowmen.⁵ There is no need for parables when we have compassion and friendliness and act on them.

The Buddha is always there to reach out to the needy and troubled, even if it is just one person, an outcaste road-sweeper,⁶ or a dangerous serial killer⁷ – or, even if it is just us. We are then moved by the Dharma to touch the life the one near us. Right now, it is we ourself.

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[an occasional re-look at the Buddha's example and teachings]

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⁵ See Dhammapada 146.

⁶ See Sunīta Thera, gātha, **Tha 620-631**.

⁷ See **Aṅgulimāla Sutta** (M 86), [SD 5.11](#).