

Paṭhama Maraṇassati Sutta

“Mindfulness of Death – Part 1”

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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At one time, while The Blessed One was living in Nāḍika, at the brick house, He addressed the Bhikkhus by saying:

“Bhikkhus!”

“Yes, Bhante!” The Bhikkhus replied.

“Bhikkhus, when you practice mindfulness of death to its full development, it becomes of great fruit and benefit, for it takes you straight to the culmination of the Deathless, by reaching the conclusion of the Holy Life, which is none other than the Deathless.

“So, Bhikkhus, would you say you are practicing mindfulness of death?

1. When this was spoken, a certain Bhikkhu replied to The Blessed One:

“Bhante, I do practice mindfulness of death.”

“And how, Bhikkhu, do you practice mindfulness of death?” The Blessed One asked.

“Bhante, I practice it while reflecting: *‘If I were to live for just this night and day, then I dedicate that time to attending to The Blessed One’s Teachings, as this itself would be accomplishing much, for I find this to be of great benefit to my practice!’*

“In this manner, Bhante, I attend to mindfulness of death.”

2. Then, another Bhikkhu said to The Blessed One:

“Bhante, I also practice mindfulness of death.”

“And how, Bhikkhu, do you practice mindfulness of death?” The Blessed One asked.

“Bhante, I practice it while reflecting: *‘However long I still have to live just this day, then I dedicate whatever time there is to attending to The Blessed One’s Teachings, as this itself would be accomplishing much, for I find this to be of great benefit to my practice!’*

“In this manner, Bhante, I practice mindfulness of death.”

3. Then, another Bhikkhu said to The Blessed One:

“Bhante, I also practice mindfulness of death.”

“And how, Bhikkhu, do you practice mindfulness of death?” The Blessed One asked.

“Bhante, I practice it while reflecting: *‘Even if I were to live for just half the day today, then I am going to dedicate it to attending to The Blessed One’s Teachings, as this itself would be accomplishing much, for I find this to be of great benefit to my practice!’*”

“In this manner, Bhante, I practice mindfulness of death.”

4. Then, another Bhikkhu said to The Blessed One:

“Bhante, I also practice mindfulness of death.”

“And how, Bhikkhu, do you practice mindfulness of death?” The Blessed One asked.

“Bhante, I practice it while reflecting: *‘However long it takes me to eat a single day’s alms food, I dedicate that time to attending to The Blessed One’s Teachings, as this itself would be accomplishing much, for I find this to be of great benefit to my practice!’*”

“In this manner, Bhante, I practice mindfulness of death.”

5. Then, another Bhikkhu said to The Blessed One:

“Bhante, I also practice mindfulness of death.”

“And how, Bhikkhu, do you practice mindfulness of death?” The Blessed One asked.

“Bhante, I practice it while reflecting: *‘However long it takes me to eat half of a single day’s alms food, I dedicate that time to attending to The Blessed One’s Teachings, as this itself would be accomplishing much, for I find this to be of great benefit to my practice!’*”

“In this manner, Bhante, I practice mindfulness of death.”

6. Then, another Bhikkhu said to The Blessed One:

“Bhante, I also practice mindfulness of death.”

“And how, Bhikkhu, do you practice mindfulness of death?” The Blessed One asked.

“Bhante, I practice it while reflecting: *‘However long it takes me to chew and swallow only four or five mouthfuls of food, I dedicate that time to attending to The Blessed One’s Teachings, as this itself would accomplish much, for it would be of great benefit to me!’*”

“In this manner, Bhante, I practice mindfulness of death.”

7. Yet another Bhikkhu said to The Blessed One: “Bhante, I also develop mindfulness of death.”

“And how, Bhikkhu, do you practice mindfulness of death?” The Blessed One asked.

“Bhante, I practice it while reflecting: *‘However long it takes me to chew and swallow a single morsel of food, I dedicate that time to attending to The Blessed One’s Teachings, as this itself would accomplish much, for it would be of great benefit to me!’*”

“In this manner, Bhante, I practice mindfulness of death.”

8. And yet another Bhikkhu said to The Blessed One:

“Bhante, I also practice mindfulness of death.”

“And how, Bhikkhu, do you practice mindfulness of death?” The Blessed One asked.

“Bhante, I practice it while reflecting: *‘However long it takes me to breathe out after having breathed in, or to breathe in after having breathed out, I dedicate that very time to attending to The Blessed One’s Teachings, as this itself would accomplish much, for it would be of great benefit to me!’*”

“In this manner, Bhante, I practice mindfulness of death.”

When this was said, The Blessed One addressed the Bhikkhus in the following manner:

“Bhikkhus, those of you who said that you attend to The Blessed One’s Teachings if you had to live only a single night and a day, or for however much that is left from a single day, or for half a day, or the time it would take to eat a single day’s alms food, or the time it would take to eat just half of the alms food collected, or the time it would take to chew and swallow four or five mouthfuls of food, these would be considered Bhikkhus who are living and practicing heedlessly: you are leading a life of negligence, indeed!

“For your practice of mindfulness on death is, at best, very slow and sluggish, and by keeping it up, you will not be able to destroy and put an end to the āsavas, that are the heart’s contaminants!

“But Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhus among you who practice while reflecting: *‘However long it takes me to chew and swallow a single morsel of food, I dedicate that time to attending to The Blessed One’s Teachings, as this itself would accomplish much, for it would be of great benefit to me!’* or *‘However long it takes me to breathe out after having breathed in, or to breathe in after having breathed out, I dedicate that very time to attending to The Blessed One’s Teachings, as*

this itself would accomplish much, for it would be of great benefit to me!’ are living heedfully: you are leading a life of diligence, indeed!

“For your practice of mindfulness of death will develop consistently, becoming robust as it grows steadily and fast. In this way, you will be able to destroy and put an end to the āsavas, that are the heart’s contaminants, once and for all!

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, you must train yourselves in this way:

‘We will live and practice diligently, by developing within us that keenly sharp mindfulness of death, which will bring us to the complete destruction of the āsavas, the heart’s contaminants, once and for all!’”

Sādhu

Sādhu

Sādhu