

When we lose a beloved

(Inspired by Sean Buranahiran)

We all go through the pains of losing someone we love or a friend. We feel sad and troubled. Instead of feeling sad, betrayed, ashamed, of being a failure, it is better to ask oneself: "What is the best thing I can do now that is better than this loss?" Surely, we will then find new friends or a better partner.

When someone we truly love leaves us, this surely devastates us. The reality is that this person has left us for all the right or wrong reasons. We are all victims of conditions, some self-created, some beyond our control. But we have put them all together, and there's the result. However, in the end, it is for the better of both parties.

Sometimes, a special person comes into our life for as if but a moment. Surely, there may be some reason or season for such a precious meeting. We can find that reason for ourself: we give meaning to this special moment. Maybe, we learn to love; maybe just to live life more fully; maybe just to learn something new.

That special person who has come into our life, touched us warmly and brightened us, and is gone. For, time is always running out for us all. We arrive, we meet, we learn something old, something new. Then, he has to go for good, leaving some good with us. We may have lost that person but we have gained his love and wisdom. Our life is changed forever. Then, that special person lives inside us forever.

There may be a time in our life when we have a crowd of friends. And the crowd seems to grow. Then, we realize that we can never keep up. For, true friendship is not in numbers, but in individuals. Our true friends, then, are the ones we are with right this very moment.

In time, we are faced with a choice. Then, we realize that we need just a single true friend, a wise partner, rather than a crowd of false friends. Sometimes, we need to lose or leave the crowd so that we can find our true self. For a crowd neither thinks nor love, and always goes the wrong way and expects us to follow like lemmings.

Losing someone special or when someone special leaves us, can give us that precious space for someone new who is just right with whom to share our lives. Or, for us to discover what's the best thing that we can now do for the better. Losing someone, then, is part of our growing up, our maturing into wisdom and true happiness.

Sometimes, the person that we love or desire may not be the right choice for our life. Instead of thinking and lamenting after that person who cannot be with us or who is gone from us, we should focus our love and energies on the one who will be there for us, who is always there for us, someone who actually accepts us, gives us strength, loves us.

Even here, we have a choice: we can just let ourselves be sad and devastated. But we are not the only one who has lost someone dear. Such a loss levels all. Or, we can actually rejoice in our sadness: see it for what it is with wisdom. Life laughs at us; we laugh back. Rather than being stuck in an unhappy relationship rigged with distrust and pain, we have joyfully moved on. We have not lost anyone: we do not deserve that person; the person does not deserve us.

Our final and most loyal partner is, of course, our self – the one we love the most, whether we know it or not. This is one who is always there to think, speak and act for us. We are so used to our self that we cannot imagine living without one. Yet, despite all the years, since day one, we still do not really know our self. We love it, we are upset at it, we don't know what to do with it: we don't even know what the self really is!

We can simply begin by imagining (only imagining, not to take it too seriously) that the self is our body. But this body has a shelf-life: it must leave us when its time is up: this can be any time, not the ROD stamped on the label. Hence, we need to take good care of our body while we are still together, while we live. We have to do the best with all the good and better than we can master, and give it.

With time, we mature in our humanity, even feel divinity within us. Then, we realize there is really NO self. We have been talking with ourselves (notice: not our self) all this time. But it was a good talk and a good time while it lasted. If we listened well, it becomes wisdom. "It" is, of course, the heart, the mind that feels.

Even without the self, or rather a phantom of the self, we are not alone at all. Rather, we are alone, but never lonely. We can see how beautiful people are or can be if they knew all about this. The world is such a great place for learning, but we must, in time, graduate and leave it for some place better. Well, it's not really a place, perhaps a state. But a "state" is conditioned: this is unconditioned. "This" – that's what it is – the Buddha calls nirvana.

When we reflect on this beautiful destiny that awaits us, we must feel a great compassion for all the homeless people and beings in the world. There are very few humans amongst us. We are mostly surrounded and confronted by beasts, demons, ghosts, and hell-beings looking like humans, but their minds (they have no heart) are those of subhuman beings.

They are so caught up in their daily rounds, hunting, stalking, struggling every waking moment with their subhuman selves, their inner worlds of the animal, the asura, the preta and the hell-being. Running here and there, back and forth, always back to the same place, defending their things and space as the self dictates – caught in a grand wheel, like hamsters in their spinning wheels.

They, who run around seeking things they think will fill their lives, are the really homeless ones. The Buddha has left his house for his true home to seek true happiness. He teaches us and countless others to find this same joyful selfless abode.

We need to pass this timeless message to the homeless beings that they have a true refuge, a real home, waiting for them. It's right there inside them, filled by a phantom. Once the self leaves, we are home. Really home sweet home.

Finally, even the Buddha, having appeared in the world, must leave us. Even Buddhas die—in the sense that their bodies cease functioning. Their consciousness can no more be spoken of meaningfully, like a fire that has gone out. Without death, there is no rebirth; without rebirth, we are free from death—that is Buddhahood, that is arhathood.

For, if the Buddha were to be “eternal” (if any meaningful existence can be eternal), or even if the Buddha had lived on a whole world cycle, Buddhism would have become meaningless. Early Buddhism would then have been Mahayanized well before its time, and we are left with theology, religiosity, philosophy, casuistry—with only Buddhism without Buddha Dhamma.

The Buddha's passing finally authenticates the Buddha Dhamma. Everything in this universe is impermanent. In this simple truth lies true reality. In true reality lies awakening. The Buddha has passed on. He leaves us the liberating Dhamma, and we are his Dhamma heirs. The Buddha is dead, long live the Dhamma!

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