



Death Connects Us To Life, by Somik Raha

Growing up with monastic teachings around the impermanence of life, I got the opportunity to apply them when my grandmother passed on, followed by my grandfather in quick succession. I told myself that it was only the body that had died. Their souls were eternal and therefore, there was nothing to grieve for.

Only years later would I realize that I had short-circuited my feelings of love toward my grandparents. That I had to allow those feelings to find their expression in an authentic way. By not giving myself that space, I had numbed myself to my own feelings.

It would take many years of heavy liftingÂ for me to realize that death connects us to life. Our own life. It is an opportunity not just to remember the impermanence of our lives and reflect on our purpose of living. It is also an opportunity to _FEEL_ the well-spring of love and gratitude in its fullness through the process of grieving.

Perhaps it is for this reason that ancient cultures prescribed a cessation of normal work for a period of time that was proportional to the depth of our relationship with the departed one. In this time, we would receive the full support of our communities in creating a space where we could safely connect to the fullness of our feelings. We were thus allowed an opportunity to get to true acceptance, and not just intellectual acceptance of the transition of our loved one.Â

A sign of the kind of acceptance we have arrived at is whether we are feeling wholeness or fragmentation by the loss. Wholeness comes from true acceptance of every feeling that emerges within us in relation to the one who is no longer with us. Fragmentation is what results when we are afraid to feel the sadness that has resulted from the departure. Fragmentation traps us into searching for that love in every space except where it can be truly found -- in our own hearts.

Wholeness, on the other hand, allows us to absorb the essence of the love we felt for the departed one and make it a permanent part of our being. That absorption frees us from fearing our feelings and roots us in joy and gratitude for having been touched, however briefly, by another life.