

Living is Loving

The Buddha's warning about gain, honour, praise
(Bhindi Sutta, S 17.33, SD 46.24)
[Previously published as fb220410 Piya Tan]

To live is to love: it is the very source of life itself. We came into the world with love, the common act of love of our parents. That love gave us a human body. We are raised with love that gives us humanity, the capacity to love and be loved. Love makes us human. To be human is to love others, to teach others love by showing it.

To live is to love. Without love there is no life: we are then but the living dead. The body moves, but there is neither mind nor heart. We neither think nor feel. We move around like dust blown about by the winds of the world, by gain and loss, fame and obscurity, blame and praise, joy and pain.

The good life

To live is to love. To love is to let live, that there is love; just as the way we feel in our most joyful moments. Without love there is no life. Hence, kill not, destroy not life. To love, we let live: we respect life.

To love is to let live. To live is to have what gives life; to work that we have. Hence, out of love, we take not the not-given, especially what gives others life in happiness. Not stealing is an act of love for the life and being of others; that they, too, may live and love in joy.

To live is to love others just as they are. To love is to give love, never to take love not freely given. Hence, we must not force ourself on others. Love means letting others live freely, just the way they are. Only in giving love, we are loved.

Loving others

When love runs over, it must fill another's cup with care and ruth. It is a love celebrated with our bodies: with seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. But love is more than just body: it is mind and heart, thoughtfulness and feeling, philosophy and poetry, science and art: all that make us human and humanity, society and civilization.

Only when given with love, there is blessed gain. Only when we act with love, there is blessed honour. Only when we speak with love, there is blessed praise. For gain, honour, praise in themselves will destroy us. To love merely gain, honour, praise, is to lack love. We see them as fodder to fill our hollow that is loveless.

The love that never ends

True love has no happy ending, nor end sad. True love never ends.
True love is letting go. We let go of self, just as we free others. Only then we are really together. We see others for the good they truly are. We happily know them, see them.

When we love gain, honour, praise, from others, we have taken what is not ours. We have measured ourselves to be less than the giver. The giver sees us as less than what we really are. For, we have been measured and bought, like goods, with gain, honour, praise.

Gain, honour, praise

When others give us gains, but without love, they see us as but goods for their own gain.
When others give us honours, but not for love, they want us to honour them forever.
When others give us praise, but not for love, they want us to be in their shadow.

When there is love in what we think, what we say, what we do—we gain for love, not for measure. When we show love, we are honoured with love without measure. When we give love, we are praised for the love that we joyfully are.

We cannot measure love: we cannot measure this gain, this honour, this praise. It is just another word for love.

This word of love wishes you to grow in love. For gain, honour, praise keep you from growing into the true person that you can be. Worse, they may destroy what good you now have. The burden of gain, honour, praise stunt you; ever in need of others' approval; only love frees you to grow and live. For, to live is to love.

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BHINDI SUTTA (S 17.31, SD 46.24)¹

The Discourse on the Severed

1 (The Buddha was) staying at Sāvattthī.

2 “Bhikshus, dreadful are gain, honour and praise,
bitter, vile, an obstruction to attaining the unsurpassed security from the yoke. [240]

3 Mentally overwhelmed and obsessed with gain, honour and praise, bhikshus, Devadatta brought schism into the sangha.

4 So dreadful, bhikshus, are gain, honour and praise, bitter and vile,
that it is an obstruction to the attaining of the unsurpassed security from the yoke.

5 Therefore, bhikshus, you should train yourselves, thus:

‘We will abandon gain, honour and praise that have arisen,
and we shall not let the arisen gain, honour and praise remain to overwhelm our minds!’
Thus, bhikshus, you should train yourselves.”

Translated by Piya Tan ©2014

¹ <https://www.themindingcentre.org/dharmafarer/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/46.24-Bhindi-S-s17.31-piya.pdf>