

The Death of a Two Year Old Boy.

Reflections on my 60th year!

Life is uncertain : Death is certain.

The Buddha.

Sometimes the simple, bare truth needs a simple, bare statement. Can we be as honest as the Buddha and look this truth straight in the eye?

During the gales and storms of last January, you may remember a news item. A section of wall about 3 metres long in a road-long wall was blown over. The child's minder escaped with bruises, but the little two year old boy died of injuries.

A small life snuffed out. We immediately look for reason, for some justice, for some sort of karmic culpability. Are we really to believe that such is the law of karma that nature with her Herculean winds and a tiny human decision to go for a walk conspired to manufacture a delicately balanced event where the child should be crushed to death by a specific small section of wall, while the minder should escape with minor injury! Such is our human-centredness that we cannot bear the thought that the world does not run along ethical guidelines. Indeed, ethics is a human invention. There is no justice outside the , only laws. Each of us lives on consecutive sparks of instantaneous becoming where all the laws that govern the universe gather to create a single event. There are the psychological laws within us, the social laws between human beings, the laws of biology, of chemistry and of physics and the law of karma. All expressing relationships at differing levels of existence and all conspiring, unconsciously, to create each and every moment. All these laws, and who knows how many more, create a multi-layered, multi-eventful universe.

And these laws are here within this . The same laws that killed the little boy. Not only out there in the vast cosmoscape of the universe. But here, right here within the intimate inscape of our own body and mind.

Here the Buddha tells us we will find dukkha unsatisfactoriness, suffering. And its deep cause is wrong relationship. The identity we have with the body. The body as Me. Have you ever woken with an inexplicable pain and the consequent electrocution of shock. The fear we have of death is the measure of our delusion. This is why meditation on sickness, old age and death is central to the techniques the Buddha offers us to discover the right relationship we ought to have with the body. Its right there in the jewel Discourse on The Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

The following contemplations take no more than five minutes, and can be done everyday, anywhere - after your regular period of meditation, on the bus, during a break. They prepare us mentally for the inevitable. And of course we may also be .

This body is subject to disease.

This body is of a nature to fall ill.

This body has not gone beyond sickness.

This body is subject to ageing.

This body has not gone beyond ageing.

This body is now in a process of ageing.

This body is subject to death.

This body has not gone beyond death.

This body will die!

Repeating these statements quietly to ourselves, accepting their truth value, not confusing this with wishing ourselves to be sick, old and die, we contact our suppressed and ignored fears and anxieties. Let them rise. Feel them. Know them to be the hearts delusion. Allow them to express themselves and die away.

The Buddha said the only annihilation he taught was the annihilation of greed, hatred and delusion. So once we have practised this, it is good to recall our destiny unshakeable liberation of the mind from all unsatisfactoriness and suffering - Nibbana.

That wall was the universe out there crushing into the body and mind of the child in here. Whatever happened out there was all in here. Within that tiny body there was only the experience of the pain and the mental anguish. The pain belongs to the body and is outside the control of the mind. The body is the intimate material universe we inhabit. But the mind is something else.

Through our meditation we come to realise that the inscape of our minds, the interior milieu which is our most private experience, is created by ourselves. Though we may be at first shocked by the ingredients and ungovernability of thoughts and emotions, yet we do come to see that this can be transformed.

I was taking a shower in a bath where the shower unit overhung the end that slopes. I had soaped the body and turned round to step under the shower. My head rested on the sloping side and in one lightening swoosh, I found myself prostrate, my mind swimming and some small perception of a pain at the back of my head. I thought I must be dying and after an initial fright, I lay back as it were into the experience.

Am I to believe that some dastardly past deed had finally blossomed into this. Or should I rather think that certain factors came together at that point in time to almost end this my life's time? As far as I am concerned, the karma that pertains to the process of liberation, was how I experienced the fall. It gave me hope that when death comes I'll be all right with it after the initial shock that is.

One of the central contemplations the Buddha advises is the contemplation of death.

Who can know the state of that child's mind? It may be that unlike my own, he fell into a deep coma and finally left the body.

What am I trying to say? Be ready! We don't know when death will come. The importance of meditation on death. The of the Death of a Two Year Old by a Falling Wall.

I met a woman who told me that after the destruction of the tsunami and the countless deaths of both mainly good ordinary people and a few bad ones, she could no longer hold with the idea of God. That is God as some suprahuman entity who had heart and ethics like we do.