AN 6.19 — Maranassati Sutta: Mindfulness of Death (1)

English translation by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

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Source revision: sha256:7c411108530c04aafcca0ac43267ed12227cbb2653320e8ae0bb686e566bb783

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

I have heard that at one time the Blessed One was staying at Nadika, in the Brick Hall. There he addressed the monks, "Monks!"

"Yes, lord," the monks replied.

The Blessed One said, "Mindfulness of death, when developed & pursued, is of great fruit & great benefit. It gains a footing in the Deathless, has the Deathless as its final end. Therefore you should develop mindfulness of death."

When this was said, a certain monk addressed the Blessed One, "I already develop mindfulness of death."

"And how do you develop mindfulness of death?"

"I think, 'O, that I might live for a day & night, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal.' This is how I develop mindfulness of death."

Then another monk addressed the Blessed One, "I, too, already develop mindfulness of death."

"And how do you develop mindfulness of death?"

"I think, 'O, that I might live for a day, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal.' This is how I develop mindfulness of death."

Then another monk addressed the Blessed One, "I, too, develop mindfulness of death." ... "I think, 'O, that I might live for the interval that it takes to eat a meal, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal.' ..."

Then another monk addressed the Blessed One, "I, too, develop mindfulness of death." ... "I think, 'O, that I might live for the interval that it takes to swallow having chewed up four morsels of food, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal.' ..."

Then another monk addressed the Blessed One, "I, too, develop mindfulness of death." ... "I think, 'O, that I might live for the interval that it takes to swallow having chewed up one morsel of food, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal.' ..."

Then another monk addressed the Blessed One, "I, too, develop mindfulness of death." ... "I think, 'O, that I might live for the interval that it takes to breathe out after breathing in, or to breathe in after breathing out, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal.' This is how I develop mindfulness of death."

When this was said, the Blessed One addressed the monks. "Whoever develops mindfulness of death, thinking, 'O, that I might live for a day & night... for a day... for the interval that it takes to eat a meal... for the interval that it takes to swallow having chewed up four morsels of food, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal' — they are said to dwell heedlessly. They develop mindfulness of death slowly for the sake of ending the effluents.

"But whoever develops mindfulness of death, thinking, 'O, that I might live for the interval that it takes to swallow having chewed up one morsel of food... for the interval that it takes to breathe out after breathing in, or to breathe in after breathing out, that I might attend to the Blessed One's instructions. I would have accomplished a great deal' — they are said to dwell heedfully. They develop mindfulness of death acutely for the sake of ending the effluents.

"Therefore you should train yourselves: 'We will dwell heedfully. We will develop mindfulness of death acutely for the sake of ending the effluents.' That is how you should train yourselves."

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, the monks delighted in the Blessed One's words.

See also: AN 6.20.