AN 6.19 — Mindfulness of Death (1st)

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Text

Numbered Discourses 6.19

2. Warm-hearted

Mindfulness of Death (1st)

At one time the Buddha was staying at Ñātika in the brick house. There the Buddha addressed the mendicants, "Mendicants!"

"Venerable sir," they replied. The Buddha said this:

"Mendicants, when mindfulness of death is developed and cultivated it's very fruitful and beneficial. It has freedom from death as its objective and culmination. But do you develop mindfulness of death?"

When he said this, one of the mendicants said to the Buddha, "Sir, I develop mindfulness of death."

"But mendicant, how do you develop it?"

"In this case, sir, I think: 'Oh, if I'd only live for another day and night, I'd focus on the Buddha's instructions and I could really achieve a lot.' That's how I develop mindfulness of death."

Another mendicant said to the Buddha, "Sir, I too develop mindfulness of death."

"But mendicant, how do you develop it?"

"In this case, sir, I think: 'Oh, if I'd only live for another day, I'd focus on the Buddha's instructions and I could really achieve a lot.' That's how I develop mindfulness of death."

Another mendicant said to the Buddha, "Sir, I too develop mindfulness of death."

"But mendicant, how do you develop it?"

"In this case, sir, I think: 'Oh, if I'd only live as long as it takes to eat a meal of almsfood, I'd focus on the Buddha's instructions and I could really achieve a lot.' That's how I develop mindfulness of death."

Another mendicant said to the Buddha, "Sir, I too develop mindfulness of death."

"But mendicant, how do you develop it?"

“In this case, sir, I think: ‘Oh, if I’d only live as long as it takes to chew and swallow four or five mouthfuls, I’d focus on the Buddha’s instructions and I could really achieve a lot.’ That’s how I develop mindfulness of death.”

Another mendicant said to the Buddha, “Sir, I too develop mindfulness of death.”

“But mendicant, how do you develop it?”

“In this case, sir, I think: ‘Oh, if I’d only live as long as it takes to chew and swallow a single mouthful, I’d focus on the Buddha’s instructions and I could really achieve a lot.’ That’s how I develop mindfulness of death.”

Another mendicant said to the Buddha, “Sir, I too develop mindfulness of death.”

“But mendicant, how do you develop it?”

“In this case, sir, I think: ‘Oh, if I’d only live as long as it takes to breathe out after breathing in, or to breathe in after breathing out, I’d focus on the Buddha’s instructions and I could really achieve a lot.’ That’s how I develop mindfulness of death.”

When this was said, the Buddha said to those mendicants:

“As to the mendicants who develop mindfulness of death by wishing to live for a day and night … or to live for a day … or to live as long as it takes to eat a meal of almsfood … or to live as long as it takes to chew and swallow four or five mouthfuls— these are called mendicants who live negligently. They slackly develop mindfulness of death for the ending of defilements.

But as to the mendicants who develop mindfulness of death by wishing to live as long as it takes to chew and swallow a single mouthful … or to live as long as it takes to breathe out after breathing in, or to breathe in after breathing out— these are called mendicants who live diligently. They keenly develop mindfulness of death for the ending of defilements.

So you should train like this: ‘We will live diligently. We will keenly develop mindfulness of death for the ending of defilements.’ That’s how you should train.”