

# ANALOGIES

## ***Attachment: Collecting Sea shells***

Collecting seashells along the shore of a large body of water is either a personal experience or one easily assimilated from movies, books, or stories like this one. The point of this analogy is the actual act of collecting. It could be that you collect stamps, books, cars, baseballs, or simple trivia and even analogies. I hope you can use the seashells as a proxy for whatever behavior of collecting, sparks your insight.

Walking along a seashore we can witness a child holding a plastic bucket and stopping from time to time to pickup, analyze and either drop or collect in her bucket a specimen of her liking. After a while the child returns to a parent to ask for an additional bucket. The parent might then say, “Well, don’t you think you have quite enough?” To which the child responds, “I know, but there is more. Can I have another bucket?”

We might be tempted to see the child’s behavior as evidence of ***attachment or clinging*** to the beauty of the seashells. But this would be incorrect. Once the child found and analyzed her first and perhaps second shell, the thrill and curiosity of her find was already quite faded and replaced by the act of “finding and collecting”, as though this action would indemnify her against ever loosing this feeling of satisfaction. This satisfaction is self referential in that it acts as a self realization or ***identity*** qualifier, “*I am a collector!*”, I am *special* and *unique* because I collect nice things, the child thinks to herself.

This complex process of identification and the energy committed to it is what Buddhism labels “Attachment”. Attachment not to the collection or the items in it, but rather to the identification of self as the progenitor of collecting. In this regard it may be closer to the “act” of clinging, but the result is the same. Like a gambler who cares nothing about the money, but instead is all about “winning”. The gambler wants to BE a Winner.

***Attachment*** is not about things, it is about ***identity***.

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## ***Enlightenment: Rolling Snowball***

The old stories of a rolling snowball coming down a large snow covered mountain, growing ever larger as it rolls, is used in a different way here to demonstrate two different Buddhist concepts.

On the one hand the momentum of the snowball as it continuously grows by collecting more snow is analogous to our Samsaric karma collecting influences and growing a vast database of identification. This collection of identity is the Samsaric mind itself, rolling around within the ever-growing snowball, trapped in its boundaries and momentum.

On the other hand, and in stark contrast to the snowball and its mind-state of Samsara, the Buddha-mind-state stands outside of the snowball entirely as observer and compassionate witness.

In this analogy, the marked difference between the roiling turmoil of the rolling snowball constantly in a state of unrest and collecting new influences of the Samsaric mind; versus the serenity and unattached mind of Buddha to clearly witness the drama unfolding with compassion, and ready influence to assist in assuaging and mollifying the Effects of the Samsaric turmoil. Both are witness to the turmoil of Samsara, but as one is swept away by it, the Buddha is calmly concerned only in preparing to assist recovery and removal from it.

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## ***Samsara: Fountain Analogy***

Samsara is a complex assembly of layers upon layers of experiences, attachments, habit energy, and influences shaping our perception from moment-to-moment (see, **3000 Realms**). In other words, this means that you might experience something one day, and a week later with a friend, you may have a complete change in your opinion or experience of that same thing due only to the friend's opinion or experience on that day. Examples of this are incalculable and constant. See also, **Epistemology**. In this Analogy we begin with a group of ten people seated in a room with an organizer and an interviewer.

The ten people are all instructed to take a short walk around an adjacent park and follow a paved path to ensure that each person takes the same route. Each person in the group would leave the room ten minutes apart from the previous person to ensure each would have their own unique experience. Upon completion of their walks and return to the room, instructed not to talk with one another, each person would be ushered into a separate closed room to be interviewed about their experience.

After all ten persons had completed their walks and returned and sequestered into separate rooms, the interviewer entered each room and asked only one question of each person. The question was, "Please describe the fountain"?

As you may have already guessed, the answers were as varied as the people. In fact some did not recall a fountain at all. Some descriptions were detailed and included several birds of different species bathing in the bottom pool, while others remembered mostly the sound of falling water from an upper level, or was it two...

We might be tempted to say that some people are simply more observant than others. However, this would be an erroneous assumption. A better evaluation might have included additional questions such as descriptions of foliage, architecture, traffic, skyline, etc. With these descriptions we might find that observational skills are related to the specific observer and their priority of attention. Perhaps their chosen careers could shed light on their tendencies and the parameters they use in their observations. The “filters” they have each built over time and their habit energy of tendencies and conditions. And here is where we get closer to the heart of the matter.

Each of us builds our experience of the world from the vast interconnections and value judgment made over our entire lifetime. This exercise points to the fact that we are quite unaware of a great deal of available experience all around us as we navigate this world through a complex lens of blinders and focus points we have determined necessary for our navigation of the world and our identity or “self” within it. This is the trap of Samsara.

In Buddhism, this Samsaric narrowing of experience is indicated as **attachment** to the identity forming ideas of a **self**. It is this self as the limited experience of our potential, requiring constant maintenance that precipitates our anxieties, confusion, dis-ease, and stress. There are a great many names or labels given to this condition of humanity.

As in the earlier analogy of the snowball, the Samsaric condition is a small subset of our full potential and has labels like, the Avichi hell, or the hell of incessant suffering, or simply Samsara.

To understand this concept can be helpful in our study as we encounter its many expressions and uses in the scholarship of Buddhism.

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## ***Time: The Picket Fence***

1. a measured or measurable period, a continuum that lacks spatial dimensions.
2. Time is of philosophical interest and is also the subject of mathematical and scientific investigation.
3. Time appears to be more puzzling than space because it seems to flow or pass or else people seem to advance through it. But the passage or advance seems to be unintelligible.
4. The question of how many seconds per second time flows (or one advances through it) is obviously an absurd one, for it suggests that the flow or advance comprises a rate of change with respect to something else.

5. Time is a construct of the Human mind in its constant activity of discriminations and identification.

Time is a measurement of human experience perceived and used by humans to define our experience of **momentum**. In this regard I find the old story of the Picket Fence a useful mental experiment.

Suppose that you are waiting on a friend to ready for a trip. You chose to wait outside of your friends home. In one case you chose to sit and wait on a garden bench for about 5 minutes. The **time goes by fairly quickly**, affected only by your anticipation. That wait almost completely **disappears** from your mind as your friend exits his home and joins you for the trip.

Now consider a different scenario; your friend enters the home and you are instructed to await while sitting on a **picket fence**. The same 5 minutes go by and the seconds tick by painfully slow. By the time your friend emerges from his home, your experience of time has lengthened the 5 minutes into an endless period of suffering and not to be soon forgotten.

In both scenarios the “time” is the same, but the experience of the time is vastly different. Time, for all its seeming presence in our lives, is an incredibly fluid concept describing experience rather than anything determinate. Just as all “things” of Samsara, it is a construct of the mind.