

“Not Only Me!” – On Facing Death Now

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You think I am going to die soon? I heard some people have been thinking that. Not only me! All sentient beings are going to die. We don't know when, nobody knows. I think it is wonderful if people are thinking that I am going to die, because then maybe they will realize that they are going to die, too; and then maybe they will try to prepare for that a little bit. I think that would be wonderful!

Why? Because when you really think that you are dying, you stop thinking that all the things of this life belong to you. Instead you think, “Oh! I am dying! This is not mine anymore. Not my tea, not my blanket, not my telephone. Nothing.” When we die, nothing belongs to us.

In life, we hold onto things so much, we think everything belongs to us. Everything has to be “Mine! Mine! Mine!” That holding deepens into fixation, and that fixation gets stronger and stronger and blossoms into desire, into anger, into jealousy. All your phenomena get heavier and heavier this way, and ignorance prevails. The five poisons take over everything, and everything is under their power. Everything becomes for us the five poisons, the passions, the afflictions. That is all because of our self-grasping – our self-grasping, which is our grasping to duality. We hold to the “I,” the self, and to “you,” the other; and then we only see through the eyes of attachment and aversion. We can't create merit or eliminate negativity that way. We can't see our own faults. Not seeing them, we don't know what they are, and we can't work to rid ourselves of them. We just hold to “I! Me! Mine!” That is the most precious thing to us.

When you recognize your death is coming, you can't hold these things any longer. Naturally you let go. You have no choice! Really nothing belongs to you, and finally you understand that. So think about that if you want the important thing!

Who is going to die first? You? Some guy or some lady? Somebody with a big butt? This dry skeleton, this old, funky guy? Nobody thinks they are going to die! Nobody thinks, “I am going to die soon.” She doesn't think that, you don't think that, he doesn't think that. Everyone thinks, “No way, not me!” Even me, I think, “Okay, so I am the old one, I'm going to die first. But not for a few days at least! A few months, a few years!”

That is all of our wrong thinking. Don't be thinking that this old man will necessarily die first, and you are all safe. Nobody knows who is first. Nobody has that kind of safety – no person, no sentient being, no phenomena.

Everything is going. Nobody has the opportunity to make it stop. Nobody gets to say, “Wait! I need to rest a few seconds!” There is no spark of phenomena in any brain that holds still.

Everything goes, continuously. Our blah, blah, blah is continuously coming, continuously going. We think we are stable! We think our seat is firm! All the time, we are each sitting on our own piece of ice. We don’t know whose ice will break first and then they will fall. Will it be yours? Mine? Hers? Everyone’s is going to break eventually. But nobody thinks theirs will break first.

You are all practicing, and that is very good. But in one way, if you can really think about how you are going to die—and not just die “sometime,” but maybe soon, maybe tomorrow, maybe *now*—then your practice will go deeper and deeper, be more sincere and more firm. I think that would be wonderful.

The bottom line is that we don’t know who will go first. Maybe the one who seems young will die before the old one. Maybe these young naughty girls and boys will die before this funky old one, and this funky one with his bad karma will just drag on and on in this life! But we don’t know. Everyone will be struck down. Everybody gets the strike! Therefore, we have to try.

Practice. Don’t forget this. Your root guru is the law of impermanence, is the law of karma. We can’t ignore karma, we can’t ignore death or impermanence. That is why we all need to practice a little bit more. If you think you are wonderful but with no practice, that doesn’t work. If you have a giant butt but no practice, that doesn’t work either. It’s useless, actually!

Therefore, everybody, don’t be busy too much with other stuff, with nonsense. Don’t forget your death. Don’t forget the law of karma and the sufferings of the lower realms.

Try to practice a little bit more, more, and more, more.

Everybody try that way. Because we don’t know! That’s it!

Tashi delek!

-Gyatral

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