

Theme of Impermanence in Buddhism

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The impermanence of human life and all achievement is the central theme of Buddhism. Lives filled with suffering, and in order to counteract suffering, one should remove their desires and follow the eightfold path. Until doing so, that person is in a cycle of life, death, and rebirth until they acknowledge samsara -the cycle of death and life- and accept life as suffering. Buddhism teaches that the impermanence of life should not be something to feel fear over or even sadness. Many people become distraught when thinking about losing a family member or recalling a lost loved one. However, the buddhaghosa would argue that this is a mistake. For all loved ones will be born again in a different form. "The Enlightenment" and "The Recollection of Death" both demonstrate the impermanence of human life in different ways and its importance towards overcoming suffering.

Buddhaghosa's "The Recollection of Death" clarifies and eliminates many misconceptions with death that causes people suffering. The buddhaghosa argues that in order to properly remove the misconceptions of death and understand its true nature, one must view death through the eight different perspectives. By doing so, one can comprehend the beauty of death rather than viewing it as an adverse event in life. The buddhaghosa teaches impermanence through stating, "Here in this world achievement prospers as so long as it is not overwhelmed by failure(Vaughn 174)". However, he argues that failure is inevitable. It will always happen to all worldly achievement, no matter what. Failure is the universal truth of impermanence that cannot be stopped. Therefore all worldly achievements will die and wither away over time.

Furthermore, with being so, one has no reason to consume themselves with pleasurable desires. As desires only increase ones suffering. This theme of impermanence is crucial to understanding and recollecting the significance of death. When the time comes for one who has

established and mastered impermanence, "he is on the dissolution of his body, bound for a happy destiny (Vaughn 177)." How one understands the eight principles determines their views on death. The buddhaghosa emphasizes that one is to imagine death as a murderer standing in front of oneself. In doing so, one begins to understand that life is not promised, nor is it ends possible to predict. At any given moment, somebody may take their last breath. Once somebody wraps their mind around impermanence, they discover "mindfulness with death for its object is established (Vaughn 176)". Then at this moment, one can die at any moment with full content to the impermanence of life.

The principles covered in "The Recollection of Death" relate significantly to the "The Enlightenment." On his first watch of the night, the Buddha "remembered thousands of births, as though living them over again (Vaughn 171)." Witnessing his rebirths serves as a critical pillar to the buddhaghosa teachings. It is as well one of his main arguments for why one should not be bothered by the impermanence of death. As one is only reborn again in a different form and never truly spiritually die. Only through meditating the profound certainty of death can one lose all "sluggishness" and negative emotions that come with it.

In "The Enlightenment," the buddhas visions of seeing multiple different afterbirths assist as the grounding pillar for Buddhist beliefs. The textual purpose differs significantly from the "The Recollection of Death." The enlightenment of the Buddha attends as a tale demonstrating where many of the essential Buddhist beliefs are derived. While "The Recollection of Death" is a law book for monks to follow, through the enlightenment of the Buddha came to the possibility of this law code to be formed.

The Buddha's enlightenment serves to explain the ultimate reality of what life is. In doing so, the Buddhaghosa teachings serve as a reference for monks on the importance of understanding impermanence. In this way, both texts complement one another. The enlightenment of the Buddha answers the question of what ultimate reality is, and in return, the Buddhaghosa answers the question of how should we live this life. Buddhaghosa, as well as answers and explains many improper ways of viewing death that can hinder one's spirituality. Once one comprehends death, then the thought of a loved one dying will have no bother to them. Instead, it will just pass along as another thought that gives the illusion of self.

Each tale intertwines with one another to answer many of the questions with reality. The Buddha's enlightenment shows what one may achieve through following and practicing the rules of Buddhism. It serves as a motivation for why one would desire to understand and meditate upon death. Comprehending the elusiveness of death can open up oneself to a higher level of consciousness. Understanding the impermanence of all things allows for one to transcend and overcome the suffering of life.