

## Old Age

*Why this joy, this gladness, when the world is forever burning? O you who are enveloped in shadows, why do you not seek the light?*

*See then this poor decorated form, this mass of corruptible elements, of infirmities and vain desires in which nothing is lasting or stable.*

*This fragile body is but a nest of misery, of decrepitude and corruption; for life ends in death.*

*What pleasure is there in contemplating these white bones strewn like gourds in autumn?*

*In this fortress made of bone and covered with flesh and blood, only pride and jealousy, dissolution and death are established.*

*Even the gorgeous chariots of kings are worn out in the end. It is the same with this body which at last is worn out with age; but the true Law is never worn out and so one sage can pass it on to another.*

*The ignorant man grows older like a bullock; his weight increases but not his intelligence.*

*Many times have I passed in vain through the cycle of births in search of the builder of this house. And how painful is this cycle of births!*

*At last, I have found you, builder; never again shall you build this house that is my body. All the beams are shattered and the ridge of the roof has crumbled.*

## Questions and Answers

*My liberated mind has attained the extinction of all desires.*

*Those who have not lived a life of self-control and who, in their youth, have not known how to gather the true riches, perish like aged herons beside a lake with no fish.*

*Those who have not lived a life of self-control and who, in their youth, have not known how to gather the true riches are like shattered bows; they grieve for their lost strength.*

There is one thing certain which is not clearly stated here, but which is at least as important as all the rest. It is this, that there is an old age much more dangerous and much more real than the amassing of years: the incapacity to grow and progress.

As soon as you stop advancing, as soon as you stop progressing, as soon as you cease to better yourself, cease to gain and grow, cease to transform yourself, you truly become old, that is to say, you go downhill towards disintegration.

There are young people who are old and there are old people who are young. If you carry in you this flame for progress and transformation, if you are ready to leave everything behind so that you may advance with an alert step, if you are always open to a new progress, a new improvement, a new transformation, then you are eternally young. But if you sit back satisfied with what has been accomplished, if you have the feeling that you have reached your goal and you have nothing left to do but enjoy the fruit of your efforts, then already more than half your body is in the tomb: it is decrepitude and the true death.

Everything that has been done is always nothing compared with what remains to be done.

Do not look behind. Look ahead, always ahead and go forward always.

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