



Non-Self: What's
Self-Love Got to Do
with It?

February: Celebrating cultural and commercial ideas of love and passion.


- ▶ Valentine's Day
- ▶ Love
- ▶ Passion
- ▶ Desire





What Can We Celebrate Instead? Love Yourself Wisely

5 minutes

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- There is a story in the Pali Canon is when King Pasenadi and his Queen Mallika are alone in the bedroom and at one point he turns to her and asks, “Is there anyone in the world you love more than yourself?” And, of course, being a king, he’s expecting her to say, “Yes, your majesty, I love you more than myself.” Now, if this were a Hallmark movie, that’s probably what she would have said. But this is the Pali Canon, and she says, “No. And how about you? Is there anybody you love more than yourself?” And the king has to admit that there’s nobody he loves more than himself. So that’s the end of that scene.
 - The king leaves the palace, goes to see the Buddha, and reports the conversation. And the Buddha affirms what Queen Mallika said. You could search the entire world and there’s nobody you can find that you love more than yourself. Now, you could take that realization in lots of different directions, but the Buddha takes it in a really wise one, which is that as a result of this realization you should never harm anybody or cause them to do harm. In other words, you should love yourself wisely.



Dhamapadda: Verse 160

Attahi attano natho

Translated by Thanissaro Bikkho

Your own self is

your own mainstay,

for who else could your mainstay be?

With you yourself well-trained

you obtain the mainstay

hard to obtain.



Healthy Sense of Self



Healthy Sense of Self

Attahi attano natho

- Don't put the cart before the horse
- Letting go of the self completely comes later
- Now we are responsible for our selves
- the actions of our self, the activity of ourself
- We need to cultivate skillful modes of selfing
- We have a healthy functioning of our ego to help us do this



Thanissaro Bhikku talk on Taking Responsibility – Dhammatalks.org

- ▶ “When the Buddha introduced his own son to the practice, it was a series of instructions on how to be responsible. First, he emphasized the importance of being truthful. As he said, if you can tell a deliberate lie with no sense of shame, you don’t have the quality of a contemplative. As a contemplative, you have to be truthful, both to yourself and to other people. If you’re going to learn from anyone else, you have to be truthful about what you’re doing and the results you’re getting. If you’re going to learn from your own actions, you have to be truthful about what you’re doing and the results you’re getting.
- ▶ Then he had Rahula reflect on his actions from the very beginning, i.e., from the intention, the desire to act. He was supposed to take responsibility from that point onward. So he wasn’t telling Rahula that the path will just develop naturally on its own, or there’s nobody there to do the path.
- ▶ So all throughout, the Buddha was teaching responsibility. When you’re talking about karma, whose karma are you talking about? You’re talking about your own, so you want to be responsible for it. If your karma was not your choice, then you couldn’t say that karma was a force anywhere at all. It would be somebody else’s force, or something else’s force, acting through you. But here you are, making decisions.”



Healthy Sense of Self

- ▶ We use this very form to apply ourselves to our practice, to the path
- ▶ We develop a healthy sense of self-esteem by taking pride in skillful actions
- ▶ We learn what to claim as part of our sense of self and what to let go of
- ▶ Practice the precepts: Not to kill, steal, lie, have sexual misconduct, or take intoxicants
- ▶ Training the mind: looking for happiness in ways that you can take pride in
- ▶ We have that reflection that we're the owners of our actions, because our actions are basically what make us.
- ▶ Who we are comes from our habits, from our daily actions



Healthy Sense of Self – Greater pleasure than sensory indulgences

- *The Buddha taught heedfulness:* realizing that we face dangers in life, some of them from inside, some of them from outside, but we can prepare, we can protect ourselves from those dangers through the power of our actions.
- Instead of just indulging in our whims, doing whatever we want, we learn to appreciate life as a skill, and the craft, the practice we are developing
- There's a deep sense of happiness that comes when we realize that we've done something skillful—
- This is a greater happiness than simply enjoying nice sounds, smells, tastes, touch sensations.



Skillful Selfing

- What kind of person are we creating through our actions, through our thoughts, through our words, through our deeds?
- We want it to be a good person, someone we love to love.
- And that requires that you have an independent source of goodness inside—“goodness,” here, in the sense of the worth of your actions.
- We want to have a sense of Inner Wealth, a source of goodness inside from the worth of our actions



Skillful Selfing



- ▶ This is one of the reasons why we train the mind in meditation. It's not just for relaxation; it's for gathering strength.
- ▶ On the one hand, as the mind gets more still, you see things in the mind a lot more clearly, you can understand when there's an unskillful impulse and you can see what it's coming from.
- ▶ When there's a skillful impulse, you can see it's there as well.



Skillful Selfing & Karma

- ▶ The second gift that comes from the meditation is the strength to let go of the unskillful impulses and to develop the skillful ones.
- ▶ And to remember these things: what's skillful and what's not, and what you should do with these things as they arise.
- ▶ That's mindfulness—understanding mindfulness as a quality of memory, your ability to hold these things in mind.
- ▶ We are constantly shaping our experience
- ▶ This is the karma of what we're doing right now
- ▶ Thanissaro Bhikku mentions, “As for your past karma, that's going to come willy-nilly. When it meets up with good karma in the present, sometimes past bad karma can be dissolved.”



Training our Minds, Expanding your Ground


“If you take a handful of salt and pour it into a small bowl of water, the water in the bowl will be too salty to drink. But if you pour the same amount of salt into a large river, people will still be able to drink the river's water.

— Thich Nhat Hanh



Skillful Selfing

- To make your mind expansive, make it into that river of water,
- In two weeks we'll talk about the Brahmaviharas which is one way of doing that through the development of goodwill, compassion, empathetic joy, equanimity.
- We want to make the mind larger than the cravings, the temptations, the noise, the distress, the confusion, the pains of the body and mind.
- We expand our healthy sense of self that can be resilient, spacious, act wisely instead of reacting



Healthy Sense of Self – Maintain until you can let go

- Eventually, we will let go of our sense of self,
- But only when it's done everything it needs to do. Finished the job.
- It's part of our strategy for finding true happiness.
- We're learning how to train it, so that it finds a happiness that's genuinely true, genuinely reliable—so reliable that we don't have to do anything to maintain it.
- That's when the mind's strategies of self and no self fall away, they aren't needed anymore.
- In the meantime we need a healthy sense of self to maintain the path.



True Self-Love: Passion for the Path



Passion for the Path

- ▶ We substitute our passions for other things with a passion for the path: a passion for the practice, a passion for concentration.
- ▶ We want to do this really well, as well as we can.
- ▶ This is why we develop a passion for the path even though we're trying to develop dispassion for the aggregates.
- ▶ Right effort generates the desire to do this well.
- ▶ If you're playing around with the breath a little bit, then wandering off to entertain yourself with something else and then coming back, the path isn't going to have its effect.
- ▶ You have to prove to yourself that this is the best thing the mind can create. It's the best state of becoming you can experience: the mind in concentration. And you have to see at the same time the extent to which you've created it.



Passion for the Path

- ▶ Do your best because that's what makes the path work: by having a passion for doing it.
- ▶ The Buddha wants to wean you off all your other types of passion by substituting this object of passion for the time being, along with all the elements that can go into motivating you:
 - ▶ a sense of heedfulness, that you really need to do this well; a sense of compassion for yourself; a sense of pride in your craftsmanship.
 - ▶ As the Buddha once said, the secret to his awakening was, one, that he would not let up on his effort and, two, that he would never let himself rest content with skillful qualities.
 - ▶ No matter how good his skills got, if they could be better, he was going to try to develop that higher level of skill.
- ▶ Use your passion and desire to set your standards high and apply yourself to the practice.



Passion for the Path

- To love yourself wisely this is what to do.
- You follow the path. You stick with it, regardless.
- But it requires doing your best.
- That's what makes the path work.



True Self- Love: Applying yourself to the Eightfold Path

- **Right view:** Understanding the nature of things, including the Four Noble Truths, our suffering, the making of our suffering, the fact that our suffering can be transformed, and the path of transformation.
- **Right intention:** Thoughts lead to action. Right intention leads to Right Action.
- **Right speech:** Avoiding harmful speech like lying, harsh speech, and gossip
- **Right action:** Avoiding harmful actions like killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct
- **Right livelihood: Choosing work that is ethical and doesn't harm others**
- **Right effort:** Abandoning negative states of mind and cultivating positive states
- **Right mindfulness:** Being aware of body, feelings, thoughts, and phenomena
- **Right concentration:** One-pointed or meditative absorption



True Self-Love

- ▶ If you just go looking for your immediate pleasures without any concern about the consequences, there's very little to respect.
- ▶ But if you decide you want to love yourself intelligently, wisely
- ▶ You behave in a way that's worthy of your self-love
- ▶ You find that it's a gift not only to yourself but also to the people around you.
- ▶ And it's a gift whose effects just keep rippling out.
- ▶ Realizing that you love yourself more than anybody else—act in a way that's in line with intelligent self-love, wise self-love, wanting the best for yourself.
- ▶ And that means wanting the best for all your thoughts, words, and deeds.
- ▶ That's why this teaching on self-love is connected to teaching on karma, because it's through our actions that we create ourselves.
- ▶ It's through our actions that we can create a self that's worthy of our love and that can take us beyond sense of selves in the end.



We let go of the Raft of Selfing when we're ready

- Passion for the Dharma meets the end of passion, craving and clinging
- The end of suffering and true freedom
- We have arrived to our true home.



The End