

# **Let Us Face our Deaths. Let us speak about our Deaths**

By Masami Saionji

## **It Is Not Forbidden To Speak About Death**

It has long been considered taboo to speak about death. Although there are some who seek death as an escape from pain or difficulty, the majority of us have looked upon death with loathing or suspicion rather than regarding it as a normal part of life.

Think about the way in which we have raised our children. How have we answered their questions about death? When a family member has been close to death, have we stifled our children's instead of giving these questions our serious attention? In doing so have we been teaching our children to avoid the issue of death?

In the course of our lives we are faced with questions such as "How are human beings meant to live?" "Why was I born in this world?" "What is the value of my existence?" and so on. If we are preoccupied only with questions like these, while continuing to ignore the question of death, the answers we arrive at will not be genuine. I say this because the underlying issue of death is interwoven in all these questions. If we try to find the meaning of life without looking into the meaning of death, no true solutions can be found.

When we think seriously about how to greet a radiant death, a radiant life will begin to unfold for us. The more we think about life, the more we must think about death.

Unfortunately, though a great many people have remained in the dark about their own death right up until the moment when they left this world. The more closely death approaches the more inauspicious it has been considered to think about death.

This can be said about the person who is soon to pass away, and it also applies to the people around them. They become overly sensitive on the subject of death, dreading it and sometimes refusing to discuss it at all. Even when it is clear that time is very short, custom strictly prohibits any mention of death. For a long, long time people have considered it their moral duty to behave in this way.

To live in this way is a serious distortion of the truth. If you continue to live without knowing the truth, your lifestyle will not reflect your true inner dignity. Your life will not have the significance which it is meant to have.

If you wish to live life how it is meant to be lived, you must clearly and thoroughly understand what death is. As you come to understand the meaning of death your life will come alive to just that degree.

## **Do Not Fear Your Death**

In the future, I believe that our image of death will change. As we learn to face our deaths we will be freed from our anxieties to a degree which we might not have thought possible.

If we thoroughly examined our anxieties, our fears, and our feelings of discord, frustration or ill health, I think we would find that each one of them was rooted in our fear of death. If we fully understood the meaning of death, I am quite sure that those feelings would be swept away at once.

You might tell yourself that this is not the case but however strongly you might deny it the truth remains the truth. All human anguish, sorrow, and pain were born from the fear of death. The more you adhere to your fear of death, the more painful your life will seem.

Perhaps you have heard expressions such as “life is nothing but trouble” or “trouble follows on the heels of trouble”. Sayings like these have run rampant around the world. Phrases like these have run rampant throughout the world, but phrases like these are used by people who have not encountered the truth of their own existence. Once a person has encountered the truth nothing in his life can be defined as trouble.

To those whose deaths are close at hand, to those who wish to escape from suffering, to those who have felt beaten down by illness, to those who see no hope for the future, to those who are grasping in loneliness, frustration and failure, to those who hate others and curse others, to those whose hearts are consumed by a thirst for power, to those who strongly deny their own merits, I would like to say this. If you wish to be quickly freed from your anguish, the secret is to sit face to face with your own death and look at it with new eyes. If you always look away from your death you cannot expect to find release.

Why do you fear your death? Death is not a thing to be feared. Your death is not the end of your life. Your death is simply a turning point in your life. With each day that you live you are moving closer and closer to death.

How long are you going to try and live in this world? How long do you wish to live here? When will you feel you have lived here long enough? When you have accomplished your purpose in this world death will come to you of its own accord. There is no need to hasten or fear it.

## **Banish Your Dark Image of Death**

Why do people see death as being dark and terrifying? It is because up to now so many have met their deaths in insecurity, fear and pain. Those who have not witnessed this kind of death have heard about it from others, or seen it depicted in dramas or read about it in books.

In those instances or portrayals of death, the image is miserable indeed. The dying persons face is not luminous, nor are they smiling. His expression is gloomy, sad and lonely. He appears to be in pain. Others find it difficult to look at them especially in the case of a loved one, it is unbearably painful to see a person's death.

It is common to think of dying as being in darkness and think of the living who remain in this world as being in the light. But is this really so? Could it not be that the departed are in the light, whilst those remaining are in darkness and that our present life is light? When people have not encountered the truth about human life, what means could they possibly have for distinguishing light from darkness?

A dark image of death and dying has been left to us from past generations. This gloomy image has been strongly impressed upon us who now live in this physical world. Discussing death and informing a person that they are dying enables them to awaken to the meaning of death and to understand it; enabling them to avoid feelings of uneasiness and fear – thus greeting death in happiness.

### **Death is our Commencement Ceremony**

It is restrictive indeed to live in this physical body. Nothing obscures our true identity as much as our attachment to the physical body. Can happiness be defined as staying in this world one day longer or one minute longer? Nothing makes the transition to death more difficult than the attachment to the physical body.

When we completed our assigned missions in this world, death releases us from our physical restrictions. Death is our rebirth to a new life, to a world of perfect freedom. It is nothing to be feared. It is a new beginning, the doorway to a new world. The human spirit continues to live after death. Our life never ends.

If I had to compare death to something in this world, I would say that it most resembles a wedding. After going through ones childhood and becoming an adult a person starts a new life with marriage. A wedding ceremony is beautiful and imaginative. Would you wish to go to your own wedding wearing a dismal mask of anxiety and fear? No, I do not think that you would. I think you would prefer to go to your wedding with an optimistic feeling, splendidly dressed and filled with hope for the future. Each of your friends and relatives would offer you their congratulations and heartfelt wishes for a bright and happy future.

Even if your marriage seemed likely to end in failure, all your guests would offer their congratulations. Your elders would encourage you with wishes for a long and happy marriage. In East and West alike, people have always behaved in this way at weddings.

Death too is a time to offer our blessings and best wishes. A person who is facing death aspires to a new life in a brilliant spiritual world filled with a fine majestic light.

To put it in simple terms we could say that death is a ceremony aimed at uniting a person with heaven. In other words, it is the celebration of our wedding with God. Why would a person attend such an event wearing somber clothing and a bitter tragic expression?

Death is a momentous occasion, and should be greeted with an atmosphere of dignity and well wishing. It celebrates the unending peace that comes when the spirit is released from all physical attachments. It is not a time for lamenting. It is not a time for fear. It is a commencement ceremony experienced by each and every human being. Death in its true sense should be our August moment, our finest hour.

What a great pity it is for people to greet such a momentous occasion with no forethought or preparation. Up until now, many people have considered it a kindness to let a person meet his death in this unprepared condition. But the reality is quite the reverse. In the case of our own deaths, it would be irresponsible of us not to think seriously about it and prepare for it, starting early in life.

### **Those Who Experience a Radiant Death**

Fortunately, we can now find examples of people who have experienced a radiant death. These people who have awakened to their own true human identity, have been continually praying for peace to prevail on Earth. They have made it a habit to convert all their thoughts to bright ones, always recognising and calling forth the wondrous, infinite qualities which exist within them.

As they sense their death approaching, these people's hearts brighten with enthusiasm. Unable to conceal their anticipation in setting out on a new journey, they cherish their parting moments with those around them. They express their heartfelt appreciation to their loved ones and apologise for departing ahead of them. They tell them how they look forward to greeting them, when they in turn arrive in the next world.

Such a person's attitude is like that of a traveller who enjoys his last moments visiting with friends while waiting to be picked up and taken to a new destination. He looks forward to the imminent arrival of his spiritual and divine guides, so that he may happily shed his physical garment and go with them, hand in hand.

A person with no fear of death experiences no pain in dying. The transition to death is in its true and original sense, tranquil, blissful, joyous, and so exhilarating that one's heart feels like dancing. It is a delightful feeling, like ascending to heaven.

For those who are left behind, parting is painful. But their hearts are comforted when they see the bright anticipation of the person who awaits the moment of moving forward. With a feeling of serenity, they find themselves naturally wanting to offer their blessings.

When they attain this feeling, they begin to think that they themselves, will greet their own deaths in a similar way. They think of how wonderful it will be.

They wonder what it is that gives that person such a blissful expression, which he had never known previously, as they begin to understand that they too can experience a radiant death, and that death is a reunion with God, they begin to take a new look at life. They are now able to look at life seriously, they feel that they must live their remaining days to the fullest.

As this attitude becomes prevalent, traditional thought patterns will gradually be transformed. It will become commonly recognised that a wonderful life leads to a wonderful death. People will be in no hurry to die, but will look forward to their deaths wholeheartedly. They will no longer live in fear and insecurity.

Words like "taboo" and "ill omened" will then become obsolete and along with them negative terms such as "sad, lonely" and "unpleasant" will also disappear. Once people are able to see death as a resplendent event, all sorts of gloomy thoughts will

vanish from this world. The present world will then transform into a world composed of light and love alone.

Up until now, the word “death” has conveyed an image of ill luck, fear, isolation and separation. Precisely because of this people have been unwilling to accept death. They have clung tenaciously to their physical existence. They have been driven by their desire to live for as long as possible, even if it has meant having to kick others down or even kill others.

However when we look at death through new eyes and eliminate the various negative phrases used in connection with it, we see the spread of entirely different adjectives used to describe death.

### **Communicate Your Vision to Others**

From now on people who have awakened to the truth will take the initiative in heightening peoples understanding of death. They will use such phrases as “a radiant death”, “a wonderful death”, a “serene death” or a “hope inspiring death.” They will speak of death as “a doorway to unending life,” or as “the beginning of a wonderful future.”

It will never do to block the word “death” from our minds. It will never do to run away from it. We must overturn our former image of death. We must no longer associate death with darkness, pain, fear and isolation.

In order for this to happen, we must take the initiative in talking about the subject of death. We must let a bright image of death permeate the very depths of our subconscious. Let us talk about our own deaths, time and time again. Let us envision our own deaths and put our lives in order so that we may be well prepared to greet death when it comes.

I do not believe that we will envision our deaths taking place in a hospital, our bodies connected to life sustaining devices up until the last moment. Rather I expect that we might envision ourselves in our own homes surrounded by our favourite flowers, enjoying a pleasant talk with friends and loved ones. Let us desire such a death with all our hearts. Let us communicate our desire to others.

It is not too soon to begin now. We can speak about our deaths immediately. It is important for human beings to begin forming an image of their own deaths while they are young and healthy. People need to continually live their lives while holding that positive image in their hearts. This will enable them to live their lives in real earnest, in the hope of attaining a resplendent death which they desire.

Feeling no embarrassment and no apprehension, we need to tell those around us about the manner in which we hope to advance toward our deaths. Will allow us to better focus on a bright concept of death and to foster our belief in it. When we tell others about the kind of death which we envision for ourselves, we oblige ourselves to lead a life which will lead to the death we desire.

For example, if we tell others “I do not wish to die in the hospital, or rather than prolong my life through life-sustaining machinery. I would prefer the dignity of a natural death” others will respect our wishes and will prepare themselves accordingly.

The most unfortunate kind of death occurs when a person dies without an awareness of death. If those around the person place a taboo on the subject of death the dying person needs to find the courage to inform others of their impending death. If the person has a deepened awareness of death and his mind is clearly prepared for it, this will be immeasurably helpful to the people around him.

It might be that the people around him are experiencing deeper agony, pain and sadness than he, himself, is experiencing. It is no easy matter to be constantly on guard, avoiding any mention of the word death, being always attentive not to arouse peoples fear while constantly searching for new ways to keep the knowledge of his death from him. How nerve racking it must be to live each day in deception, continually trying to conceal the truth.

When the dying person clearly recognises the approach of his own death, this also comforts others and puts their minds at ease. This is why they must clearly inform them of it. In appreciation of the care and assistance which others are giving him, I feel that he needs to show them of this kind of consideration.

In ways like these we can advance step by step towards a great reformation in the way in which we greet our deaths.

### **Do Not Attempt to Hasten Your Death**

At this point, I would like to clearly reiterate to all readers that while we need to prepare ourselves for death, there is no need whatever to hasten it.

Each person has certain missions to fulfil in his own individual development and in the overall design of the universe. We must fully utilise our energy and our inner resources in living our lives to the utmost. I would like to urge each person to live out the full course of the lifetime that has been allotted to them, with a sense of confidence as to their own death.

There are people who feel that because they are physically immobilised their lives are not worth living. However many bedridden people have made an enormous contribution to humanity. For example a bedridden person, in praying for the peace of the world, might accomplish more in one day than they previously accomplished in a period of twenty or thirty years.

In order to experience the best possible death, we must do our best from one moment to the next. However dark the present situation might appear to be, we cannot escape from it by hastening our deaths.

### **Tombs and Graves**

As peoples understanding of death increases, I think that we will see diminishing attachment to tombs and graves. The need for tombs and graves is strongly felt by people who not knowing the meaning of death are overly reluctant to exit from this world and wish to leave some traces of themselves behind.

Since the real person (the spirit) lives on and on after death, the existence of the grave or tomb is not essential to our communication with the heavenly world. Just by thinking of the departed person our thoughts have already reached heaven, with or without the existence of the tomb.

In numerous countries, it has been customary to build a tomb in memory of one's dear departed parents. However in many instances although one may wish to build a tomb, one has neither the land, or funds for doing so. Despite these circumstances in not constructing a tomb, one sometimes encounters rumours to the effect that one has been a disloyal child, or that one might incur punishment from heaven or that a family member might become ill and so on. Such motions can result in the long term anxiety to the bereaved person.

If you wish to spare your children this anxiety I would suggest that you clearly make your wishes known to them. If you do not wish to have a tomb, tell them so in clear terms. If you wish for a simple internment of your bones tell them so. If the law in your country requires that a tomb be built you might instruct your children to build a very small and inexpensive one, if such is your wish.

The laws and legal structures of a nation may be expected to change through time. What does not change is the reality of life itself. We live on throughout eternity.

### **Death in Childhood**

Here I would like to add a few words about death occurring in childhood. When children or infants complete the course of their lives early on, we need not grieve for them so unremittingly. It might seem as though because of their youth they have not completed the full course of their lives. This not a question of age. There are many spirits born on this earth with physical embodiments who need to stay here only for a short time. With their early deaths, they fulfil their given mission in this world.

Before they were born here in physical form many of those spirits had come very close to accomplishing their missions in a previous experience. Consequently there is no need for them to remain here for 70 to 80 years, as others do. They speedily complete their assigned roles in a period perhaps of one or two years, or perhaps 11 to 12 years. In thinking of those children, who came to this earth with a great job to do, there is no need for us to bring our own emotions, describing their existence as transient, pathetic or tragic.

They have led short but happy lives. Their lives might have been unhappy and filled with pain. But in the end, they completed the course of their lives. We, who are left behind may feel the need to grieve. We may need to grieve for ourselves, but we need not grieve for them.

Since parting from family members is considered sad, the departure of a small child is especially heart rending, and yet the truth is as I have described it. Knowing this truth can help us avoid much worldly pain.

## **Brain Death and Organ Transplants**

When people understand the truth of death, I believe that many questions, such as the still smouldering issues of brain death and organ transplants will naturally resolve themselves. In issues like these, the direction to be taken will depend on the thinking of each and every individual citizen. Therefore if each citizen takes a close look at what death is and comes to grips with it there will be no further need to debate those topics as if they were major issues.

Persons who wish to have an organ transplant or who consider it necessary for others are persons who believe that the physical body is all there is to life. Because they think of death as being an eternal separation they continue to fix their hopes on organ transplants and other such measures.

In the event that dying people decidedly reject the option of organ transplants will naturally disappear.

There is one more reason why, one by one, people need to move forward in preparing themselves for their own death. It is a mistake to wish to live longer than we need to simply because of our fear of death. Issues such as organ transplants or brain death have arisen out of an excessive attachment to the physical existence.

## **Death is not an Eternal Parting**

In summary, I would like to repeat that death is not an eternal parting. Death is one turning point in our eternal life.

Many who have stood at the threshold of death have testified that human beings continue to live even after leaving their physical bodies. We have reached a time when every citizen can recognise this truth.

As society comes to recognise the meaning of death, I think we might see a decline for the necessity for wills. In the future instead of writing wills, many people will simply express their appreciation to others, one after another.

Please do not think that just before your death it will become impossible for you to clearly say what you wish to say. If you firmly believe such a thing your belief could cause it to occur. It is a law of this third dimensional world that our thinking gives shape to our fate.

Instead let us depict in our minds the best death we can think of. To the greatest extent possible let our deaths reflect beauty, radiance and rejoicing. Let us depart not in mental anguish, but in an atmosphere of affection, surrounded by our loved ones. With death let us step into a bright future.

We can do this. We, who live in the spirit of prayer for world peace, are already living in a light filled world, even while inhabiting this restrictive physical body.

Let us speak about our deaths with our spouses, with our parents, and with our children. Let us live a life of harmony and cooperation, just as we have determined to do. Let us live brightly and courageously, now and throughout our limitless future. May peace prevail on Earth.