

Life Changes

My parents are always telling me ‘life is impermanent’. Of course, I understand them, that every beginning has an end. The ball game starts but eventually has to end. The sun rises but sets at the end of the day, you light a candle and the flame burns, but eventually the fire goes out. Nothing in this world lasts forever, not even the highly valued life itself. The concept I have found is rather easy to understand, however, applying it to an actual experience takes the idea to an entirely different degree.

I had been sitting at my desk doing my homework when my Dad came straight up the stairs to my room. I didn’t even get a chance to greet him when he quickly asked, “*Christine, I need you to search for flights to Houston, Texas that leave as soon as possible.*” I didn’t have to ask him why. I had already sensed the uneasiness in his request. My aunt, my father’s youngest sister, was fighting that seemingly endless and notorious battle dubbed lung cancer. Why her you ask? It’s just pure destiny. Aunt Ivy had always lived righteously. She got married, had two adorable daughters, she didn’t kill, lie, steal, smoke, or consume alcoholic beverages. Of all the people who could be chosen to uphold such a burden, it had to be her. Nevertheless, no one ever said that just because you do good deeds you are exempt from pain, suffering, sickness, or even the inevitable, death.



I have acknowledged the fact that at any given moment my aunt could pass away. The mere thought of that doesn’t affect me as much as I would have expected and I understand why. Every beginning has an end. I know that the idea of impermanence is hard to accept because we, as humans, find ourselves becoming attached to many things whether it is a piece of jewelry, a happy moment in time, occupational status, or even a loved one. Being attached to such only causes more suffering and makes the transition to something different more difficult to accept.

One shouldn't apply impermanence to just death. I've found that impermanence coincides with attachment. Of course, it isn't right to not care about certain things but rather value them while they are there and when it is time for it to leave or end, let it. I love my aunt dearly but when it is her time to go, then it is only right to let her do so. Everyone's purpose in life is to be born, live their life for as long as they can in as much happiness as possible, and then die one way or another. The idea may sound grim but it is the truth and when the time comes, things won't be such a shock. Life changes constantly, it's just up to each individual on how he/she wants to handle the obstacles that are thrown at them.

Quảng Diệu Tâm - Christine Lê