



Newsletter
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Gay Buddhist Fellowship

The Gay Buddhist Fellowship supports Buddhist practice in the Gay men's community. It is a forum that brings together the diverse Buddhist traditions to address the spiritual concerns of Gay men in the Bay Area, the United States, and the world. GBF's mission includes cultivating a social environment that is inclusive and caring.

Dharma on the Frontline

Second of two parts: Excerpts from a talk by Venerable Robina Courtin given to the Gay Buddhist Fellowship on July 30, 2000.

It is the sense of "I" which causes us, propels us, from one life to the next; this is the way they talk about when you die, especially in the Tibetan tradition. There are very detailed descriptions of the death process in Buddhist tantra, and of course there are very esoteric practices, very sophisticated methods of actually harnessing the energy of the subtle physiology of the body and the mind—to literally go through death without losing control, in order to live or choose rebirth. This is how they talk.

What Tibetans say happens, roughly speaking, at the time of death, is the gradual throwing off of this gross sense of "Me," Robina. This gradual throwing off is of the sense of who she is, this Australian female, this, that, all the stuff, all the package that we have and identify with; that is ceasing, ceasing, ceasing. By the time you stop breathing, even by then (which is when you're ready for the body bag in this culture) you're not yet dead according to the Buddhist tradition. You've got two more days before the subtler consciousness is able to leave the body.

But even before then, Tibetans say the karmic imprint that will cause the future life is beginning to ripen, to harness, so there's this powerful grasping energy they say manifests at that time. It's like a huge motor that just propels us into an intermediate set between lives, frantically looking for another "I." This is ego grasping. This is ignorance, this kind of propulsion to continue to get reborn. It's what drives us. And its main energy, because it is separate-cut-off-dualistic, its nature is to feel lacking; its main voice is "I want."

This is why attachment is our main delusion. Attachment is the main cause of our suffering. Effectively, in this life, the fundamental cause of suffering is this ignorance, this ego grasping. There's also the "I want," the attachment energy, and again it too is so primordial. It's not a question of "I'm attached



