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MY DEATH

Though most of us prefer not to think about death, it is the only event, which will happen to all of us. Death is the only thing from which all human beings may be sure they can't escape. Death is also somehow scary.

We Buddhists are taught that actually we don't die for real. Only our bodies pass away. Even if we believe in that, we still are not very comfortable about our own death, since we don't remember any similar experience. At least, MOST of us don't remember!

I am someone who survived death in this actual lifetime and that experience has strongly determined the way I live. When I was 20 years old I was seriously injured in a car accident. As a direct consequence of the accident I found myself separated from my body. I saw myself from a distance; a young woman, in pain and lying down on the street. I was dying. In that moment, that body wasn't me. I was somewhere up there, looking down. I saw people calling for an ambulance. I saw a soldier picking up my purse. He opened it. I was wondering why. Immediately my invisible eyes worked like a zoom. I was quite near him, I could see what he was doing. He was looking for my ID to call my family. I saw my head bleeding and my leg broken. But what was most fascinating was that suddenly I was NOT my body. I felt that my human body was like some sort of convenient vehicle, which can be thrown away once broken. I had no body, so I was able to move with the speed of my thoughts. I had no ears, but I heard what all the people were saying and even thinking. I had no eyes, but my vision had some kind of rapid zoom ability. I could even see through physical masses such as bodies and walls. And I felt incredibly free. In one brief moment it came to my mind that I must have gone through such experiences many times before.

When the ambulance came, some sort of force placed me back into my body and I lost my consciousness for three months. I was incredibly lucky. It was 1962 and at that time there were no organ transplants at all. All people were given equal access to available medical care. At that time our medical establishment believed that the brain was the last organ to cease to function. Therefore a dead person could only officially be declared dead when all organs had completely stopped working. Additionally, according to our old laws, we were prohibited from burying the dead earlier than three days after expiration. There were some rare cases of catalepsy, which had confounded medical experts. Some herbal poisons may also work to make somebody appear as if dead. I have to admit I was very fortunate. The doctors did their best to keep me alive while in a coma, instead of using my body as a free-for-all organ bank. I am even more fortunate, because I am still able to remember how I felt without my body. All people have the same experience while dying, but most lose their memories when they return to their bodies. This experience finally led me to the Jodo Shinshu temple.