

A Strong Finish

October 1, 2016

There are two weeks left to the rains retreat. Whatever vows you took at the beginning of the retreat, now's a good time to reflect on them, to see if you've been able to carry them through. If there are places where you're lacking, you've still got two weeks to make up for the lack. Or if you find that the vow is not heavy enough, you can strengthen it for the last two weeks.

Even though the rains retreat is simply a convention, it's a convention that you can use to good advantage.

We all realize that death could come at any time. But if it gets very abstract, you say that to yourself every day, every day after day, and the mind begins to get numb, but here you can say, "Okay, I've got two weeks. Straighten things out. What needs to be straightened out?"

Come to the finish of the rains retreat with a strong finish. Make use of this convention to accelerate your practice.

This comes under the factor of right effort: generating desire. How do you motivate yourself to do better? There are lots of different ways.

One of them is heedfulness: reminding yourself that there's not much time. Even if death may not come for many more years, the end of the retreat is coming soon and you want to make sure that this retreat is a good retreat to look back on. You put forth an extra effort, you got better results. That's when the convention of the rains retreat is a good convention and you've used it well.

To see what you haven't seen before, to realize what you haven't realized before, means you have to do things you haven't done before: good things in the path.

Here's your chance to give yourself a little extra oomph in the practice, reminding yourself that there's not much time left, but you do have this time right now. So take advantage of it.