

The Nature of Death

by Sujanmal Modi (Original Gujarati article)

You always talk about death but do you know what is death -- or nature of death?

Shrimad Rajchandra in his letter to Shri Laghurajji writes (605 Vachanamruta) "the thoughtful person (Vicharvan) is neither happy nor unhappy about leaving this body behind (about death). For him, the only death is turning away from the awareness of consciousness of soul or Atman. Not to be peaceful within oneself but to seek happiness outside (vibhava parinati) is the greatest loss and death itself. To be one with your own nature to rest into knowledge only and to remain with your innermost self or soul, or the strongest desire for such a state of being removes even the fear of death."

From this enlightened perception of principles of knowledge, we must try to understand the nature of death - what is death and who is death?

From the point of view of absolute principle (Nischaya Naya), death in fact is like our mother. Just like our worldly mother, death gives us birth or rebirth. Death brings another life for us. Death takes us from one way to another way of life, from one body to another body. She is the savior. She changes the life of the evil and good. She transforms the pain and unhappiness and brings limitless bliss. She is the giver of liberation (Moksha). She liberates us from the cycle of birth and rebirth.

She is the savior mother who protects the disillusioned persons, afraid of death and suffering in all the four states/conditions of Jivas.

When death occurs with proper understanding (Samyak Darshan - to see the things as they are without any bias) of self, then she is united completely with the right knowledge of atman and she becomes the complete bliss - Samadhi. Thus, she is the greatest queen, with the ratnatrayas - Darshan, Jnan, and Charitra - understanding, perception, and knowledge. Thus, death is the principle of change and transformation.

Realization of soul or self or Atmanubhuti is the friend of Mother death. She informs us that death comes to end all miseries and pains of this life. Death is the only powerful element which can end all our past deeds - good or evil, and pay us back the results of our good or bad states of mind or thoughts or actions. No one else is capable to relieve or deliver or liberate us from the miseries of Narak, from the worldly pains or pleasures of a king or even from the heavenly joys of an Indra. This same death is the one who liberates even the Arihanta, the Acharya, the Upadhyaya from the bondage of the worldly life or entanglements. Death is the Bhagavati Mrutyu Mata, who delivers freedom to all.

Who can realize death as the liberating mother - a kind loving mother? Only those who are striving to attain self-realization - the sadhakas of pancham bhava - those good souls with their right knowledge of Param Pada - the atman, can identify death in its true nature. Only those soul-elite, who had cleansed themselves of the bonds of attachment, of prejudices and dislikes, and of ignorance, to whom self-knowledge comes easily are fit to see death as a kind mother. Such a person is the dear son of mother death. Samadhi or complete bliss is her younger sister and self-realization is her friend. Only those who can rest united (constantly in such mental states) with these can worship death in its true form. Only they can attain death in the form of complete bliss.

Vishesh:

Only the Samyakvan, the person with self-knowledge can understand the true nature of death. Only he can strive for and attain such death. He only realizes that death is the savior who liberates him from the bondage of the cycle of births. It is only this mother death who can salvage him from the deep sea of the worldly body lives and set him on the summit of the highest attainment- the Siddha Pada. There is no other power, not even God or Devil, Indra or Narendra, king of heaven or king of men or even Jinendra, who can save, deliver, or liberate a person from his past life.

An ignorant person, a Mithyamati, does not realize the value of death. He opposes death and with that he opposes the Param Pada, the highest attainment. He identifies himself with the yoga of mana, vachana, and kaya or with the union of mind, speech, and body. He believes that I am the body and the subjects of five senses - Panchindriyas are mine. He clings to the outer shell structure of body matter and buries himself into the enjoyment of sensual pleasures. He is like a dog who likes the bone without realizing the true joy or ananda.

This body, with its qualities of touch, taste, smell, color, and sound is nothing but pudgal, jada - the lifeless matter. It cannot know the state of true happiness. It is the home of 56,899,584 diseases. The ignorant person believes that the touch of such a body is love and that it brings happiness. He believes that I am this body and like a mad person indulges in the pleasures of body. Again and again he clings to the body and builds up new bondage of Papa and Punya -evil and good, which are dependent on body for future and continues to live in the four states of existence. He opposes death and when the diseases come as a result of his deeds, he fights them. He tries in several ways to stop the death. but it is useless. He tries the doctor and Hakim and goes to astrologer and Mantra-tantra, but he never realizes the value of death. So he suffers great pains and at the end gives in to the death and therefore gets the state of Narak - the unending terrible sufferings, and the cycle of birth and death - coming and going continues. The ignorant person does not realize the true nature of knowledge of self. He cannot discriminate (vivek) or reflect upon the good or evil states of mind and goes on round and round with the cycle of birth and death.

Conclusion:

The person with the right knowledge (Samyakvan) knows what is Haya - worth renouncing, Ksheya - worth knowing, and Upadaya - worth attaining. He is awakened and fully aware of the true nature of things. He knows the difference between Karoti Kriya - action and Janak Kriya - knowledge. He may appear as doing things, but actually he only knows. He is not with Kartabhav. He knows that action is done by the body. It is also the subject of my knowledge. I am the knowledge and knowing itself. This body with its union of senses - mind and speech and their objects - all are my friends - means of knowledge. They co-exist with me. They are nothing but my servants. With their help I attain knowledge and knowledge is my true nature. Knowledge is my being. It is the only truth. It only exists. The enlightened one knows that all these servants or instruments are for the observance of Sayyam - control (restrain) and renunciation. The body is full of this sayyam and vitaragata and that is why the body is the main instrument of spiritual liberation. The body is described as but an outer garment which the soul wears for a time, only to lay it aside when the moment comes for the highest attainment of self or atman. The outer shell, the body, and that whole web of circumstances one binds around himself because of the body, peels off or drops away at the moment of soul knowledge or Atma-gnana.

What is the essence of the principle?

Mother death does not kill anyone, just as fire does not burn anything. Everything changes from one state of being to another state. Even the body - the pudgal, turns into ashes and the particles - parmanus, of ashes

remain for ever. But this could be accepted only by the Gnani - the realized person, one who has the knowledge of atman. The cycle of birth and death continues according to the thoughts of a Jiva. The one that dies is who is Agnani - ignorant, who is full of darkness, full of Ahankara (pride and vanity). The ignorant person with Achetan material mind dies because he identifies himself with the ten pranas. He is not aware, not self-realized, but occupied with the other than the self. For him the death comes. But for the realized person, the cycle of time or death does not change - his true nature. He is an awakened person, he only knows, he is the witness or the spectator.

The one who believes that I am the doer and these are my deeds, is like a poisonous snake. He dies again and again and moves in to the four states of being. He takes in the poison of Kartabhava and moves in to the lower states of being. death does not kill or destroy him but this Kartabhava - I am the doer of actions - kills him. But the person, for whom the Akartabhava is his true nature, never dies, he is immortal and drinks the joyous Amrut. He is the dear son of chetana - consciousness - knowledge and achieves the absolute state - Param Pada with the help of Ratnatraya. The mother death puts him on the throne of Sidha Pada. Thus, a person who is 100 years old, is young if he is Atmagnani - a realized person. The one who is only 32 years old, but not enlightened is like a dead body.

The cause only becomes the result. The material cause, and the Nimit - instrumental cause are not different - suitable or unsuitable. Moksha or liberation is Akamp samay - one steadfast moment in the self while Samsara is going out of this. The thing itself is very manifested. The atman is revealed but our stream of consciousness wanders away from it, our knowledge is other of other things and not of the knower. There is no other way to achieve liberation except to keep our attention on this inner consciousness.

Thus, there is no death for anyone or anything. Only the unaware, ignorant person dies. For the enlightened one there is no death.