

On Death

Sri Nisargadatta Maharaj

Everyone has to die; so die as your true nature. Why die as a body? Never forget your true nature. It may not be acceptable to many, but it is a fact... this body has nothing to do with you. If you must have an ambition have the highest, so that at least while dying, you will be the Absolute. Decide that now firmly, with certainty and conviction. Giving up the body is a great festival.

Death is generally considered to be a traumatic experience, but understand what happens. That which has been born, the knowledge 'I am' which is the same everywhere, but which has gotten itself limited by the body, again becomes unlimited. A speck of consciousness is given up. Why the fear? How has this fear of death crept in? That which cannot die somehow became convinced that it was going to die. It is based on the concept that one is an individual who is born... all the fear arises from mere words told to you by someone. This is the bondage. It is like someone gives you a drink and then tells you, "I have put poison in that drink, and in six months you will die.?" Immediately you become very frightened because you think that you will die. But then you meet a friend and he tells you not to worry. He says, "Here, drink this and there will be no death for you. First there is one concept which fills you full of fright, and then there is another concept which negates the first concept. Like this you get involved with the flow of maya and there are concepts, ideas, creations... pain alternates with pleasure... but all of it is just ignorance and misery. It is only when you search for your Self that you become aware that it is all a fraud.

Be still in your beingness. Then even it will disappear and you will merge in Truth. All that needs to be done is to find out your real source and take up headquarters there. From the Absolute standpoint, your beingness is only ignorance. Nothing comes and nothing goes; it is a mirage. All there is is the Absolute, all there is is the Truth. The witness of the consciousness never comes into the realm of the consciousness. When you pursue this spiritual path of understanding the Self, all your desires just drop off... even the primary desire... to be. When you stay put in the beingness for some time, that drops off. Then you are in the Absolute... there is no movement for you. You are minding the show. Consciousness extinguishes itself, knowingness disappears, and you, the Absolute remains. That is the moment of death.

When this life force leaves the body, it will not seek permission from anything. It came spontaneously and will leave spontaneously. That is all that happens in what is called death. Death is the culmination of the experience 'I am'. After the termination of the 'I amness' there is no experience of knowingness or not knowingness. What did you know prior to your birth? Similarly, after death this instrument is missing; without the body there is no experience. Eternity has no birth and no death, but a temporary state has a beginning and an end. Even when the consciousness goes, you prevail - you always are - as the Absolute. As the consciousness you are everything that comes into manifestation. Whatever is, is you. But, when you fully understand the knowledge 'I am' and all its manifestations, then you will understand that, in truth, you are not that. You are the unlimited, which is not susceptible to the senses. By limiting yourself to the body you have closed yourself to the unlimited potential which you really are. Treat the body like a visitor or a guest, which has come and which will go. You must know your position as a host very clearly while it is still here, and while it is here you must also know what your position will be after it leaves.

In spirituality there is no question of doing... only observing and understanding. But, if you try to understand spirituality through various concepts, like birth and rebirth, you will get caught up in them in a vicious cycle. And once you are caught up in them you are bound to have them. Out of concepts the forms are created. Right now, think of that last moment when the body will go - at that time with what identity are you going to quit? When you become aware of your true nature, then at the end of your life you will not be prepared to give even one paisa to extend your life. You will have lost all love for this manifested world and you will not want even this consciousness for five minutes more.

The vital breath leaves the body, the 'I amness' recedes and goes to the Absolute. That is the greatest moment, the moment of immortality. The 'I amness' was there, the movement was there, and now it is extinguished. Being alive is never as an individual, but simply being part of the spontaneous manifestation. Now that has subsided in death. The ignorant one will struggle and get frightened at the moment of death; most reluctantly he will give up the consciousness to a concept he has come to call time. But the jnani gives up the beingness to his own true nature; for him it is the happiest of moments.