**Reflection Essay – Episode III – Buddhist Attachment**

Many people that I’ve met have negative opinions of the Star Wars Prequels, especially Episode III. People think that Anakin is whiny, and that the story is forced and sometimes lame. But anyone who has studied Buddhism views Episode III in a much different. Yes, for the Buddhist student, Episode III is a *perfect* example of how earthly attachment leads to suffering.

The Buddhists have many different ideas and philosophies within their larger religious philosophy, but the overgeneralization of the Buddhist philosophy is this: All life is suffering, and the way to rid yourself of suffering by ridding yourself of attachment. The Buddhists understand and recognize that what causes pain is loss, and their solution to this problem is to rid yourself of all attachment. If one has no relationships or materials that he or she is holding on to, how could he or she fear losing them or experience that pain of loss? Now I understand that to many people at first glance this idea sounds like ‘how can you lose if you don’t play the game,’ and there are many critiques concerning this lifestyle, but at the end of the day *it works*. This Buddhist philosophy really does ease suffering through attempting to rid oneself of earthly attachment, and many other philosophies such as stoicism attempt to do the same thing, because loss leads to pain.

Now, how does this relate to Star Wars? Isn’t this just an eastern Philosophy? Yes it is, but it relates to star wars in one very important and specific way. This is because Anakin’s fall to the dark side, The betrayal and destruction of the Jedi order, The rise of the Galactic Empire, and Darth Sidious rise to power were all caused by one thing: *Anakin’s Fear of Losing Padme.* Anakin was so overly attached to Padme, *so afraid* of losing the one he loved that he was willing to do ANYTHING to lose her. The following is an excerpt from the script of episode III, right after Anakin and Palpatine threw Mace Windu out a window:

PALPATINE: You are fulfilling your destin, Anakin. Become my apprentice. Learn to use the dark side of the Force.   
ANAKIN: I will do whatever you ask.   
PALPATINE: Good.   
ANAKIN: Just help me save Padme's life. I can't live without her…

As we can see, Anakin is willing to betray his friends and everything he stood for as a Jedi his whole life, to the point of betraying Obi-Wan and *killing younglings* in cold blood, just because he didn’t want to lose Padme. The cruel irony of the situation is that it is Anakin’s fear of losing Padme that fuels his anger and ultimately causes him to lose her when he lashes out in anger and chokes her on Mustafar. Anakin’s whole story is what NOT to do as a Buddhist. If Anakin had spent more time listening to the Buddhist influenced Jedi teachings about ridding oneself from personal attachment as Obi-Wan had instructed him, maybe he wouldn’t have single handedly caused the destruction of the Jedi Order and the hostile takeover of the Galaxy. How much do I wish that Anakin would have heeded those words spoken to him as a kid in Episode I by Master Yoda, the very same words that Yoda tells Luke. “Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger, anger leads to hate, hate leads to suffering.” And ultimately it is this suffering that causes Anakin Skywalker to become Darth Vader. I guess the Buddhists have it right, maybe the only way to avoid losing this game of personal attachment is to not play at all.