

What Happens After I Die?

A transcript from a YouTube video on the @ananduniverseofficial channel. Edited and annotated by Sifu Sylvain Chamberlain for TLK. Annotations in parenthesis.

It was late afternoon. The sun was descending, its light soft and golden, touching everything as if saying goodbye. Buddha was lying down under the shade of a great s tree. His body was frail, but his presence vast, as if the entire forest was breathing through him. Disciples sat around him in silence. The air was still and only the sound of wind through leaves moved like a slow meditation. From the crowd a woman came forward. She bowed, touched the earth and sat near his feet. Her eyes were full of longing, not worldly longing, but that deep ache which appears when all certainties collapse.

Master, she said softly. For many nights I cannot sleep. My husband has died. My children have gone their own ways. Sometimes when I sit alone, I ask myself, "What is this all for? And when I too die, where will I go? Will I ever meet them again?"

Buddha turned his face slightly toward her. The evening light touched his skin like a golden veil. He did not answer. He simply looked not at her body, not at her sorrow, but through her into that space where the question was born. Minutes passed. The woman waited, her heart trembling between fear and hope. Then Buddha spoke slowly, each word falling like a drop of clear water. "You ask where you will go after death," he said. "But have you seen where you are now?"

The woman looked puzzled. "I am here before you."

(She responds as though the answer is obvious, but she is not living in this moment. She is trying to live in the future...)

He smiled. Are you sure? The one who was here yesterday. Where is she now? The thoughts that worried you last night. Where they now? The breath that carried you here, has it not already vanished? You live in a continuous disappearing, *(attached to the past)* yet you ask what will happen at the end *(the future)*. He paused. The woman's eyes widened. Something stirred in her heart. He continued, "Life and death are not two. They're one movement like the inhale and the exhale. If you watch carefully, **you die every moment**. Each thought is born and dies. Each feeling arises and fades. In every breath, a small death happens. And yet you remain.

(This is the lesson on the "Cycle of birth and death", right? Living or "Life" is a moment-to-moment action.)

She whispered, "Then who remains?"

Buddha said, "That which watches, that which has never been born, that which does not come or go."

("That which watches", points two ways. First as the Tathagata potential of clarity and the 'observer' consciousness; and second, the Saha awakening of the Buddha-mind or enlightenment)

The woman's tears began to fall. But my husband, she said, the one I love so much. Where is he now? Will I not meet him again?

(Attachment. This is the nature of Samsaric thought. In the next paragraphs you will read familiar words of Love and the nature of various expressions of potential versus the experience of those expressions as Samsarically imposed 'permanence'.)

Buddha looked toward the sky. A flock of birds was crossing the horizon, their wings gliding effortlessly through the gold of the setting sun. He said, "When a bird flies across the sky, does the sky hold its shape after it is gone? The sky remains, but the form of the bird dissolves. In the same way, your husband was a form, a beautiful temporary wave in the vast ocean of being. The wave has subsided, but the ocean is still here. You were that ocean."

The woman sat motionless. Her mind wanted to cling, but something deeper had begun to melt.

Buddha continued, "You think love ends with death, but what you called love was often attachment, **the desire to possess, to hold, to continue**. True love has no object. It is like fragrance. It remains even when the flower is gone. If your love was pure, it is already eternal. It has nowhere to go."

(Love is a potential to be discovered but not owned)

The woman closed her eyes. Tears rolled silently, not from pain, but from release. After a long pause, she said, "Master, I feel both empty and full at once. It frightens me."

Buddha smiled faintly. That is how truth enters. First as fear, then as freedom. The mind trembles when its boundaries begin to break. But what dies is not you. It is only the shadow of you that dies. When that shadow fades, you will see that death has never touched you.

(The true "You" is only experienced in through your GoHonzon mind, your Buddha or enlightened consciousness. This 9th consciousness is an expression of Tathagata; and Tathagata is fundamental to the entirety of the Cosmos. This 'you', this 'self', this experience of clarity is without time, non-dimensional, and therefore always present as potential)

The woman whispered, then why do we fear death so much?

Buddha said, because you have never lived. *(Constantly struggling to cling to permanence, divorcing yourself from the present)*

If you live fully, death is a completion, not an end. *(A dismount from the cycle of birth and death)*

You fear it because you have postponed life. *(By clinging to the past)*

You have loved with conditions. *(Ownership, possession and clinging)*

You have lived with expectations. *(Craving and longing for things)*

You have looked outward for permanence in a world that is constantly vanishing. See this moment, this silence, this breath, this awareness. It is the only eternity there is. *(Moment-to-moment is-ing, be-ing, observing)*

He closed his eyes again and for a while there was only the sound of the wind.

The woman felt as if the whole forest was breathing with him. Each leaf, each bird, each grain of dust alive with awareness. Then she bowed and whispered, "I came asking where I will go after death. Now I see there is nowhere to go." *(There is only being)*

Buddha opened his eyes and said softly, "When the wave knows it is the ocean, the question of journey disappears. **There is no going, no coming, only being, silent, eternal, infinite.**"

The woman left quietly. She no longer carried her grief as weight. The forest looked the same. Yet everything had changed because the one who was looking had dissolved.

And Buddha lay still, eyes half closed, his breathing gentle like a whisper of eternity, a being who had already gone beyond both life and death.

(I like this little story. It touches on such fundamental basics of Buddhist thought in a gentle yet profound way.)

Love and respect,
NaMuMyoHoRenGeKyo