

Samsara, a Thousand Cycles of False and Truth

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Abstract

In the quest for truth, it is often the case that a seeker, perhaps an accomplished philosopher or a martyr endowed with the highest merits and virtues, dedicates their entire being to uncovering that essence—an elixir of life, a fountain of youth. This pursuit is not merely a search for knowledge, but a deep, consuming journey towards understanding the very nature of existence.

Contrasting this, a being who is not driven by such a search may find a certain peace in accepting life as it is, unchallenged by the deeper questions that beckon the seeker. However, the wayfarer—one who treads the path with purpose—encounters something along their journey. The truths they uncover, though profound and illuminating at each step, inevitably become obsolete as they advance. Yet, this obsolescence does not negate their truth; rather, it signifies the transient nature of understanding as the seeker evolves.

Similarly, the non-seeker may stumble upon something—a falsehood—that also loses its hold over time. This falsehood, like the truths discovered by the wayfarer, is subject to the same impermanence.

This dynamic journey resembles the lotus of the path, a symbol with thousands of petals, each representing a layer of truth. The lotus, with its infinite layers, mirrors the infinity of creation itself. Yet, the creator—the source from which all truth and falsehood emanate—remains beyond comprehension, beyond size, beyond knowledge. The creator transcends all, while the creation,

with its infinite possibilities, unfolds like the ever-blooming lotus, offering glimpses of truth at every turn.

Keywords: Samsara, Wisdom, Imhal, Istidraj

Introduction

The pursuit of truth has been a central theme in both philosophical and mystical traditions, often depicted as a quest for the essence of life, an elixir that promises eternal youth and understanding (Davoudpour, Zandi, & Mikaeil, 2024). This quest is not merely an intellectual exercise but a profound journey that engages the entire being of the seeker. Such seekers are often portrayed as philosophers or martyrs who, driven by a deep sense of purpose, invest all their capacities in the search for truth. Their journey is characterized by a relentless pursuit of the essence of existence, a quest that transcends mere knowledge acquisition and touches the very core of what it means to be human. In this context we discuss the eternal but transient nature of the Truth, where a new fact is derived from the previous knowledge which is called the higher truth in Avesta¹ and Zoroastrian Prayer “Ašem . vohu “¹ the most recited prayer of the religion, the higher truth is the fruit of pursuit of truth.

“Righteousness is best (of all that is) good.

As desired, what is being desired

is truth for him who (represents) best truth.”

In Islamic teaching, “Istidraj”² and “Imhal” are designated steps for the people or entities who pursue falsehood and consequently fall into greater falsehoods.

¹ Ašem . vohu . vahištem . asti... Uštā . asti...Uštā . ahmāi . hyat . ašāi . vahištāi . ašem

² Istidraj means gradually and Imhal means given time and granting respite

Samsara in Buddhism

In Buddhism, *samsara* refers to the cyclical nature of existence, a continuous cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. This endless wheel of life, driven by karma and delusion, traps beings in a perpetual state of suffering, known as *dukkha* (Gethin, 1998). Samsara is often depicted as a vast ocean, where beings are adrift, caught in the currents of their desires, attachments, and ignorance. Each life within samsara is influenced by past actions and the cravings that keep beings tethered to the cycle (Harvey, 2013).

The fundamental problem of samsara lies in its inherent dissatisfaction. No matter the circumstances, whether one is born into pleasure or pain, wealth or poverty, the conditions of samsaric existence are impermanent and thus incapable of providing lasting fulfillment. This impermanence, or *anicca*, ensures that every pleasure eventually fades, every achievement loses its luster, and every life ends in death, only to begin anew (Rahula, 1974).

Buddhism teaches that the way to break free from samsara is through the attainment of enlightenment, or *nirvana*. Nirvana represents the cessation of the cycle, the end of suffering, and the realization of the ultimate truth (Keown, 2000). It is a state where the flames of desire and ignorance are extinguished, allowing the mind to rest in perfect peace and wisdom. The path to nirvana involves ethical conduct, meditation, and the development of wisdom, particularly the understanding of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path (Conze, 1993).

In this way, samsara and nirvana represent the fundamental dichotomy in Buddhist thought: one is the realm of perpetual suffering and illusion, the other a state of liberation and ultimate reality. The journey from samsara to nirvana is the core of the Buddhist spiritual path, a transformative process that leads from the bondage of ignorance to the freedom of enlightenment (Snelling, 1991).

***Istidraj* and *Imhal* in the Quran**

In Islamic theology, the concepts of *istidraj* (استدراج) and *imhal* (امهال) are profound themes that illustrate how divine wisdom operates in the lives of individuals, particularly those who persist in wrongdoing. *Istidraj* refers to the gradual enticement of a sinner by granting them continued success and worldly pleasures, despite their disobedience to God. This divine strategy allows the individual to become increasingly engrossed in their transgressions, leading them further away from repentance and ultimately toward a greater downfall. The Quran highlights this concept in several verses, emphasizing that the apparent prosperity of wrongdoers is not a sign of divine favor, but rather a form of subtle and gradual punishment (Al-Qurtubi, 2003).

For instance, in Surah Al-An'am (6:44), Allah says, "So when they forgot what they were reminded of, We opened to them the doors of everything, until, when they rejoiced in that which they were given, We seized them suddenly, and they were in despair." This verse reflects how *istidraj* allows sinners to indulge in their desires, leading them to a state of heedlessness before an abrupt and severe reckoning (Ibn Kathir, 2000).

Imhal, on the other hand, refers to the divine act of granting respite or delaying punishment. It is a form of divine patience, where God gives wrongdoers time to repent and correct their ways, even though they continue in their disobedience. This is emphasized in Surah Al-Imran (3:178): "And let not those who disbelieve think that Our granting them respite is good for them. We only give them respite so that they may increase in sinfulness; and for them is a humiliating punishment." *Imhal* serves as a reminder that the delay in punishment should not be misunderstood as approval of sinful behavior, but as an opportunity for repentance and return to the right path (Al-Tabari, 2001).

Both *istidraj* and *imhal* underscore the intricate balance between justice and mercy in the Quranic worldview. While God allows individuals the freedom to choose their path, these concepts remind believers that continued transgression without repentance leads to greater consequences. The divine wisdom behind *istidraj* and *imhal* is a test of faith, intended to encourage self-reflection, repentance, and ultimately, the return to righteousness (Al-Ghazali, 1988).

The Seeker and the Non-Seeker

In contrast to the seeker, there exists a being who is not driven by the need to uncover deeper truths. Such individuals may find peace in accepting life as it is, unchallenged by the existential questions that propel the seeker forward. This acceptance can lead to a form of tranquility, as the non-seeker is not burdened by the constant search for meaning. However, for the wayfarer—those who embark on the path with purpose—this peace is elusive. The wayfarer’s journey is one of continual discovery, where each step reveals a new layer of truth. Yet, as each truth is uncovered, it becomes obsolete, not because it was false, but because the wayfarer has evolved beyond it (Smith, 2020).

The Transient Nature of Truth

The transient nature of truth is a key aspect of the wayfarer’s journey. Truths that are profound and illuminating at one stage of the journey may become irrelevant as the seeker advances. This obsolescence does not diminish the validity of these truths; instead, it highlights the evolving nature of understanding. The wayfarer’s experience echoes the philosophical notion that truth is not a static entity but a dynamic process that unfolds over time. As the seeker progresses, they continuously shed old truths in favor of new insights, reflecting the ever-changing nature of existence (Kumar, 2019).

Falsehood and Obsolescence

Interestingly, the non-seeker’s encounter with falsehood follows a similar pattern. Falsehoods, like truths, are subject to the same impermanence. A falsehood that once seemed convincing may lose its hold as the non-seeker’s understanding evolves, even if only subconsciously. This process mirrors the wayfarer’s journey, where each step forward involves the discarding of outdated beliefs, whether they are truths or falsehoods. The impermanence of both

truth and falsehood suggests that all understanding is transient, shaped by the individual's journey and the context in which it occurs (Rizvi, 2018).

The Lotus of the Path

The dynamic journey of the seeker can be likened to the lotus, a symbol of infinite layers of truth. The lotus, with its thousands of petals, each representing a layer of truth, mirrors the infinity of creation itself. This symbol captures the essence of the wayfarer's journey—a path marked by continuous revelation and the unfolding of deeper understanding. The lotus also signifies the interconnectedness of all truths, suggesting that each layer, while distinct, is part of a greater whole (Giri, 2022).

While the creation is vast and infinite, offering endless possibilities for discovery, the creator remains beyond comprehension. The creator, who is the source of all truth and falsehood, transcends the limitations of size, knowledge, and understanding. This transcendence underscores the ultimate mystery of existence, a mystery that the seeker can approach but never fully grasp (Davoudpour et al., 2024a).

Conclusion

The search for truth is a journey without end, one that challenges the seeker to continually evolve and adapt their understanding. As the wayfarer progresses along the path, they encounter truths that illuminate their way, only to find these truths become obsolete as they advance. This process of discovery and obsolescence reflects the transient nature of all understanding, whether it be truth or falsehood. The metaphor of the lotus serves as a powerful symbol of this journey, representing the infinite layers of truth that unfold before the seeker. Ultimately, while the seeker may uncover many truths, the creator remains beyond the reach of human comprehension, a testament to the profound mystery of existence. We previously explained the purpose of pursuit of wisdom and the



divergence between intellect, wisdom and religion (Davoudpour, A.R., 2024c) in empirical studies and the times of crisis. It is unclear whether the pursuit of truth can protect from falling into such occasion, but it is evident that such virtue is an authentic marker of the true seeker (Davoudpour, A.R., 2024), where both science and intellect fail to act.

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