

Wave Riding and the Problem with Lack of Engagement in Seeking Spiritual Connection

by Richard Hood Feb. 22, 2023

Buddhism in large part addresses questions of suffering by emphasizing detachment. Our mind is one reliance we can harness to assert our responsibility of tending effectively to self. It becomes semantics if we use attachment or the stoic term judgement. But while pragmatic, suffering is not the sole limit to our fulfillment. And this focus of linking suffering with attachment does not provide a complete answer to the role of suffering in fulfillment.

Perhaps judicious attachment in moderation? As too much detachment treads the copout of sheer life avoidance. Sometimes suffering is truly beneficial. There is truth in hardship, and revelation to be found. And temporary suffering can situationally stave protracted bouts of future suffering. Oftentimes the suffering of what may come is not visible beforehand. The reach of suffering is unpredictable and its infiltration unknowable even with the benefit of hindsight. In our modern age suffering is now as much a function of power structure, limiting resources, and those decisions impacting our world community. This prevailing flavor of suffering is not a direct manifestation of the mind we can so easily steer deterministically.

Other religions of course each have their own perspectives on spiritual fulfillment that can vary markedly. But the notion of the incongruity of spirit with physical reality is especially problematic. And remains odd as a lifelong practice idealized. Exclusively retreating from typical life to enhance spiritual clarity or purity is relatively common throughout various religions. The height of attainment for clergy regardless of sect, be they monks or cardinals, involves isolation. The transfer of knowledge happens in secret, behind closed doors, where the wind of the world may never flow. With religion, beliefs become an entity outright that must be fed and protected in order to survive.

But moreover this stratification presupposes the spirit world as a singularity and with an uncomfortable proximity to a paradoxical living reality. While a necessary mind-shift would rather view life as complete and untorn in its altogether imperfect complexity. Even during times of intense strife. For we are in fact alive with both physical and spiritual necessities at play simultaneously. And one is not inherently or necessarily at odds with the other at all times. And when they are, this then becomes the proving ground capable of catapulting us beyond our previous limits of spiritual understanding. When motivated we seek. And when we seek, we often find.

Here's a nice little metaphor. It has been said many times over and is no doubt in danger of being overused. Life is a wave. But I grew up by the ocean and spent a lot of time there. So forgive me. Some of my best memories occurred on the beach with the ocean as a backdrop. Or perhaps even as the main character itself when I braved this very element of vast ocean head on. I always came away with the reward of betterment. A renewed sense of connection that also included a clearer portrait of self-knowledge. The ocean is a patient albeit decisive teacher with limitless depth. Offering the heights of attainment for those receptive to its embrace.

What is the point of this? Well, getting back to the wave of life. Life is to be experienced. And the most crucial knowledge is only gained by doing. The notion of spirituality as separate

and very often at odds with our physical reality of simply being alive is a misleading trope that has too often been repeated throughout time and across the globe.

Certainly solitude, meditation and shunning worldly conventions have their place for some, and under the right circumstance. A potential wealth of insightful possibilities. But here is the caveat. ...When practiced intermittently.

A monk's vow of worldly divorce, both the symbolic and literal removal from the human fold, is also their fundamental charge to inaction. This very intent to remain unsullied dooms their epiphanies to cease to breathe. And as such they simply persist awkwardly as incomplete sleep walking notions. Resigned to the academic realm of exalted reverie but not practical in this actual day. Much less the future world of tomorrow.

Such guidance can be definitive. But is often not inspirational to undertake. At best there are goals, a purpose, the rally toward identity. No doubt a framework to understanding greater things. Even simple comfort out of the seeming chaos of life. But those same attributes can also be said to apply at worst. As there is not surprisingly an arbitrariness that invariably rears across so many tenants originating from the exclusivity of life and spirit apart. Errantly championing the fixed and the immutable. Lending themselves to factionalized adherents and their respective dogmas. Amplifying extremism. Subject to misinterpretation. Advocating retribution. Quickly leading to unhealthy interactions and relationships. Ironically pulling those further from the spiritual force in all of us. And surrounding each of us. Spirituality is meant to live as we were meant to live. And its tenants, at least their practice, are meant to evolve and to change as life changes.

The wave of life is where the true work is done. The ocean is a school and a playground. The two are inseparable. Because we learn by playing. And if we are doing it right we fail. We fall. But can you truly fail at playing? Indeed the quicker we are back up the more fun we have. And of course the more we then learn.

Failure is its own form of success. One side of a coin in perpetual motion that for better or worse is always a coin with two sides. Failure is the path to grace and essential proof of embracing the necessary spirit of life. Once again, that we are in fact doing it right. Success without failure is not success. Success without challenge is no prize to laud. Redemption and grace are found in intent alone. When engagement is spurred. The willingness to rise to action, to play, at times stupidly, to get dirty, to brave the unknown, to risk what is dear. Because it is absolutely necessary to do so.

I've learned the most from the worst teachers. But not in traditional classrooms. A bad teacher in class offers nothing. In life, the horrible people I was encouraged to cooperate with taught me much however. There is no greater call for the right way to do something than being shown over and over the myriad ways it can be done wrongly. Now the pitfalls of what has been wagered are clear. What it costs, and what it takes to see intent through rightly.

But as with everything, at its very own cost. Even pure wisdom shoulders the weight of simply knowing. Sometimes the price exacted includes the unsavory knowledge of what being forced to make a meal from someone else's failure tastes like. The intimately unavoidable awareness of the tyranny of those who so easily shirk parity for ego. Such bitter treachery must not be digested or incorporated, but given up readily and released to die alone. Certainly, the stinging wave feels more solid and less liquid in that split second of the wayward tumble down.

And then almost immediately we can yield to melt in oceanic embrace. And water becomes us. All over again. Endlessly available to us. Oneness.

We should rightly be weary of those quick to offer direction but without the courage of anteing in themselves. Those who've never truly tried. Those who rely on others' efforts. Those cloaked madly in the misattribution of others' risk. Advice forged without attributable risk is something fragmented. Removed from the kiln of life. An untested, broken creation that cannot be applied to life because it was never designed with the intent of action in mind as requisite for life. You cannot succeed without falling. So why seek advice from someone who fears falling to the extent they dare but try?

When the path toward perfection becomes above all else the premature destination of perfection an impossible mirage is born. And while a non-reality, it is fixed so firmly and as such to some appears very real indeed. For only non-living ideals can afford to remain forever unchanged. It clearly costs a rock nothing to continue to sit just as it has sat all those preceding years.

Again it seems we have found our way back to attachment. A special kind of clinging fastidiousness. I would rather bear the brunt of the fleeting solidity on an otherwise fluid wave than face the stridence of perpetual failure foisted upon. In deathly grip of its very waiting. A premature destination devoid of life's fundamental bearings, or the necessity of its own path.

Grace is sought through intent. And achieved by every attempt we channel through action to become better. Every individual who tries and tries again embodies the necessary practice of grace and is treading along its path to fulfillment. When we fail through mounting pressures and invariably get diverted from ourselves and others and our greater spiritual understanding, the simple matter of reestablishing a right mindset of intent and the courage to step back out along the necessary path is all we need. And all that matters. At the end of the day, that we earnestly tried is all it was ever truly about. It is better to have tried and failed in life, than to rest solely on the successes of the mind's pure achievement artificially removed from the necessary active engagement life demands. The successful path is paved in momentary failure. The path itself is the destination. And true success is inseparable from the humble acknowledgment of always coming up short. It is through our willingness to risk at times unknown personal costs that we find the strength in perspective to clearly frame our inevitable losses as the only means of resonating grace within.