

Death and Dying

(Revised & Expanded - 2023)



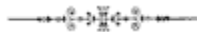
The gods conceal from men the happiness of death,
that they may endure life.

(Lucan)



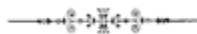
Life is going forth,
death is returning home.

(Lao-tzu)



Death is the bright side of life.

(Alfred, Lord Tennyson)



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In the Indian epic poem, the *Mahabharata*, the sage Yudhishthira is asked: "Of all things in life, what is the most amazing?" Yudhishthira answers: "That a man, seeing others die all around him, never thinks that he will die."

The Five Stages of Grief

(Elisabeth Kübler-Ross)

1926 – 2004, psychiatrist, pioneer in near-death studies

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross stated that these stages are not meant to be complete or chronological. Her hypothesis also holds that not everyone feels all five of the responses nor will everyone who does experience them do so in any particular order.

1. Denial — "I feel fine."; "This can't be happening, not to me."

Denial is usually only a temporary defense for the individual. This feeling is generally replaced with heightened awareness of possessions and individuals that will be left behind after death.

Denial can be conscious or unconscious refusal to accept facts, information, or the reality of the situation. Denial is a defense mechanism and some people can become locked in this stage.

2. Anger — "Why me? It's not fair!"; "How can this happen to me?"; "Who is to blame?"

Once in the second stage, the individual recognizes that denial cannot continue. Because of anger, the person is very difficult to care for due to misplaced feelings of rage and envy. Anger can manifest itself in different ways. People can be angry with themselves, or with others, and especially those who are close to them. It is important to remain detached and nonjudgmental when dealing with a person experiencing anger from grief.

3. Bargaining — "I'll do anything for a few more years."; "I will give my life savings if..."

The third stage involves the hope that the individual can somehow postpone or delay death. Usually, the negotiation for an extended life is made with a higher power in exchange for a reformed lifestyle. Psychologically, the individual is saying, "I understand I will die, but if I could just do something to buy more time..."

4. Depression — "I'm so sad, why bother with anything?"; "I'm going to die soon so what's the point?"; "I miss my loved one, why go on?"

During the fourth stage, the dying person begins to understand the certainty of death. Because of this, the individual may become silent, refuse visitors and spend much of the time crying and grieving. This process allows the dying person to disconnect from things of love and affection. It is not recommended to attempt to cheer up an individual who is in this stage. It is an important time for grieving that must be processed. Depression could be referred to as the dress rehearsal for the 'aftermath'. It is a kind of acceptance with emotional attachment. It's natural to feel sadness, regret, fear, and uncertainty when going through this stage. Feeling those emotions shows that the person has begun to accept the situation.

5. Acceptance — "It's going to be okay."; "I can't fight it, I may as well prepare for it."

In this last stage, individuals begin to come to terms with their mortality. This stage varies according to the person's situation. People dying can enter this stage a long time before the people they leave behind, who must pass through their own individual stages of dealing with the grief.



Stages to the Moment of Death

(Elisabeth Kübler-Ross)



The death of the human body is identical to what happens when the butterfly emerges from its cocoon. The cocoon can be compared to the human body, but it is not identical with your real self for it is only a house to live in for a while. Dying is only moving from one house into a more beautiful one.

As soon as the cocoon is in an irreparable condition it will release the butterfly, your soul so to speak. At this stage, symbolically speaking, after the butterfly leaves its material body, you will experience some important things which you simply ought to know in order not to be afraid of death anymore.

As soon as your soul leaves the body, you will immediately realize that you can perceive everything happening at the place of dying, be it in a hospital room, at the site of an accident, or wherever you left your body. You do not register these events with your earthly consciousness, but rather with a new awareness.

In this stage, the “dead” one will realize that he is whole again. People who couldn’t hear or speak can hear and speak again. There are thousands in wheelchairs who during this second stage could finally dance again. You understand now that this out-of-body experience is an enjoyable and blessed happening.

We did a scientific project with blind people. Our condition was that we would involve only blind people who had not had any light perception for at least the last ten years. Those who had an out-of-body experience and came back can tell you in detail what colors and jewelry you were wearing if you were present. They can tell you the color and pattern of your sweater, or of your tie, and so on. You understand that these statements refer to facts which one cannot invent.

In this stage you will also notice that nobody will die alone. When you leave the physical body, you are in an existence where there is no time. In the same way, one can no longer speak of space and distance in the usual sense because those are earthly phenomena. This phenomenon was experienced by many people when they realized that somebody who lived far away suddenly appeared in front of them. A day later, a telephone call or a telegram reached them telling of the passing of the one seen, who lived hundreds or thousands of miles away. These people are by nature very intuitive, for normally one doesn’t notice this kind of visitor.

On this level you realize as well that nobody can die alone because the deceased one is able to visit anyone he likes. There are people awaiting you who died before you, who loved and treasured you a lot. And since time doesn't exist on this level, someone who lost a child when he was twenty years of age could, after his passing at the age of ninety-nine, still meet his child as a child. For those on the other side, one minute could be equal to one hundred years of our earth time.

In general, the people who are waiting for us on the other side are the ones who loved us the most. You always meet those people first.

In this stage, after you have perceived that your body is whole again and you have encountered your loved ones, you will realize that dying is only a transition to a different form of life. The earthly physical forms you leave behind because you have no need for them anymore. But before you step out of your physical body, you pass through a phase which is totally imprinted with items of the physical world. It could be that you float through a tunnel, pass through a gate, or cross a bridge.

After you have passed this tunnel you are at its end embraced by Light. This Light is whiter than white. It is extremely bright, and the more you approach this Light the more you are embraced by the greatest indescribable, unconditional love you could ever imagine. There are no words for it.

If someone is having a near-death experience, he is allowed to see this Light only for a short moment. After this he must return. But when you die, I mean really die, the connection between the cocoon and the butterfly (the silver cord) will be severed. After this, it is not possible to return to the earthly body. But you wouldn't want to return to it anyway, for after seeing the Light nobody wants to go back.

In this Light, you will experience for the first time what man could have been. Here there is understanding without judging, and here you experience unconditional love.

In this presence, which many people compare with Christ, or God, or a spiritual deity to which one was devoted, with love or Light, you will come to know that all your life on earth was nothing but a school that you had to go through in order to pass certain tests and learn special lessons.

In this Light, in the presence of this Divine-Being, you have to look back on your entire life from the first day until the last.

With this viewing of your life you have reached another stage. You are now in possession of knowledge. You know in minute detail every thought you had at any time during your life on earth. You will remember every deed, and know every word that you ever spoke. This recapitulation is only a very small part of your knowing because at this moment you know all consequences resulting from your thoughts and from every one of your words and deeds.

God is unconditional love. During this review of your earthly life you will not blame God for your fate, but you will know that you yourself were your own worst enemy since you are now accusing yourself of having neglected so many opportunities to grow.

Now you know that long ago when your house burned down, when your child died, when your husband hurt himself, or when you yourself suffered a heart attack, all fatal blows were merely some of the many possibilities for you to grow: to grow in understanding, to grow in love, to grow in all those things which we still have to learn.

All the hardships that you face in life, all the trials and tribulations, all the nightmares and all the losses, most people view as a curse, as a punishment, as something negative. If you would only realize that nothing that comes to you is negative. I mean nothing. All the trials and tribulations, the greatest losses are gifts to you. It is an opportunity that you are given to grow. This is the sole purpose of existence on this planet earth.

You will not grow if you sit in a beautiful flower garden and somebody brings you gorgeous food on a silver platter. But you will grow if you are sick, if you are in pain, if you experience losses, and if you do not put your head in the sand but take the pain and learn to accept it not as a curse or a punishment but as a gift to you with a very specific purpose designed to facilitate your spiritual growth.



For those who seek to understand it, death is a highly creative force. The highest spiritual values of life can originate from the thought and study of death.

It is not the end of the physical body that should worry us. Rather, our concern must be to live while we're alive - to release our inner selves from the spiritual death that comes with living behind a facade designed to conform to external definitions of who and what we are.

It is difficult to accept death in this society because it is unfamiliar. In spite of the fact that it happens all the time, we never see it.

It's only when we truly know and understand that we have a limited time on earth - and that we have no way of knowing when our time is up, we will then begin to live each day to the fullest, as if it was the only one we had.

I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that there is no death the way we understood it. The body dies, but not the soul.

It is important to feel the anger without judging it, without attempting to find meaning in it. It may take many forms: anger at the health-care system, at life, at your loved one for leaving. Life is unfair. Death is unfair. Anger is a natural reaction to the unfairness of loss.

I've told my children that when I die, to release balloons in the sky to celebrate that I graduated. For me, death is a graduation.

Those who have the strength and the love to sit with a dying patient in the silence that goes beyond words will know that this moment is neither frightening nor painful, but a peaceful cessation of the functioning of the body.

Death is not painful. It is the most beautiful experience you will have.

Those who learned to know death, rather than to fear and fight it, become our teachers about life.

Any natural, normal human being, when faced with any kind of loss, will go from shock all the way through acceptance.

I always say that death can be one of the greatest experiences ever. If you live each day of your life right, then you have nothing to fear.

I was destined to work with dying patients. I had no choice when I encountered my first AIDS patient. I felt called to travel some 250,000 miles each year to hold workshops that helped people cope with the most painful aspects of life, death and the transition between the two.

It is inconceivable for our unconscious to imagine an actual ending of our own life here on Earth, and if this life of ours has to end, the ending is always attributed to a malicious intervention from the outside by someone else.

When we grow older and begin to realize that our omnipotence is really not so omnipotent, that our strongest wishes are not powerful enough to make the impossible possible, the fear that we have contributed to the death of a loved one diminishes - and with it, the guilt.



The Moment of Death

(Sogyal Rinpoche: 1947-2019, Tibetan lama)

At the moment of death, there are two things that count: whatever we have done in our lives, and what state of mind we are in at that moment. Even if we have accumulated a lot of negative karma, if we are able really to make a change of heart at the moment of death, it can decisively influence our future and transform our karma, for the moment of death is an exceptionally powerful opportunity for purifying karma.

Remember that all the habits and tendencies that are stored in the ground of our ordinary mind are lying ready to be activated by any influence. Even now we know how it only takes the slightest provocation to prompt our instinctive, habitual reactions to surface. This is especially true at the moment of death.

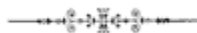
Therefore, our state of mind at death is all-important... The last thought and emotion that we have before we die has an extremely powerful determining effect on our immediate future.

At the moment of death our minds are totally vulnerable and exposed to whatever thoughts then preoccupy us. The last thought or emotion we have can be magnified out of all proportion and flood our whole perception.

This is why the masters stress that the quality of the atmosphere around us when we die is crucial. With our friends and relatives, we should do all we can to inspire positive emotions and sacred feelings, like love, compassion, and devotion, and all we can to help them to “let go of grasping, yearning, and attachment.”

If possible, it is best if friends and relatives do not show excessive grief at the moment of death, because the consciousness of the dying person is at that moment exceptionally vulnerable.

To create the most positive possible imprint on the mind-stream before death is essential. The most effective practice of all to achieve this is a simple practice of Guru Yoga, where the dying person merges his or her mind with the wisdom mind of the Master, or Buddha, or any enlightened being. Even if you cannot visualize your Master at this moment, try at least to remember Him, think of Him in your heart, and die in a state of devotion. When your consciousness awakens again after death, this imprint of the Master’s presence will awaken with you, and you will be liberated. If you die remembering the Master, then the possibilities of His or Her grace are limitless. (*The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*)



When we finally know we are dying, and all other sentient beings are dying with us, we start to have a burning, almost heartbreaking sense of the fragility and preciousness of each moment and each being, and from this can grow a deep, clear, limitless compassion for all beings.

(Sogyal Rinpoche)

Before we know it our life is finished and it is time to die. If we lack the foundation of a stable practice, we go to death helplessly, in fear and anguish. (Kalu Rinpoche: 1905-1989, Tibetan lama)

The Importance of the Dying Person's Final Thoughts

(Roshi Philip Kapleau: 1912-2004, Zen Buddhist teacher)

Your mind state at the time you draw your last breath is crucial, for upon this hinges the subsequent direction and embodiment of the life force. Only with a disciplined and spiritually prepared mind can you hope to resist the pull of old patterns of craving and clinging as your final energies are slipping away. The impulses of thought, feeling, and perception all gather together in this last breath with great potency and can thwart the attainment of a higher level of consciousness and even enlightenment itself. (*The Wheel of Life and Death*)

Of extreme importance is one's last thought at the time of death...It is impossible to live a life full of fear, anger, and pain-producing actions and then, at the moment of death, escape from karmic retribution by having a "good" thought. Although a person might be afraid of rebirth and try to suppress the desire for another body, it is not possible to do so, because the habit forces of many lifetimes are still operating at the moment of death. The last thought of a dying person has an initial impact on the rebirth, but the cumulative effect of the events of his or her life exerts a tremendous additional influence. (*The Wheel of Life and Death*)

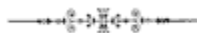
Sushila Blackman

The direction that the vital air takes is determined by the final thoughts a person has at the time of death. Our last moments of thought create the impetus and circumstances of our rebirth. The final thought, however, cannot simply be the result of a controlled act of will, or a whim.

The Buddha compared the last moments of thought to a herd of cows in a barn. When the barn door is opened, the strongest will go out first. If no one cow is particularly strong, then the habitual leader will go out first. If no such cow exists, the one nearest the door will go out first. In the absence of any of these, they will all try to get out at once.

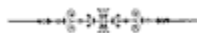
Perhaps the last thoughts that are most widely remembered are those of the great being Mahatma Gandhi. When the assassin's bullet hit him, Gandhi immediately invoked the name of his beloved deity with the exclamation, "Sri Ram, Sri Ram, Sri Ram!"

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna reveals to Arjuna that one may be liberated from rebirth by concentrating completely, by keeping the mind and heart united, by deeply surrendering to the Lord, and by uttering the mantra "Om" while dying. Yet even the first of these tasks is impossible without engaging in some sort of spiritual practice while we are alive. (*Graceful Exits*)



Whatever state of being he remembers when he gives up the body at the end, he goes respectively to that state of being, Arjuna, transformed into that state of being. (*The Bhagavad Gita*)

Whatever state of being one calls to mind at the end upon leaving aside his body, to that very state he attains, always being in that state. (*Tibetan Book of the Dead*)



If you die in that sweet remembrance of the Master you are not to return to the world.

(Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/lok/dont-forget.htm)

Wherever our desire is, we shall go there. That is why a person's thought should be on God at the time of death. (Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/serpent.htm)

Whatever your ruling passion is at the end of your life, you'll be driven there, that's the law.

(Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/comeback.htm)

If you have been accustomed to one thought, a ruling passion in your life, then naturally that will be the last thought with you. Anything which has been ruling your mind will come up.

(Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/lok/protection.htm)

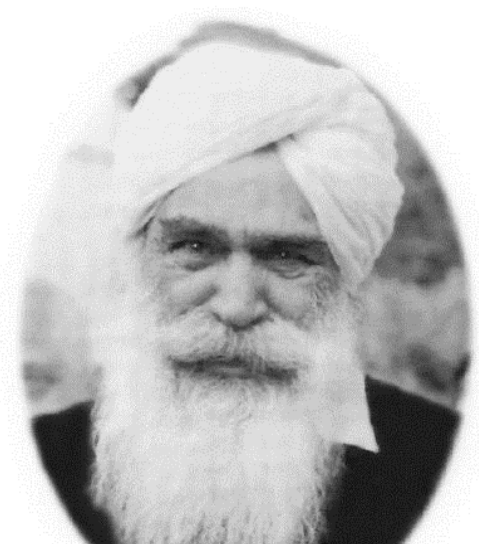
At the time of death the same scenes appear before us which we have been fixing in our mind during our lifetime. These very scenes or thoughts, as they are connected with this world, bring us back to this world after death and are the cause of our rebirth. (Baba Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*, 198)

So why do the Saints always emphasize doing Simran? Why do they make us do Simran?

They make us do the practice of Simran so that at the time of our death either we should be doing Simran or we may have the Form of the Master within us. If we are doing Simran, or if we are remembering the Form of the Master, we will go directly to Him. (Sant Ajaib Singh,

The Ambrosial Hour)

The longings that a person feels when alive, which remain fixed in his heart, come to mind at the moment of death. (Jnaneshwar: 1275-1296, Indian saint, poet, philosopher)



A Spiritual Death

The afterlife is not a place like the world you know around you now. What survives is the inner you. If you are spiritually advanced, you may immediately become aware of the Divine Light of God. Many Eastern religions believe that the last thoughts and words of the dying person will determine the level of spiritual attainment in the next life.

The spiritual person will think of God at their passing moments. As the assassin's bullets tore through Mahatma Gandhi's body, his final cry was "He Rama" (Oh, God). Clearly Gandhi was a man of exceptional spirituality and, according to Hinduism, these final words would have enabled him to merge with the godhead. Remembrance of God at the time of death leads to the attainment of this state of being.

The Tibetan Buddhist will read to the dying from *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* to help them attain a fortuitous future state. By keeping the mind on God at the end of life, we draw closer to the Absolute.

I'm sure that spiritual thoughts at the end of life will help the journey. However, saying the name of God on your last breath will not wipe the karmic slate clean, nor will a last-minute confession of your sins. The sum total of your life is what matters. The last thoughts and words do, however, reveal what your primary drive has been in life. You will carry these with you to the threshold and as you pass into the afterlife states.

Someone who has habitually developed spirituality and often thinks about God is more likely to be drawn instantly to God consciousness than someone whose life has been spent on lesser things. The Eastern teachings say that a person who has followed a true sacred path in life will have greater freedom of action at the time of death. However, nothing can be done for the evil man at his dying moment, for he has no independence and is drawn forward by the weight of his past deeds. (psychics.co.uk/spirituality/spiritworld/final-words-before-death.html)



Administering Heavy Narcotics to the Terminally Ill

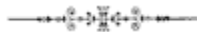
Question to Sant Kirpal Singh: His mother has cancer and there is very much suffering and he asks, if there is no other help, can the suffering be lessened by using morphine?

Sant Kirpal Singh: I think it is better to let her die consciously. It's better. Otherwise her consciousness will be morbid and that will affect her soul. Why not tell her to put all her attention here (at the eye center) and the suffering will be lessened. I think that is the best morphine you can have. Write her. Let her turn her attention here and pray. She'll get help. The suffering will be less.

So tell her to put her whole attention here, back of the eyes and pray. I hope the suffering will be less. To give morphine is not good. She'll go into a swoon; die while in a swoon... Sometimes doctors give morphine which induces swoon. The best remedy is just to have her put her attention here. Doctors do at times, give patients morphine. But to die consciously is always better.

Question: In the West, many people die unconsciously, as it is very common that they are given morphine. What is the difference between dying consciously and not consciously, in the Beyond, I mean.

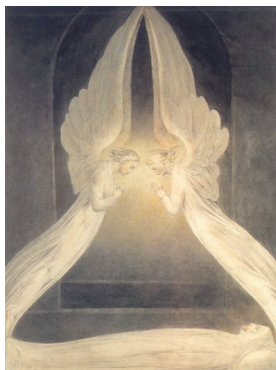
Sant Kirpal Singh: The consciousness will be morbid, even after leaving the body. If he is not conscious when leaving the body that does have an effect. To die consciously is all right. To be able to say, "I am going now..." is best. (<http://www.ruhanisatsangusa.org/lok/protection.htm>)



If you are suffering intense pain, it is well to ask your doctor or nurse to ease it with drugs that do not render you unconscious or semiconscious. Those who are not used to taking drugs and are sensitive to them should beware of heavy drugs – especially painkillers, most of which contain narcotics. Such drugs can induce a respiratory arrest or affect one's mental condition... It is common knowledge that in most American hospitals the experience of death is clouded by drugs. When drugs are necessary to relieve pain, there is no alternative, but heavy sedatives, tranquilizers, and painkilling drugs are also used for purposes of patient management. Therefore, make every effort to avoid them. (Roshi Philip Kapleau)



I want to meet my God awake. (Mother Teresa – refused drugs on her deathbed)



The Spiritual Needs of the Dying: A Buddhist Perspective

(Compiled by: Ven. Pende Hawter)

Death, Intermediate State and Rebirth:

At the time of death, the body and mind go through a process of dissolution, where the twenty-five psycho-physical constituents that we are comprised of gradually absorb and lose their ability to function. This process of dissolution is associated with external and internal signs. This process continues even after the breathing ceases, for up to three days.

During this process the mind becomes more and more subtle and clear until it eventually reaches the point of the “clear light of death”, where it is said to be approximately nine times more clear than in the normal waking state. At this point the mind separates from the body, taking with it all of the subtle imprints from that life and previous ones.

This very subtle mind or consciousness and the very subtle wind upon which it rides then arises into an intermediate state being which has a subtle (non-physical) body that can move through solid objects, travel anywhere just by thinking of that place, and so on. The intermediate state being stays in that state for up to seven weeks, by which time a suitable place of rebirth is usually found. This place of rebirth is determined by the force of karma, whereby the intermediate state being dies and the consciousness is propelled without control towards the place of rebirth. The consciousness enters the fertilized egg at or near the moment of conception and the new life begins.

Crucial in this whole process is the state of mind at the time of death, because it is this that determines the situation a person will be reborn into. If the mind is calm and peaceful and imbued with positive thoughts at the time of death, this will augur well for a happy rebirth. However, if the mind is in a state of anger or has strong desire or is fearful etc., this will predispose to an unhappy or lower type of rebirth.

The mind that arises at the time of death is usually the one that the person is most habituated to. People tend to die in character, although this is not always so. So in the Buddhist tradition it is emphasized strongly that the time to prepare for death is now, because if we develop and gain control over our mind now and create many positive causes we will have a calm and controlled mind at the time of death and be free of fear. In effect, our whole life is a preparation for death and it is said that the mark of a spiritual practitioner is to have no regrets at the time of death.

The Spiritual Needs of the Dying:

When considering the spiritual needs of the dying, the basic principle is to do whatever you can do to help the person die with a calm and peaceful mind, with spiritual/positive thoughts uppermost. This is because it is believed that the state of mind at the time of death is vitally important and plays an important role in determining what will happen to the person after death.

Within this basic principle, there are several ways we can categorize people which will help to determine the type of spiritual support that they need, namely:

- * Is the person conscious or unconscious?
- * If the person is conscious, you can do the practices with them or get them to do them.
- * If the person is unconscious, you have to do the practices for them.
- * Does the person have specific religious beliefs or not?
- * If the person is religious, remind them of their religious practices.
- * If the person is not religious, encourage them to have positive thoughts, or remind them of positive things they have done.

For a person with a spiritual faith it is beneficial to have spiritual objects around them such as an altar, a rosary, photos of their spiritual teacher, or to play spiritual music, or to burn incense, and so on – whatever reminds them of their spiritual practice. It is good also to talk to them about their spiritual practices, recite prayers with them and so forth. For an unconscious person it is said to be good to recite prayers, mantras etc. into their ear.

If a person does not have a spiritual faith, it is helpful to remind them of positive things they have done in their life, or of positive qualities such as love and compassion and kindness. It is important to avoid religious activities that are inappropriate or unwanted by the dying person. Someone standing at the end of the bed reciting prayers may be an annoyance, and I have seen a case of an attempted deathbed salvation which greatly angered the dying person.

The basic aim is to avoid any objects or people that generate strong attachment or anger in the mind of the dying person. From the spiritual viewpoint it is desirable to avoid loud shows of emotion in the presence of the dying person. We have to remind ourselves that the dying process is of great spiritual importance and we don't want to disturb the mind of the dying person, which is in an increasingly clear and subtle state. We have to do whatever we can to allow the person to die in a calm, happy, peaceful state of mind.

For both a religious and a non-religious person a white light 'healing' meditation can bring a lot of comfort and benefit. The person visualizes a brilliant ball of white light above their head, with the light streaming down through their bodies, removing sickness, pain, fear, anxiety and filling the body with blissful healing light energy. Depending on the person's belief system, they can see the light as being in the nature of Jesus, or Buddha or some other spiritual figure, or they can just visualize it as a source of universal healing energy. When a person is close to death they can also be encouraged to let go into the light, into the heart of Jesus or Buddha seated above their head, whatever is appropriate for that person.

The use of guided imagery or gentle music can also be soothing and relaxing and help the person to have a calm and peaceful mind as they approach death.

Conclusion

The aim of all these methods is to help the dying person die with a calm, happy and positive mind. Anything that we can do to achieve this will benefit the person, whether that be good nursing care and pain relief, massage, the presence of a loving family, or whatever. It is said that the best thing we can bring to a dying person is our own quiet and peaceful mind. In this way we will help the dying person make the transition from this life to the next as smooth and as meaningful as possible, recognizing the vital spiritual importance of this transition.

There Are No “Accidental” Deaths

There is no such thing as premature death. (Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*, letter 188)

When a baby is born into this world, the number of breaths he is to breathe, till his death, is already fixed, and nobody can increase or decrease it. (Sawan Singh, *Spiritual Gems*, letter 70)

Each man has to cast off the mortal raiment in a manner predestined and preordained by past karmas – by disease or accident. Death cannot befall any one before it is due. (Sant Kirpal Singh, *Spiritual Elixir*, 284)

Repeatedly Sants have warned man that in this Kali Yuga (iron age) man has been allotted a limited number of breaths in one lifetime. He has been given roughly 26,000 breaths a day – the amount varies from person to person and is determined by the prarabdh or fate karma. (Sant Kirpal Singh, ruhanisatsangusa.org/sant.htm)

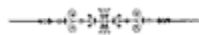
Hazur Baba Sawan Singh Ji

(1858-1948, “The Great Master”)

We are to leave this world one day, and if we are loving, obedient disciples, and have made proper preparations in this lifetime, we do not have the transition which we call death. While others weep, the spiritually developed soul departs happy – happier than a bridegroom on his wedding day.

The time of death is a critical one in our experience, when our friends and relatives are helpless to render any assistance; but for the followers of Sant Mat, it is the happiest time of all. The Master appears and takes the departing soul with Him, and puts it in its upward journey at the place for which it is fit.

Every soul, according to his karmas, is given another birth in some other place. The body into which he has to be put is ready. The body into which he has to be born and the interval between death and rebirth, both depend upon his karmas. (*Spiritual Gems*, letter 6)

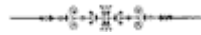


As I have said before many times, death comes in its time. No physician or medicine can hasten or retard its coming. (*The Dawn of Light*, letter 78)

Mark that we are here for a short time only, and in the end even our bodies will desert us. What then can we expect from other people in this world? Think of death, what a solemn and awe-inspiring scene it is. At that time neither friends nor our worldly greatness will help us. Only the Word and our Satguru will relieve us. Therefore, even now begin to prepare for that event, lest you be found wanting in the time of trial. (*The Dawn of Light*, Letter 5)

The physical body is like a coat that we took from Kal at birth, and we have to return it to him one day. There should not be any hesitation in returning what was borrowed. The devotee goes to a far better state and he does not hesitate to take a velvet coat in exchange for this one of coarse material. And if the devotee has made preparation for this day during his lifetime, he does not suffer even at this transition period, but is happy like a bridegroom. (*The Dawn of Light*, letter 40)

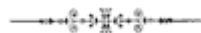
Sant Mat is unique. The time of death is the critical time in our life when all friends and relations are helpless in rendering any assistance. But for those who follow Sant Mat, it is the happiest time. The Master appears and takes the departing soul with him, to a place it is fit for in its upward journey. There is no rendering of accounts with Kal, provided there is love and faith in the Master. The departing one is happier than he has ever been before. There is absolutely no fear of death. The Master's presence within breaks all worldly connections and the mind is free to commence the upward journey. (*The Dawn of Light*, letter 41)



Mrs. B.'s state is good. She is in Trikuti [causal region above the astral world] and she will have to stay there for a long time because she did not do her spiritual exercises for a sufficiently long time in this world. But she did not renounce the Path and is in such an excellent condition that language cannot describe it.

In the future, please do comfort an initiated soul at his last moments. Inquire from him whether he recollects the five holy Names; if he does not, please repeat them so that he comes to remember them by heart; but before that, remove the uninitiated from his chamber and ask him whether the Master is visible to him or not.

When a soul passes out of the body, it at once ascends with the Master; even if it has to take a second birth, it is stopped at the first stage – not lower than that. After it has sojourned for some time in that region, it is sent back. However, it very seldom happens that a soul is sent back, for after undergoing purification at that stage it is taken up higher and higher. (*Dawn of Light*, letter 42)



At death some sort of physical cause – fever, heart failure, if nothing else – will be assigned by the doctors. The body may appear to suffer, but ask the dying one if he feels any pain. The Current keeps the attention detached from the body; the departing one is actually happy to go and feels annoyed if somebody says that it would be better if he had stayed for a few years more to complete this or that work.

It is easier to pay the karmic debt on the physical plane and it is more advantageous to pay as much of it as possible here, than to carry it to the planes within. The mind, if it is not free from its subtle tendencies here, takes a long time to work them out at Trikuti, although it may not have a tendency to return to this plane again, being free from the coarse tendencies which do not allow it to go within or let it stay within. By a little suffering here it gets rid of these subtle tendencies much quicker. (*The Dawn of Light*, letter 73)

Birth follows desire. We are born again and again because the attention is given deeply to desires, and unfilled desires bring the attention back. When the desire is for the Master and not for things of this world, then why should we return to this world after death? The attention will go up. And for those who have, while living, concentrated up to the eye focus, there is no return after death. (*The Dawn of Light*, letter 64)

When a loving devotee dies, the Master takes care of the soul. He guides it and instructs it even after death. In this respect the death of a devotee is totally different from that of a man of the world. (*Spiritual Gems*, latter 81)

If a satsangi has not been able to give full time to his practices and has progressed very little during his lifetime, but he is imbued with the love of the Master and has no attachment for the world and its desires, the Master is so gracious that the satsangi is not given any rebirth. He is placed, after death, in a suitable place inside, in the first or second region, where he completes the deficiency before going further up. (*Spiritual Gems*, letter 75)

You should be above the idea of death and life – neither fear death, nor desire the joy of life. Cultivate the idea that we are to be as He wishes us to be. (*The Dawn of Light*, letter 73)



The Great Master was traveling on the express “Frontier Mail” train, which goes at least 40 miles per hour between stops. Along the right of way there happened to be a man riding a camel. This camel rider looked up at the passing train just in time to see Hazur looking out of the window of his compartment! Who can say what passed between them during this instant?

Death came to this man after four years had passed; and he said, “The brilliant and radiant form of Hazur has come. I saw His reflection once before in a passing train.” So, even a glance from a perfect Master cannot leave you unaffected. (*Sat Sandesh*, July 1973)



Once Hazur visited the city of Rawalpindi (now in Pakistan). While the train on which Hazur was returning from Rawalpindi was still standing in the railway station, an old Muslim man was buying grapes on the platform nearby. The Muslim happened to look up while paying for his grapes and he saw the radiant face and the snow white beard of the Master sitting in the train. He marveled and exclaimed, “Heaven! Heaven! What a light of God!

In his desire to be closer, he was drawn immediately to the side of the railway car, and addressing Hazur through the window, he said “Please accept these grapes, Maharaj Ji.”

The Master smiled at him and merely touched the proffered grapes, saying, “Oh, I have gotten them.” In the same moment the conductor whistled for the engineer to start the train, and the old Muslim had to jump clear of the moving train. This was their first and only meeting.

The old man returned to his home village of Mataur. He caused quite a stir of interest among his family members and friends by recounting to them the deep impressions that he had felt when he had seen and spoken to such a radiant personality so briefly in Rawalpindi. He was positive that he had never before seen or heard of the like of such a man in all the world.

It so happened, that Mr. Parmanand and a Sardar Balwant Singh and some other initiates of Baba Sawan Singh also lived in the same village. Upon hearing the account of the old Muslim, S. Balwant Singh inquired of him as to whether he might have seen “Guru Maharaj.” The old Muslim was puzzled by the reference until he was shown a picture of Hazur. When he saw the picture, he immediately acknowledged, “This is the one I saw!”

About a year later, the old Muslim was stricken and about to die. He sent for S. Balwant Singh, and told him, “Your Master has come, and he tells me that he will take me.” He had seen and spoken to Hazur only once; yet his soul was taken care of by the Master at the time of death.

(*Sat Sandesh*, July 1973)

A lady in Dhilwan village was dying. She summoned her family and said, “My Satguru has appeared. I am ready to leave. I hope you will not cry at my death, because I am going to my true home. My Satguru is taking me with him. What else can make me happier?”

“What will become of us?” her sons asked her. “That is for you to see,” she replied with calm detachment.

If the Master manifests himself at the time of our death, what more can we wish for? If you discard a jute coat in favor of a velvet one, what do you lose? If you leave this impure world and find shelter with the supreme Lord, what else could you want? *(Tales of the Mystic East)*

At the time of death who accompanies us? All our parents, brothers, sisters, relatives, friends, neighbors, and priests leave us at that moment. Even this body of ours, to feed and clothe which we commit so many sins, proves unfaithful. If there is one who helps us at the time of death and accompanies us to the seat of judgment, it is the Guru alone. Beyond the grave no one else can be of any help.

If by good luck a person meets a Master and, taking the secret of the Path from Him, sets out on the Path with love and devotion, then surely at the time of his death the Master comes and takes him along with Him. In other cases the angels of death appear.

If the Guru is not helpful at that time of great agony, what is the use of such a Guru? It is only to receive help and comfort at that critical moment of agony and pain that one takes refuge in the Master. If that help is not forthcoming, worthless is that Guru. Herein lies the necessity for the great care that should be taken in selecting a perfect Master.

At the time of death, extinction of life causes extremely great pain. But a Satsangi, when the Master appears, feels happiness and pleasure greater than that of his marriage day.

At this point the missionary professor asked, “If the disciple has not made any inner progress, will the Master still appear at the time of his death?”

“Certainly,” said the Great Master, “because Guru means grace. This is the responsibility He takes upon Himself at the time of initiating the disciple. He will duly perform His part of the agreement, quite unmindful of what the other party does or does not do. This is something that one believes only when one sees the inner working within himself.

I have seen young mothers losing all attachment for their infant sons and refusing to suckle them on the day of their death. When their mothers-in-law brought their children to them, they refused to take them in their lap saying that they themselves are now in the lap of the Guru....Naam drives away all worldly attachments and cleanses the heart of all impurities. At the time of a disciple’s death, the Guru turns his attention away from all sides.

“Maharaj, what should one do to prepare for death?” P. Kewal Krishan asked.

“It is a life-long work,” the Great Master replied. “One should lead a life that will remove the sting of death so that when the time for death arrives one may embrace it with joy. A Persian mystic says:

*Do you remember that at the time of your birth, all were happy but you were weeping?
Live in such a way that at the time of your death, all may weep but you may rejoice.*

“At the time of death, what should one do to ‘enjoy’ it?” asked P. Kewal Krishan.

The Great Master answered, “You have used a beautiful word, Pandit Ji, but as I have just said, one cannot ‘enjoy’ death unless one has ‘enjoyed’ life. Lord Krishna says in the Gita:

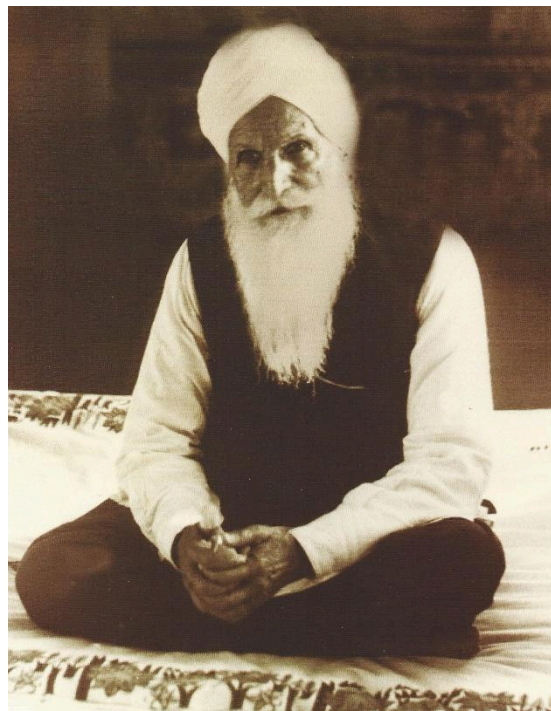
*When conscious of the approaching end, man closes all avenues of sense perception,
checks all distracting activities of mind, and concentrates his attention in his forehead,
in the middle of his eyes, he attains the highest bliss.*

Rai Sahib Ranjit Gopal commented, “But would that be possible Sir, unless one has been practicing it throughout one’s life?”

“Time of death is so painful,” the Great Master told him, “that even prophets dreaded it. Kabir Sahib compares the agony of death to the pain of being bitten simultaneously by ten thousand scorpions at one time. How can one concentrate his mind at that time if he has not mastered it by constant practice throughout his life?” *(Call of the Great Master)*



We have never cared to think about what kind of journey lies beyond the Gates of Death. We lament the death of others, but actually we should be concerned with our own end, and should prepare ourselves for our own life beyond death.



Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj

Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj

(1894-1974, "The Beloved Master", spiritual successor of Baba Sawan Singh)

Excerpts from *The Mystery of Death* - Chapter IV *Death in Bondage*

In nature death follows life, and life proceeds from death. Death, as a cessation of life in one form, is but a prelude to re-living in another form, and generally at a higher level of existence than before, and in better and more congenial environs.

To have some idea of what happens after death, let us have recourse to the scriptural texts. The Masters divide mankind into four categories.

In the first group, there are those who have not had the good fortune to take refuge in any Sant Satguru, and these form a considerable bulk. They have to go all alone, each a solitary soul by itself, without any friend and companion. All such souls have to appear before, and abide by the decrees of the god of justice (Dharam Raj), who dispenses stern and strict justice on the principle of "as you sow, so shall you reap" (see Galatians 6:7), without compassion or commiseration. This is what is called the inexorable Law of Karma which works relentlessly. This Law does not take into account any extraneous circumstances, and admits of no exceptions.

At the appointed time, of which no one is aware, good angels (Ramgans) or bad angels (Yamgans) as the case may be, come to take the spirit forcibly out of the body, and one has to go along with them. They escort the spirit to the judgment-seat, and each spirit has to render account of his thoughts, words and deeds.



The one who has indulged all his life in sinful doings is sent to Hell (Narak or Dozakh) to undergo the penal servitude for a particular length of time as his misdeeds may merit, and thereby rid himself of the evil impressions and understand the law that works for his ultimate good. When the allotted time expires, the soul once again takes birth so that it may have another chance to lead a reformed life freed from the evil now washed off, and make a fresh start avoiding the pitfalls of the past.

If one led a life of righteousness, he is assigned a place in Heaven or Paradise (Swarg, Baikunth or Bahisht), where he, for some allotted time interval, enjoys the fruits of his good deeds, after which he too once again comes down to the earth-plane.

Thus, all souls ensconced in the karmic wheel of life move up and down by the ceaseless momentum of their own deeds. There is no escape from this ever-revolving giant wheel until one, by a stroke of good fortune, meets some Sant Satguru and the latter accepts him and helps him to a way-out and to the God-Way.

In the second category of mankind fall all persons who come in contact with a living Perfect Master, are accepted by Him, and initiated into the esoteric science of the soul, but for one reason or another, are not able to develop communion with the holy Word to any appreciable extent, be it on account of indulgence in sense-pleasures, or lethargy, or something else. They stand on a different footing from those in the first category.

At the time of death of these initiates, when the soul-currents begin to withdraw from the body, or a little earlier, the Satguru in His Radiant Form appears within to take charge of the departing spirit. The Radiant Form of the Master gladdens the heart of the devotee, and he gets so absorbed in Him that all attachments of the world fall off like autumn leaves; then he fearlessly and joyously follows Him into “the valley of the shadows of death.”

With the dervishes, there is no reckoning of the deeds of their disciples. The Master is all in all, the sole judge and arbiter of the disciple’s deeds, whether these be righteous or unrighteous, and deals with them as He thinks best.

Distance does not count with the Master. The Master-Power does come at the last moment, or even earlier, no matter where the disciple may be - far or near. The Master-Power apprises him of the impending inevitable hour of his exit from the world, and accordingly comes to escort him.

The subtle form of the Master is resplendent, and leads the spirit into higher regions. He assigns each spirit an appropriate place to which he may be entitled according to his sadhna or the practice of the holy Word during his lifetime; and He imparts to him the necessary instructions for further and fuller development on the spiritual path.

In case one is to be chastised for his laxities, the Master Himself administers the necessary chastisement, but never lets him into the torture of Hell-fire. The divine-balance holder (the King of Shadows: Dharam Raj) who judges each departed soul according to his deeds, has no authority over the apt disciples of the Master, for they live in the Name of the Master.

It is not given to him (Dharam Raj) to pass and execute judgment on the disciples of a true Master. In all such cases, the Master Himself decides and does things as He thinks best.

But such initiates as have no love for the world are not reincarnated on the earth-plane, unless for some particular reason the Master deems it necessary to do so; and in that case, such a one does not slide down the scale of existence but is reborn in some human family of pious and religious parents so that the new-born easily gets into touch with a Master-Saint and resumes on his Path Homeward, from an early age, without any let or hindrance. For the “incorruptible seed” of the Word sown by the Sower (the Master-Power) ever remains within the depths of the disciple’s soul, and, in time, cannot but sprout, blossom and fructify by means of the Water of Life that he is sure to get from the true Master of his lifetime.

The third category of mankind comprises such persons as make the most of the instructions and commandments imparted to them by the true Master, but have not yet attained perfection though they are well on the way to it. Such souls know of the day and time of their departure in advance of the event. Since they are fully conversant with the death process and everyday undergo its experience, they are not afraid of death and know its shadowy character. On the contrary, they wishfully and wistfully await the appointed time and voluntarily throw off the worn-out mortal mantle, just in the same way as they had put it on at their advent into the world.

They know some of the higher planes of the spirit-world which they traverse day in and day out along with the Master-Power. They also know the particular plane to which they are ultimately to go for their sojourn after death. There they live for some time and work for their way up to still higher regions. They live all the time consciously in the love of the Master, and the Master- Power ever abides in them. He is their mainstay and support, and they owe no allegiance to anyone else.

Last, but not the least, come the Perfected Souls. While living on earth, they are liberated beings (jivan mukats) and lead a freed life of the spirit. They know full well, far ahead of the time, as to when they have to go back to the House of the Lord, and gladly await the hour, welcoming the manner in which they are to quit the bodily frame... With no will of their own, they live in the Will of God, and joyously embrace death as a means of reunion with the Beloved...

Rise Above Consciousness of This World

Sant Kirpal Singh, January 15, 1971, Morning Darshan, Rajpur

Our Master used to say, "If you would like to see how the Master works, go to some initiate at the time of death. Ask him, he will tell you."

My wife passed away on the 3rd April. On 31st March she was having the Master within her. She said, "I am going on the 2nd." I told her, "Don't go on the 2nd; there will be thousands of people here [for the Bhandara--Sawan Singh's Death Anniversary]. This will cause a great disturbance." "All right, then the day after on the 3rd or 4th I will go." On the 3rd I asked her, "Are you ready now?" She said, "Yes." "All right, go." She smiled and left.

So everybody has to go. We should at least go jolly. How far have you progressed while in the physical body? You will go directly to the place to where you have progressed while in the physical body. You can progress more here in the man body. If you have divested yourself of all the vestures of the different planes you'll go directly Home. What takes months to do here, there takes years to do. How important it is. Again I might tell you this is not given in books. You have to learn to leave the body, is it not so? Is there any doubt about it? Perhaps you have arranged something here? I don't think you can. So that's the foremost thing that you must learn--to leave the body. When you leave the body all environments are cut off.

(ruhanisatsangusa.org/lok/riseabov.htm)

From a heart – to heart talk given by Sant Kirpal Singh at Sawan Ashram, just ten days before His physical departure.

Question: Does the Master meet every initiate at the time of physical death?

Sant Kirpal Singh: Just those who are in tune with it are informed ahead of time. Those who will never sit in meditation, know only that very day. He will guide you at least, direct the way. But for him who transcends the body, the stepping stone is there. They know: "All right, I'm going." My wife said, "I am going tomorrow." I said, "Tell the Master not to take you tomorrow. Ask Him please. Tomorrow there will be thousands of people gathered, a large Satsang.. "When that was over I went to her: "Are you ready?" – " Yes." – "Go inside." She went jolly. This is the fate of everybody. No concession, this is for everybody initiated. But we are not sincere, that's the pity. We are sincere to our friends and relatives.

(kirpalsingh-teachings.org/index.php/cn/talks/sant-kirpal-singhs-last-satsangs/272-go-on-doing-it.html)

Question: What happens after death; do we enter another place to go through a period of birth and growth and groping until we find our Master again?

Sant Kirpal Singh: It is supposed that the question relates to the initiates of the Living Master only and as such, it should be understood in the light of what follows. The dear ones who have been blessed with the sacred boon of holy Initiation into the Mysteries of the Beyond, are all granted full protection by the gracious Master-Power in the Beyond.

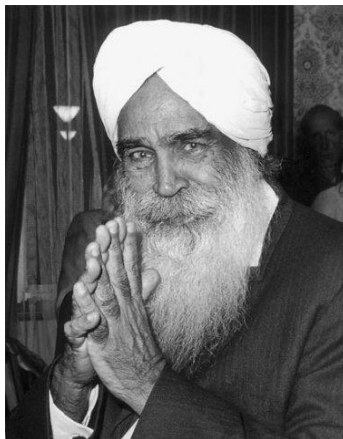
Most of their karmic debts are paid off as they had lived their normal fate karma. Smaller karmic debts are paid off even before leaving off the body and as such they are not reincarnated. If, however, there remain some overwhelming worldly desires, the initiated souls are granted human birth, but are placed in such congenial environments where they will have the chance of continuing their inner journey, by meeting the Living Master working at the time. Spiritual growth and progress thus continues under His guidance. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/gemsqa.htm)

Question: Master, if your devotees are not able to rise above the body consciousness adequately, are they saved when they pass on?

Sant Kirpal Singh: The point is, by putting in regular time in the spiritual practices, you become like wood that appears all right from the outside, but within is all eaten away by ants. Those who devote their time by coming in contact with the Light and Sound Principle are naturally inwardly cut off, unattached. Do you see? The real attachment begins to be with God and with the higher planes. Such-like souls are not to return, because they are not attached to the world. They are kept in the higher planes and advance further.

Those who do not do anything at all - they take the talents (reference is to the parable of the talents in the Bible, Matthew 25: 14-30) and bury them underground - have to come back but not below the man-body because in the man-body only this can develop.

So, those who, for instance, have advanced to the third state will go directly to the third plane. Those who have advanced one, will go one. You'll find that those who are initiated are fed up with worldly things. Outwardly they are doing things, but still, in their hearts, they want to leave. This is but natural. When we sit by fire, naturally cold will leave us. We have to go where we are attached. If we are attached to higher things, then naturally we are not to return; we are to develop from there. And whatever stage we have developed now, we will go straight up to at death.



Protector and Protection

Sant Kirpal Singh

Excerpts from a satsang talk given at Sawan Ashram in Delhi, India

One can be so much within the Guru's radiation that even the powerful Lord of Death cannot come near. For example, I will tell you of one incident when I was living in Lahore. There was a lady who hailed from my village, but she was not a disciple. She became seriously ill, and her family endured constant sleepless nights in looking after her. I heard that she was sick, and went to see her, accompanied by Dalip Singh (later treasurer in Sawan Ashram).

I told them, "You have spent so many nights awake, and must be tired, so you all sleep tonight and I will watch beside the bed." Dalip Singh and I sat together for some time. She was not initiated, but that did not matter, and I asked her, "Do you repeat any holy name?" She affirmed that she did. I told Dalip Singh to go and rest, and return about 4 a.m. and I continued to sit beside the dying woman. She went on repeating the holy names, as I had suggested, but suddenly she said to me, "There is an old man here." I looked up and saw the old man, and he explained to me that she was his granddaughter, and that he had come to take her away, but I told him that he could not do so as long as I was sitting there. He tried his best to take the soul out of the body, but did not succeed, so after some moments he went away. I asked the woman if she had recognized the old man and she said, "Yes, it was my grandfather; he was a very pious man."

After some time, Yama, the Angel of Death, appeared in the doorway. I looked straight at him, and he ran away - he could not even enter the room. He returned several times, but could not enter. Then Dharam Raj, the Lord of Death himself, appeared, but he also could not come into the room. He said, "This soul belongs to me." I said, "Yes, that is true, for she has not been initiated, and I know also that you cannot come near her because I am sitting here, so you had better go to my Guru and ask him what is to be done now. If he gives you permission to take this soul, then I will leave."

My friends, just see - how great is the Naam! Dharam Raj left, and in a matter of moments returned and said, "I have got the permission to take the soul." I said, "All right, take it." He replied, "How can I when you are still sitting there?"

Whatever is written regarding the protection power of the Holy Naam is all true, for I am telling you what actually happened. Dharam Raj said, "Unless you leave, I cannot take this soul."

I asked him, "What benefit will she get from my spending the whole night beside her?" He said, "She will receive the fruit of that before any other rewards or debts are accounted."

Just then, Dalip Singh entered the room, and I said to him, "Come brother, let us go away from this room, for while I am here she cannot die." As we were leaving, I asked her husband to give away in her name some money which was still due from her, to some needy people - that her give and take may be squared up and she may leave the body. Dalip Singh and I stepped out of the room, and in one moment she was gone. Dalip Singh is here, you can ask him about it.

If a person who has got the Naam is sitting somewhere (not necessarily the Master, but anyone who meditates) then Yama or Dharam Raj cannot come near that place. What do you people imagine the Naam to be? I am sorry to say, that you hold it to be of little value. (Sat Sandesh, 9/70)

I will tell you of another instance. There was a man in America, named Walter Kirel. When I initiated him, he had a very good experience, but after some time he fell ill. When a man is in a helpless condition, he gets restless and worried. He wrote and told me that the doctors were pressing him to eat meat and drink wine. Each time he wrote I tried to make him understand that the non-vegetarian diet would not help him, and he should remain on the vegetarian diet. After a few months he wrote that he could not fight any more, that he had become helpless and could not breathe, and that the doctors were insisting on a meat diet. I replied, "All right, do whatever you feel like."

When I visited America and reached Santa Barbara, the doctors had then given up hope for him, and he was at the door of death. Violet Gilbert, one of the hospital nurses, was a Satsangi, and she met me and told me about Walter Kirel who was dying in the hospital: "He cries a lot and goes on saying that he has disobeyed his Guru who is now in America but will not want to see his face. Do you think you could visit him, Master?" I said, "Of course I will."

When I arrived in his room, Nurse Gilbert told him, "The Master has come." He opened his eyes and saw me, and the tears started flowing down his cheeks. I put my hand on his forehead, and said, "Do not worry - whatever has happened has happened, and it is finished. Do you hear the Sound?" He said, "No." "Do you see the Light?" Again he said, "No."

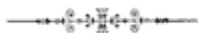
I put my hand on his head and told him to close his eyes and forget all outer things. When he did so, not only the Light came, but the Radiant Form of the Master too. His ears were closed for him and he heard the Sound clearly. I told him, "Now go, with rejoicing."

His wife was there, and she was a non-initiate. She said, "Master, I know that he has been forgiven and saved, but I wish he would speak to me before he goes." I again put my hand on his head and said, "Your wife wants you to say something to her before you go." He opened his eyes, and said, "All right," and turning to his wife, he smiled and said, "I am going now."

This is what is called protection; it is not a story but a true incident. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/protect.htm)



Mr. Rowlands was the group leader in London. While I was there, I came to know that he was sick in the hospital. I had to travel more than six hundred miles to see him. I spared one day out of that program and went to see him. He said, "I have got terrible pain. I cannot concentrate. No Light, nothing." When you are in terrible pain, it is very difficult to concentrate. So God helped him; he was in peace. The next day he passed away. Had he not been dear to me, why should I have traveled six hundred miles to see one man? Do you see how dear the children are to the mother? (ruhanisatsangusa.org/conscious.htm)



Throughout the human life we see the daily advent of birth and death. Some people die young, some in youth, and some in old age. At death, some writhe in agony and torment, and others leave in joy and peace. So what is it all about? They say that at the event of any birth the world rejoices, and the newcomer cries - but brothers, you should live such a life that at departure you yourself rejoice, and the whole world cries. This would mean that you had won the gamble of life. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/death.htm)

The initiates of the living Master have a rare privilege, for they are granted divine protection at the time of their final exit from the world. Such disciplined souls are greeted at the last moment by the Radiant Form of the Master, who escorts them into the inner planes for further progress on the Path as may be necessary for each individual. There are many living instances of those leaving the earth plane for good who bore testimony to the Master's presence and make a happy transition, with His Grace. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/follow.htm)

There is no court of trial after death for a devoted disciple. The Master is all in all for him. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/knowthy.htm)

Death is no bugbear; it is the name given to a change which comes when one leaves the coarse atmosphere of the earth and enters a finer one of Light. Something like the sun setting in one place and rising in another. (ruhanisatsangusa.org/jewel.htm)

You should please be rest assured that the blood and near relations of the initiates are granted feasible protection and help in the beyond. (*Spiritual Elixir*, 252)

Those whom Masters have initiated are taken one by one. All will go, some before, some after, but on the other side of the world you will all meet. (*The Light of Kirpal*, 417)

The Master and Death

(Kabir: 1398-1448, mystic poet, saint)

Listen to this one thought about the value of the initiation by a Perfect Master; you would be dragged to the door of the angel of death, were you without a Master. At the door of the angel of death, his minions would tear you to pieces. From them, indeed, you never would be freed; and you'd be hurled again into the wheel of transmigration. Without a Master you would wander aimlessly within the cruel wheel of transmigration, and never from it would you find escape.

But through the grace of an Almighty Master, you have been rescued from that dreadful wheel. Kabir, I pray, come unto that country, where neither death nor old age can distress you; where none has heard of any being dead, and where the Master is the attentive doctor, who keeps you safe from death and all disease. Because of initiation by a Perfect Master, you go across, placing your foot on the head of Kal, and the Lord Himself will stretch out both His hands, and take you safe to His own realm on high.

Kabir reveals what mankind does not know: The Messenger of Death roars like a raging tiger, when to your death-bed, filling you with fear, he comes. But for the Grace of the Beloved Master, to pieces he would tear you and devour you.

Death, I can see, strikes terror in all others, but gives me joy that is immeasurable. I am impatient to die, that I may get the Truth Eternal.

Death, the awe-inspiring and heart-rending death, is to me a harbinger of joyous life, and I welcome it fully.

Why shed your tears over the death of a devotee? For he is homeward bound and in safe hands. Lament the death of the wretched worldly-minded, for they are hawked from shop to shop, In the marketplace of death.

Sant Darshan Singh Ji Maharaj

(1921-1989, spiritual successor of Sant Kirpal Singh)

From *Spiritual Awakening: Death and Karma*

Question: What happens to the soul at the time of death?

Sant Darshan Singh: This question can be divided into two parts: One part is the procedure relating to those souls who have been initiated and who are directly under the benevolent protection of the Master. It also applies to the souls who have fallen within the ambit of the Master because they had the good fortune to receive his glance of grace or attention, or because their near and dear relations are initiated by the Master. These souls fall into one category, and for them the death process which other souls have to undergo is not applicable. The other part pertains to those souls who have not been initiated, or who have not come under the protection of a perfect Master.

When our allotted time is over, the spirit currents withdraw from the body. First they withdraw from the toes. They then rise to the knees, then to the kundalini center, the navel, the heart, the throat, the tongue, and finally to the eyes. At that point the pupils of the eyes turn upwards and then come down, and the soul currents ebb out from their center in the body. Finally, the silver cord, which connects the physical body and the soul, breaks, and the process of death is complete.

For those who are uninitiated, when their sensory currents withdraw they experience pain. It seems that every limb is twisting, turning and breaking. It is a painful process for several reasons. First, those who have not had the experience of withdrawing from the body during life are not used to that process. Then, we are so attached to our body that the moment we feel we are losing it we experience pain. If we are attached to our child, and we find the child is leaving us, how do we feel? Just imagine the plight of a mother whose child is snatched from her breast when she is feeding him. How would the mother feel? If we are attached to our parents, our spouse, or other relations, and we find we are losing them, we experience a big jolt. So, in the case of our body, when one part breaks, or is deadened, we not only feel the physical pain but also mental and psychological pain. And this withdrawal is not a fast process either – the soul has to withdraw not only from one part, but from the entire body. It is a prolonged period of restlessness and anguish.

For those souls who are initiated, the Master Power enables them to pass through the whole process smoothly. In the case of a disciple, the Master is so gracious that the soul is able to withdraw in a very peaceful manner. Those souls who are initiated receive, from within, a forewarning from their Master of their impending death sometimes months in advance, sometimes weeks in advance, sometimes days or hours in advance. They can then begin preparing themselves for this final change. The soul passes through the inner stars, moon and sun, and beyond that to the Radiant Form of the Master.

The Master decides to which inner plane the soul should be taken. If the disciple has been soaring high in meditation during his life, the soul at least goes to the plane it has reached. But if the soul has not been able to withdraw from the body during the disciple's lifetime, then it is for the Master to decide whether to place the soul on the inner planes or send the soul back for another human birth. Masters take the entire picture into account and give the maximum possible benefit to the soul.

They usually place the souls on the inner planes. The soul remains there and meditates, and in due course the Master takes the soul to higher and higher stages, according to the soul's progress, until it reaches its Eternal Home. Finally, after passing through the higher stages, the soul attains ultimate communion with God. This is how the Master takes care of a disciple. For the initiate, death is a moment of peace, a moment of bliss, a moment of ecstasy. Kabir Sahib has said, *"The death of which this world is afraid is a source of bliss for me, because it is only through this process of dying that I get eternal ecstasy."*

Question: Why don't initiates experience pain at the time of death?

Sant Darshan Singh: One reason is that those who are under the guidance of the Master learn from Him the art of withdrawing the sensory currents from the body while they are still living. That helps at the last moment because it has been a daily feature in life.

Take this simple example: When I was a young man I was regularly practicing both physical exercises and yoga asanas. The Beloved Master himself had mastered these in his youth and I learned them under his guidance in those early days. My body was so flexible, it appeared as if it were made of rubber or foam and could be twisted in any way, or bent in any direction. If I had never practiced these exercises, and had attempted to perform them all on a single day, I would have had pain in my muscles for about a week. Since I practiced them regularly, there was no pain.

Similarly, if we regularly withdraw from our body, then it becomes a simple and natural process for us. If we have done it hundreds of times in life, then doing it at the time of death will not be any different. But even if initiates have fallen short of the mark and have not been able to rise above body-consciousness during their life, at the time of death the Master appears and helps them undergo this process smoothly.

Question: The Masters say that the time of death is fixed. Is it possible that the Master can change this date? And if so, for what reason does he do it?

Sant Darshan Singh: Man comes from God with a capital of a certain number of breaths. He does not come with the commandment that he live for so many years and days. Those who indulge in pranayama, who stop their breath and sit in meditation, might have a longer life with the same number of breaths than those who dissipate their energies in certain labors or in the passion and panting of the sex act. The hour is not fixed, but the number of breaths allotted to man is fixed, and that is usually not changed. But the Master can prolong your life if he thinks that your existence in the world contributes to a noble cause. I have seen cases in which the Master has given a new lease on life to people.

Question: Is there anything we as initiates can do to give comfort when we know that a person is dying?

Sant Darshan Singh: When an initiate is dying, all should sit in meditation. We can always pray to our Master. Even if the dying person is not initiated, we can still pray to the Master for the soul's peace and spiritual welfare.

Question: How does the Angel of Death actually judge each soul?

Sant Darshan Singh: The Angel of Death goes through the accounts to decide whether our good deeds have an edge over our bad deeds, and if so he commands that the soul be elevated to paradise which is a place of temporary bliss; it is not a place of eternal bliss according to the Path of the Masters of Sant Mat.

If the Angel of Death finds that there is a preponderance of evil deeds, then he ordains that the soul be sentenced to hell. In hell there are various tortures – tortures of fire, of intense hunger and unquenchable thirst, and many others. The soul remains in either heaven or hell for a length of time which is determined by the preponderance of good deeds over evil deeds, or evil deeds over good deeds. If one has a much greater degree of bad deeds than good ones, his stay in hell will be longer than that of someone whose bad deeds are only slightly greater than the amount of good deeds. But if both the good deeds and evil deeds balance out, then the soul is placed in what the Sufis call *ahraf*, an area intervening between heaven and hell. When the period of stay in either heaven, hell, or *ahraf* is over, the soul returns for another birth in the 8.4 million species of life.

In the case of those who have come to the feet of a living Master, at the time of initiation the record of good and bad deeds is immediately transferred from the custody of Dharam Raj to the Master. It is then the Master, not the Angel of Death, who meets the soul within at the time of death. The Master ensures that even if a disciple must come back for another birth to finish his spiritual journey, he will not go below the human body.

Question: Sant Kirpal Singh said that it is very important to meditate while on earth because you make much more progress here than you do in your meditation while on the inner planes. Could you explain this?

Sant Darshan Singh: That is true; you do make much quicker progress on earth. If we put in time for the meditation practices in this physical life, our progress on the spiritual path is much greater than if we put in the same effort when we are placed on some inner plane after death. This is actually one of the reasons our Master sometimes decides to give us another human birth.

Question: What do souls do on the inner planes?

Sant Darshan Singh: They have all the time at their disposal to pray and meditate. Even in this world what do the true lovers do? One of my verses is: “I have no friend except the Beloved, and I have no vocation except His love.” If this is the disciple’s condition in this world, then what else is there to occupy him on the inner regions? All we have to do is be devoted to Him, have love for Him and meditate on Him.



Sant Rajinder Singh Ji Maharaj

(1946-present, spiritual successor of Sant Darshan Singh)

Question: What happens to initiates at the time of death?

Sant Rajinder Singh: Teachers of Sant Mat tell us that when we get initiated our soul is protected by the Master Power. At the time of our death, those who are not under the care of a perfect Master are met by the Angel of Death, or agents of a power referred to as Kal, responsible for sustaining the three lower regions. Kal, or the agents of Kal, will take that soul, and, based on its past karma, put it back into the cycle of lives and deaths – the wheel of transmigration. For those initiated by a perfect Master, it will be the radiant form of our Master who comes to take the soul and bring it out of that cycle of transmigration. If we have done enough meditation, if our life has been good, we can go right to Sach Khand. Sant Kirpal Singh Ji Maharaj would often say that those who live according to the teachings and meditate properly have an opportunity to go back to their true Home, Sach Khand, in this lifetime.

Some people get initiated and do not do their meditation or live according to the spiritual teachings. They walk off the Path and never come back or even think about it. Yet, once the seed of initiation has been planted, that soul will not go below the human body in the next life. Once we have been initiated, then that seed has to fructify. This is why emphasis is placed on leading an ethical life and meditating for the required period of time so that, in this lifetime, we can reach our goal.

Sometimes, people may do some of the spiritual work of meditation and ethical living but not enough to return to Sach Khand in one lifetime. After death, these souls might be placed in one of the inner regions and helped there until they have progressed sufficiently to reach the goal of merger of their soul with God.

The saints have also said that God has provided a boon that time spent in meditation while living on earth in the physical region has much more effect than time spent meditating in the inner planes. That is one of the reasons they want us to meditate more and more while here in the physical region.

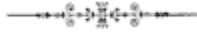
There are souls who, while living in the physical body, reach the Radiant Form of the Master and rise above physical body-consciousness and cross the physical, astral, causal, and supracausal regions to reach Sach Khand. They have gone beyond the range of Kal, the lord of the three lower regions. They experience themselves as they truly are – as soul. When they come back into the body after meditation, the silver cord, which binds a soul to the physical body during its lifetime, remains intact and is only severed at the time of physical death. These souls then can become conscious co-workers of the divine plan and help the mission of the Masters and their spiritual teachings. (*Spiritual Thirst*)



The Existence of Heaven and Hell

Question: What are the teachings of the Masters regarding hell and purgatory?

Sant Kirpal Singh: The Masters do not contradict the scriptures which describe these places meant for the reformation of human souls in accordance with the Law of Karma. (*Spiritual Elixir*, 40)



The following discussion is recounted in the book *Call of the Great Master*. Baba Sawan Singh is talking with a barrister (lawyer) regarding the afterlife.

“Do they have bodies in heaven and hell?” asked the barrister.

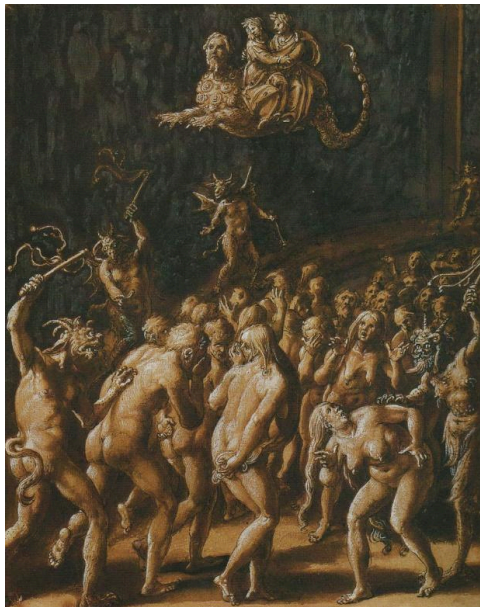
“Yes,” said the Great Master. “Not physical ones, but subtle bodies that feel pleasure and pain.”

“Does this body also change at death? Suppose a man after death incarnates as a bulldog, will his astral body also undergo a similar change?” asked the barrister.

The Great Master replied, “Sense impressions, desires and subtle tendencies of mind form the astral body, which do not change easily. As the water takes the shape of the vessel in which it is poured similarly the astral body fits in all the physical bodies whatever their form or shape.”

“Do the Angels of Death sometimes make the mistake of taking some Satsangis to hell?” asked the barrister.

“No,” the Great Master replied. “They dare not come near one who has been initiated by a perfect Master. Even their master, Yama, is afraid of the perfect Master Shabd. If they should take an initiate there the Master Himself would have to go there to get him released. The result would be that all the inmates would be immediately released and hell would become empty. Yama does not want this to happen.”



Stoicism on Death

(from *The Practicing Stoic*)

Death has two kinds of significance for the Stoic. First it may be considered an external. It is out of our control; we can accelerate death and sometimes delay it, but its eventual arrival is not up to us. It is also the most frightening prospect the mind confronts. An external that is frightening makes a natural topic for Stoic analysis. Overcoming the fear of death is considered by the Stoics to be one of the most important of all philosophical achievements, and the gain of an important liberty.

But Stoicism treats death as more than just an external that needs to be laid bare. It is also a source of perspective and inspiration – a valuable aid, not just something to which we overreact. Mortality is the defining feature of our existence; Stoics want the imminence of it to inform their daily lives. Meditation on death and the fact that we will soon be gone is used by the Stoics to stimulate humility, fearlessness, moderation, and other virtues.

Seneca: Death belongs among those things that are not evils in truth, but still have an appearance of evil; for a love of self is implanted in us, and a desire for existence and survival, and a dread of disintegration. Death seems to rob us of many good things and to remove us from all we have come to know. And there is another element that estranges us from death: we are already familiar with the present, but are ignorant of the future into which we will go, and we shrink from the unknown...Even if death is something indifferent, then, it is nevertheless a thing that cannot be easily ignored.

At times the Stoics analyze death simply as an external – a thing that gains meaning from the ways in which it is costumed by the mind. What we must overcome is not death but the way we think about it.

Epictetus: Neither death nor pain is to be feared, but the fear of pain or death...Confidence should therefore be our attitude toward death, and caution should be our attitude toward the fear of it. But now we have the opposite: toward death, avoidance; toward our opinions about it, carelessness, indifference, and neglect.

Epictetus: What is death? A mask to frighten children. Turn it and examine it. See, it does not bite. The poor body must be separated from the spirit as it was before, either now or later. Why then are you troubled if it be now? For if not now, later.

Seneca: Does it do any harm to a good man to be smeared by unjust gossip? Then we should not let the same sort of thing do damage to death, either, in our judgment; for death also has a bad reputation, but none of those who malign death have tried it.

Marcus Aurelius: Do not despise death, but be content with it, since this too is one of those things nature wills. For what it is to be young and grow old, and to increase and reach maturity, and to have teeth and beard and grey hair, and to father children, and to be pregnant and to give birth, and all the other natural operations the seasons of your life bring – so also is dissolution. This, then, is the way of one who is reflective: to be neither careless nor impatient nor arrogant with respect to death, but to wait for it as one of the operations of nature.

Marcus Aurelius' view of humanity gave him a reason not to fear death: the human race, seen accurately, is not the sort of company one should be too sorry to leave behind.

Marcus Aurelius: *If you want a vulgar form of comfort that touches the heart, reconcile yourself to death by observing, above all, the things from which you will be removed, and the morals of those with whom your soul will no longer have to associate. Do not take offense at them – it is your duty, rather, to care for them and to gently put up with them – but nevertheless remember that you will be departing from others who do not have the same opinions you do. That is the one consideration, if any, that would pull the other way and attach us to life – if we could live with those who share our opinions. But when you see how much trouble arises from the discord of all of them living together, it is enough to make you say, “Come quickly, O Death, lest somehow I too forget myself.”*

Seneca: *You ask what the finest life span would be. To live until you reach wisdom. The one who gets there has arrived, not at the farthest goal, but at the most important. That man, indeed, may boldly congratulate himself, and give thanks to the gods – and to himself along with them – and count in his reckoning with the universe the fact that he has lived. His account will be in credit; he has given it back a better life than he received.*

Seneca: *There is no reason for you to think anyone has lived long just because he has grey hairs or wrinkles. He has not lived long; he has existed long. For suppose you should imagine that a man had a great voyage when in fact he was caught by a fierce storm as soon as he left harbor; was swept this way and that by strong winds from different directions, and was driven along the same path in circles. He did not make a great voyage. He was greatly tossed about.*

Fearlessness of death is regarded by the Stoics as a great achievement. And the way one confronts death when it arrives is considered a test of that achievement, and of character – perhaps the true test.

Seneca: *This is what I mean: your debates and learned talks, your maxims gathered from the teachings of the wise, your cultured conversation – all these afford no proof of the real strength of your soul. Bold speech may issue even from the timid. What you have accomplished will only become evident when you draw your last breath. I accept the terms; I do not shrink from the judgment.*

The nearness of death as a physical matter is matched by the Stoic's efforts to keep it nearby in the mind. Stoics recommend thinking about death often, as they find that it helps toward virtue without a need for argument.

Seneca: *Nothing will give you so much help toward moderation as the frequent thought that life is short and that the little we have is uncertain. Whatever you are doing, be mindful of death.*

Reflection on death is viewed by the Stoics as a way to reduce the fear of it, but also as a cause for urgency in living and a source of inspiration.

Marcus Aurelius: *Think of yourself as having died, and as having finished the life you have lived until now. The portion that is allowed to you beyond this, live out according to nature.*

Marcus Aurelius: *You are going to die at any minute, and yet you still are not simple and straightforward, nor do you have peace of mind, nor are you free from suspicion that you will be hurt by external things, nor are you kind to everyone, not do you see that being wise consists solely in being just.*

Seneca: *Take as much as Fortune gives, remembering that it comes with no guarantee. Snatch the pleasures your children bring, let your children in turn find delight in you, and drain joy to the dregs without delay; nothing is promised for this night – nay, I have granted too long an extension! – not even for this hour. We must hurry, the enemy is right behind us!*

Seneca: *As for old age, embrace it and love it. The gradually declining years are among the sweetest in man's life.*

Seneca: *The objective is to live a full life, not just a long one. Survival into old age requires only good luck, whereas living enough demands character.*

Epictetus: *Never say about anything, "I have lost it," but only "I have given it back." Is your child dead? It has been given back. Is your wife dead? She has been returned.*

More quotes on death from Seneca:

The day which we fear as our last is but the birthday of eternity.

No man enjoys the true taste of life but he who is ready and willing to quit it.

Death is a punishment to some, to some a gift, and to many a favor.

The hour which gives us life begins to take it away.

The body is not a home but an inn and that only briefly.

We must make it our aim to have already lived long enough.

You are mistaken if you think that only on an ocean voyage is there a very slight space between life and death. No, the distance between is just as narrow everywhere. It is not everywhere that death shows himself so near at hand; yet everywhere he is as near at hand.

Your brother has not lost the light of day, but has obtained a more enduring Light. He has not left us, but has gone before us.

He who has learned to die has unlearned slavery. He is above any power, and certainly beyond it. What terrors have prisons and bonds and bars for him?

What is death? Either a transition or an end. I am not afraid of coming to an end, this being the same as never having become; not of transition, for I shall never be in confinement quite so cramped anywhere as I am here.



Chuang-tzu and Death

(369-286 BC, Chinese philosopher)

Chuang-tzu, the Chinese Taoist sage of the fourth century B.C., was visited after the death of his wife by his friend Hui-tzu, who came to express his condolences. The latter arrived to find the master sitting on the ground with his legs spread wide apart. The widower was singing away and whacking out a tune on the back of a wooden bowl. Hui-tzu said to him, “You’ve lived all these years with your loving wife and watched your eldest boy grow to manhood. For you not to shed a tear over her remains would have been bad enough. But singing and drumming away on a bowl – this is just too much!”

“Not so,” the master replied. “I am a normal man and grieved when she died. But then I remembered that she had existed before this birth. At that time she was without a body. Eventually, matter was added to that spirit and, taking form, she was born. It is clear to me that the same process of change which brought my wife to birth eventually brought her to death, in a way as natural as the progression of the seasons. Winter follows autumn. Summer follows spring. To wail and groan while my wife is sleeping peacefully in the great chamber between heaven and earth would be to deny these natural laws, of which I cannot claim ignorance. So I refrain.”



Chuang-tzu describes the death of Yu, a Taoist who went before him. When Yu fell ill, another sage named Szu went to visit him and asked how he fared. Yu said, “Wonderful. The way of the master is deforming me!” “My back is as crooked as a hunchback’s and my organs are all topsy-turvy. My chin sticks in my navel, my shoulders rise up above my head and my pigtail points to the sky. The elements of nature must be all confused.”

His heart was calm and his manner carefree. He limped to the well, looked at his reflection in the water and said, “My, my! How the maker of things is deforming me!”

Szu asked, “Does this upset you?” “Why would it?” said Yu. “I was born when it was time to be born, and I shall die when it is time to die. If we are in peace with time and follow the order of things, neither sorrow nor joy will move us. The ancients called this ‘freedom from bondage.’ Those who are entangled with the appearance of things cannot free themselves. But nothing can overcome the order of nature. Why should I be upset?”

As Chuang-tzu approached death, his disciples wanted to give him a large and expensive funeral. But Chuang-tzu said, “The heavens and the earth will serve me as a coffin and a coffin shell. The sun and moon and stars will decorate my bier. All creation will be at hand to witness the event. What more need I than these?”

His disciples gasped, “We’re afraid that carrion kites and crows will eat the body of our master!”

Chuang-tzu replied, “Above the ground my flesh will feed the crows and kites; below the ground, the ants and cricket-moles. Why rob one to feed the other?” And then he smiled. “I shall have Heaven and Earth for my coffin,” he said. “The sun and moon will be the jade symbols hanging by my side. All the planets and constellations will shine as jewels around me. All beings will be present as mourners at the wake. What more could I need? Everything has been taken care of.”

When Great Beings Die

Guru Nanak

When news spread that Guru Nanak was ready to embark on his last journey, the disciples began to descend upon Kartarpur, on the banks of the Ravi River, to see Him. While seated under an acacia tree, his wife, disciples, and successor – Guru Angad – all began to cry; He pacified them, saying they shouldn't weep. He then uttered a long hymn and the assembly began to chant. Then Guru Nanak went into a trance and recited a poem that describes the intense longing of the soul for union with the Lord.

During the last moments of His life, the Muslims were saying, "We shall bury Him" while the Hindus said, "We shall cremate Him." The Guru responded to this saying, "Put ye flowers on both sides – those of the Hindus on the right and of the Muslims on the left. They whose flowers remain fresh will have the choice."

He then asked the congregation to recite God's praises. As the epilogue to the hymn was being read, Guru Nanak pulled the sheet over Himself and lay down. The assembly paid obeisance. When the sheet was lifted, there was nothing but flowers. The Hindus and Muslims, equally astonished, took their respective flower offerings and the entire assembly fell to their knees. The date was September 7, 1539.

Sant Kirpal Singh

On the evening of August 20th, 1974, just after arrival at the hospital, Master was suffering terribly, His blessed body tossing in the bed. Later He graciously allowed these symptoms to be lifted, and rested in perfect peace. The following morning a devotee asked Him if He wanted water. He said, "This is not the time for water, this is the time for tea." Tea was at once prepared and offered to Him, but He said so sweetly, "No; this is for you people, you take your breakfast"-- so at Master's contrivance, all the attendants, nurses, etc., enjoyed a tea break that morning - the last morning of Master's earth life.

A devotee asked Him if His Master, Baba Sawan Singh, had come; He replied, "When has He not been here?" Then He was asked who would take care of the Sangat after He left; He said, "I am leaving it in His hands."

During the last hours, Master remarked that He would be taking twice as much care of the Satsangis from now on.

Just before He left, His eyes moved back and forth across the room, as though in acknowledgment and greeting. He was again asked if Sawan Singh had come, and Master replied, "Everyone has come!"

His last known words, in response to a question about His welfare, were, "Very good!"



Jalaluddin Rumi

When Rumi's time of death drew near, he cautioned his disciples to have no fear or anxiety on his account. He told them to remember him "so that I may show myself to you, in whatever form that may be, and ever be shedding in your breasts the light of heavenly inspiration."

As he lay in extreme sickness, severe earthquakes took place for seven days and nights. On the seventh day, in response to the alarm of his disciples, he calmly remarked, "Poor earth! It is eager for a fat morsel! It shall have one!"

After his death, Rumi's body was laid on his bier and washed by a loving disciple. Every drop of this ablution water was caught and drunk with reverence by his disciples as the holiest of water. As the washer folded Rumi's arms over his breast, a tremor appeared to pass over the inert body and the washer fell with his face on the lifeless breast, weeping. Upon feeling his ear pulled by the dead saint's hand, as an admonition, he passed into a swoon.

In this state he heard a cry from heaven, which said to him, "The saints of the Lord have nothing to fear, neither from one habitation to another abode."

The funeral procession was attended by mourners of all creeds – Turks, Christians, Jews, Romans, and Arabs. Each group recited sacred scriptures according to their own traditions. Rumi belonged to everyone.

Jetsunla

After having spent twenty-nine fruitful years in a cave in strict retreat, the Tibetan nun Jetsunla was known to some as the wish-fulfilling gem. In 1959 she had to break her retreat and leave Tibet.

Her cousin built her a small mud and grass hut, large enough to hold Jetsunla and two visitors. Revered as the highest lama of the area, she would receive devotees the first nine days of each month and meditate the rest of the time.

A few months before she passed away she said, "Now I have accomplished what I had to do and achieved everything that I need to. Now I don't have to live any longer. I am very happy if I can go soon, but before I go I must see His Holiness the Dalai Lama, because I have a few words to say to him."

About a month later His Holiness visited Orissa and conferred privately with her for over an hour. She came out from this meeting very happy and said, "Now my last wish is fulfilled, now I am free to go."

Soon after, Jetsunla became slightly ill and, while remaining in meditation posture, she passed away.

Another Tibetan nun related that when Jetsunla died, the air was filled with a sweet scent, and the sounds of cymbals could be heard. And at the time of her cremation, the sky was filled with rainbows.

Socrates

In ancient Greece the customary form of execution was to have the condemned man drink, on the appointed day, a glass of poison. Socrates was surrounded by his friends when his time came in 399 BCE. Before drinking the poison he bathed to avoid “giving the women trouble of washing me when I am dead.”

He then asked that the poison be brought to him. His friend, Crito, reminded him, “...that in other cases people have dinner and enjoy their wine, and sometimes the company of those whom they love...and only drink the poison quite late at night. No need to hurry; there is still plenty of time.”

Socrates answered his friend, “I believe that I should gain nothing by drinking the poison a little later – I should only make myself ridiculous in my own eyes if I cling to life and hugged it when it had no more to offer. Come, do as I say and don’t make difficulties.”

The poison was brought and Socrates drank it in one draught with no sign of revulsion. His friends began to cry and he reprimanded them, “Calm yourselves and be brave.”

When he began to feel numb he lay down and the coldness spread from his legs upward. When it reached his heart, he’d been told, he would die. He covered himself in a sheet from head to toe. Just before the end he pulled the sheet from his face and said, “Crito, we ought to offer a cock to Asclepius. See to it and don’t forget.” Asclepius was the god of healing. The offering was Socrates’ gesture of thanks for being cured of life.

Tung-Shan

When Zen Master Tung-Shan felt it was time for him to go, he had his head shaved, took a bath, put on his robe, rang the bell to bid farewell to the community, and sat up till he breathed no more. To all appearances he had died.

Thereupon the whole community burst out crying grievously as little children do at the death of their mother.

Suddenly, the master opened his eyes and said to the weeping monks, “We monks are supposed to be detached from all things transitory. In this consists true spiritual life? To live is to work, to die is to rest. What is the use of groaning and moaning?”

He then ordered a “stupidity-purifying” meal for the whole community. After the meal he said to them, “Please make no fuss over me! Be calm as befits a family of monks! Generally speaking, when anyone is at the point of going, he has no use for noise and commotion.”

Thereupon he returned to the Abbot’s room, where he sat in meditation until he passed away.



Jesus Christ

A number of theories that attempt to explain the circumstances of the death of Jesus on the cross via medical knowledge of the 19th and 20th centuries have been proposed by a range of people, including physicians, historians and mystics.

Most theories proposed by trained physicians (with specialties ranging from forensic medicine to ophthalmology) conclude that Jesus endured tremendous amounts of pain and suffering on the cross before his death.

The cardiovascular collapse theory is a prevalent modern explanation and suggests that Jesus died of profound shock. According to this theory, the scourging, the beatings, and the fixing to the cross would have left Jesus dehydrated, weak, and critically ill and that the stage was set for a complex interplay of simultaneous physiological insults: dehydration, massive trauma and soft tissue injury (especially from the prior scourging), inadequate respiration, and strenuous physical exertion, leading to cardiovascular collapse.

The gospel writers record seven statements uttered by Jesus while he was on the cross:

Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.

Woman, behold, your son!

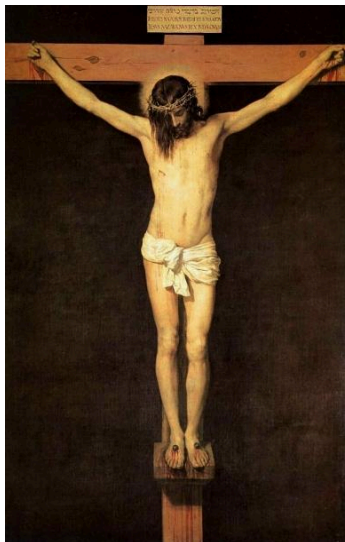
My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?

I thirst.

It is finished.

Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!

(wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion_of_Jesus)



Ryoen Genseki

When Zen Master Ryoen Genseki was told he had cancer and was given a life expectancy of several months, he set off alone on a long pilgrimage. Ryoen lived for two more years.

For nearly two weeks before his death, in critical condition, every morning he crawled from his room to the main hall of the temple to invoke the names of the masters of his lineage. He needed to rest frequently throughout both his crawling and invocation.

When he died, he was found sitting in the zazen (meditation) position.

Paramahansa Yogananda

On March 6, 1952, Paramahansa Yogananda told his disciples laughingly, "I have a big day tomorrow. Wish me luck."

The next day he attended a banquet at Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel for the new Indian ambassador. He did not gaze about with his usual heart-warming smile. After eating modestly, the guru rose to make a speech about spiritual India. He spoke more slowly and in a more measured cadence than usual. As he finished, Yogananda lifted his eyes, turned slightly to the right and slid to the floor.

Officials who conducted the embalming of the body reported an unusual phenomenon – no physical disintegration was visible, even twenty days after death. Yogananda's body was apparently devoid of impurities. They reported this case as being unique in their experience.

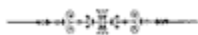
Saint Augustine

Saint Augustine died on August 28, 430. He spent his final days in prayer and repentance, requesting that the Psalms of David be hung on his walls so that he could read them. He directed that the library of the church in Hippo and all the books therein should be carefully preserved.

Shortly after his death the Vandals lifted the siege of Hippo, but they returned not long thereafter and burned the city. They destroyed all of it but Augustine's cathedral and library, which they left untouched.

Psalm 23 - A Psalm of David

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.



Milarepa

Milarepa, considered by many to be Tibet's greatest saint, is said to have knowingly drunk a glass of poison given to him by a jealous false admirer. This act of compassion resulted in the culprit totally repenting his action and becoming a disciple.

When it was evident that Milarepa was not long for this world, a disciple wanted to intercede with the Powers on his behalf. Milarepa replied that illness in a yogi should be a spur to drive him on and prayers should not be offered for his recovery; he should use his illness to progress spiritually and ever be ready for suffering and even death. He went on, "The time has come when the body that is mind-evolved only must become merged into the Realm of Light and no rites are necessary for this."

When asked by his disciples about funeral instructions, Milarepa replied, "Instead of erecting stupas, cultivate a loving devotion to all parts of the Dharma and set up the Banner of Love, and in place of memorials let there be daily prayers...Life is short, the moment of death unknown to you, so apply yourselves to meditation."

Milarepa then took up residence at Chubar and his illness increased. When two of his leading disciples asked him to what realm he was going and where they should direct their prayers to him, he responded, "Direct your prayers wherever you feel it best; wherever you pray, as long as you are sincere and in earnest, I shall be there with you. So pray earnestly and unwaveringly. I am going to the realm of happiness first of all."

Then Milarepa sang his two disciples a song, after which he seemed to sink into a trance from which he never awoke. He died at age eighty-four in the year 1135.

Saint Teresa of Avila

Saint Teresa died on October 4, 1582, at the age of 67. A fellow sister describes the hours just before her death:

"She remained in this position in prayer full of deep peace and great repose. Occasionally she gave some outward sign of surprise or amazement. But everything proceeded in great repose. It seemed as if she were hearing a voice which she answered. Her facial expression was so wondrously changed that it looked like a celestial body to us. Thus immersed in prayer, happy and smiling, she went out of this world into eternal life."



Saint Francis of Assisi

On the eve of his death, the saint, in imitation of his Divine Master, had bread brought to him and broken. This he distributed among those present, blessing Bernard of Quintaville, his first companion, Elias, his vicar, and all the others in order. "I have done my part," he said next, "may Christ teach you to do yours."

Then wishing to give a last token of detachment and to show he no longer had anything in common with the world, Francis removed his poor habit and lay down on the bare ground, covered with a borrowed cloth, rejoicing that he was able to keep faith with his Lady Poverty to the end. After a while he asked to have read to him the Passion according to St. John, and then in faltering tones he himself intoned Psalm 142.7. At the concluding verse, "Bring my soul out of prison", Francis was led away from earth by "Sister Death", in whose praise he had shortly before added a new strophe to his "Canticle of the Sun". It was Saturday evening, October 3, 1226, Francis being then in the forty-fifth year of his life, and the twentieth from his perfect conversion to Christ.

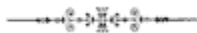
Psalm 142

I cry out to the Lord; I plead for the Lord's mercy. I pour out my complaints before Him and tell Him all my troubles. When I am overwhelmed, you alone know the way I should turn. Wherever I go, my enemies have set traps for me. I look for someone to come and help me, but no one gives me a passing thought! No one will help me; no one cares a bit what happens to me. Then I pray to you, O Lord. I say, "You are my place of refuge. You are all I really want in life. Hear my cry, for I am very low. Rescue me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me. Bring my soul out of prison so I can thank you. The godly will crowd around me, for you are good to me."

Siddhārtha Gautama Buddha

The Buddha died at eighty years of age on about 483 BCE. He continued as a teacher for many years, gathering a group of followers. On the day of his death – most likely due to a serious digestive tract disorder - he gave them his final teaching. The precise English translation of these final words is open to interpretation as it was spoken in Pali and passed on orally, not being written down for some centuries after Buddha's death. One such interpretation is:

"Behold, O monks, this is my advice to you. All component things in the world are changeable. They are not lasting. Work hard to gain your own salvation."



Stories

The Biggest Fool

One day a court jester said something so foolish that the king, handing him a staff, said to him, "Take this and keep it until you find a bigger fool than yourself."

Some years later the king was very ill and lay on his deathbed. The king, addressing those gathered around his bed, said, "I am about to leave you. I am going on a very long journey, and I shall not return to this place; so I have called you to say goodbye."

Then the jester stepped forward and addressed the king, saying, "Your majesty, may I ask you a question? When you journeyed abroad visiting your people, staying with your nobles, or paying diplomatic visits to other kings, your heralds and servants always went before you making preparations for you. May I ask what preparations your majesty has made for this journey you are about to take?"

"Alas," he said, "I have made no preparations."

"Then," said the jester, "take this staff with you, for now I have found a bigger fool than myself."

Final Goodbye

A much loved holy man of Petrograd lay dying. In another room were members of his family and friends, none of whom the sage would allow to enter for a few last words.

Suddenly there was a knock on the door and who should be admitted but the notorious Bergdorf, a liar, cheat and scandal-monger. "I came to pay my final respects," he declared.

When the mortally ill holy man heard who had come to see him he immediately demanded that the visitor be permitted to approach his bedside.

"Sir", murmured Bergdorf in surprise, "I am at a loss to understand why you allowed me to enter your room when your family and close friends are kept outside."

"Dear Bergdorf", replied the sage weakly, "they have lived in accordance with the teachings of the Torah and I will soon meet them again in paradise. But as for you," he concluded, extending a withered hand, "I want to say goodbye for the last time."



The Procrastinating Householder

It is said that whenever the great spiritual master Kabir walked by a certain place in Banaras, he would always find a certain man sitting in his garden. One day Kabir stopped and suggested to him:

“Sir, instead of sitting idly in your garden, you could better spend the time in spiritual meditation, and thus improve yourself.”

“I have very young children, and will be able to afford the time for spiritual practices only after they have grown up,” the man replied.

After the children had grown up, Kabir met the man again, and asked him: “Do you now find time for spiritual meditation?”

“Ah, Sir, now I must wait for the children to be married, so they can look after themselves independently. Then I will have the time to devote myself to meditation.”

Later, when Kabir again met the man, he asked him: “And now, fortunate man, all your children are married, so you are no doubt devoting yourself to spiritual practice.”

“Ah, now,” the man replied, “I am eager to see my grandchildren grow up and get married.”

After this had taken place, Kabir again asked the man: “What is your position now, my friend?”

“O, Sir,” the man replied, “I find that my grandchildren are very careless. As a result of this, it is quite necessary that I look after the house, even during the night. For if I were also careless, thieves would come and steal what little we have.”

Some years later Kabir again visited the man’s house and inquired where the old man was. The sons and grandsons said that he had died.

“Ah, that is indeed a great pity,” Kabir said. “Poor man, his life was wasted following the orders and desires of his worldly mind, which led him into such deep attachment to his family and his beasts. And even a few moments only of love for the Lord would have started to end his imprisonment here.”

So I submit to you, as a man you've got the heritage, the right to know God. If you don't utilize that, that's a misfortune. Even when God affords somebody the opportunity to be put on the Way, and with all that they don't do it, then it's a great misfortune. So procrastination is the thief of time. This is what we do: “I'll start it when such and such work is finished. I'll do it when I'm retired. I'll do it when that thing is done first.” Well, who knows if you'll live longer until that time? So Masters say that those who do not care while young, when their brain, their memory, their body is fit; then who can do it in old age, when the hairs are quite white? The point is, if you have not lived a normal chaste life, or have misused this life, then who knows if you'll be able to see Him in your old age? You will become deaf; your eyesight will become shortened, lessened; you won't be able to walk. Then can you do it?

(Sant Kirpal Singh, Ruhanisatsangusa.org/gohome.htm)

No Mustard Seeds for Buddha

During the Buddha's lifetime, five centuries before Christ, a grief stricken mother came to Buddha. She was wailing and lamenting over the death of her baby, whose corpse she carried in her arms. All the compassionate monks reached out to her with their prayers, and she requested an audience with the Buddha himself.

The compassionate Buddha received her with peaceful, smiling eyes, gazing upon the infant's corpse. The Buddha's indescribable kindness and warmth instantly enveloped her, for no grief is greater than that of losing one's own child.

The woman said to the Buddha, "Lord, my son has died, and I am inconsolable. Can you bring him back to life for me? He was the light of our entire household. We waited many years for his birth, and now he has been stolen away by a sudden incurable illness. You who know all things, who have transcended life and death – please restore life to his little eyes. It is not fair that he should be taken from us so soon!" Thus, in her grief, she beseeched him.

The Buddha did not answer quickly. Gazing upon the infant, he gently touched his cold brow. Then he said, "Faithful woman, go from house to house in this town and collect a mustard seed from each household in which no one has died. When you have those seeds, bring them to me – we shall see what can be done."

The woman was overjoyed. She prostrated to the Buddha and reverently touched his feet. The Buddha placed his hands on her head as a benediction. Then she went on her way, carrying the dead baby in her arms.

All day long she went from door to door, from house to house, seeking mustard seeds from those who had not lost a household member. However, as she proceeded - telling her woeful tale wherever she went - she failed to find even one home that death had not visited.

Undaunted, she persisted in her quest, hoping that those magic mustard seeds would, through the Buddha's unfathomable blessings, bring her baby back to life.

As the day waned, still she had not collected even a single mustard seed, for death is indeed ubiquitous. People were willing to give mustard seeds, whether or not they had lost relatives, but the woman was adamant. Only those from a house that death had not entered would do!

When at dusk she was still without a single mustard seed to reward her efforts, understanding finally began to dawn in her weary mind. "Is this not the way of all living things?" she thought to herself. "All things that are born must eventually die. This is the basic fact of life, the truth of Dharma, that Lord Buddha has introduced to me." Then she bowed reverently in the direction of his abode.

At nightfall, with the baby still in her arms, she returned to the Buddha's temporary dwelling place. Although the woman had no mustard seeds, she did not return empty-handed; she carried her understanding like a blazing torch within her.

As she approached the Buddha, bowing each step of the way, she laid her dead son before him and said, "O Enlightened Compassionate One, I see now that there is no bringing the dead back to life. You asked me to bring a mustard seed from each household where death has never visited, and I could not find even one. Now I understand, and the light of truth has awakened within me.

"Please cremate this poor child, and pray for him. You have given me a gift as great as life. I trust your prayers will deliver this little one's stream of being into higher rebirths and ultimately to freedom and enlightenment."

The omniscient Buddha simply smiled his acceptance.

Only a Visitor

In the last century, a tourist from the States visited the famous Polish rabbi Hafez Hayyim. He was astonished to see that the rabbi's home was only a simple room filled with books. The only furniture was a table and a bench.

"Rabbi, where is your furniture?" asked the tourist.

"Where is yours?" replied Hafez.

"Mine? But I'm only a visitor here."

"So am I," said the rabbi.

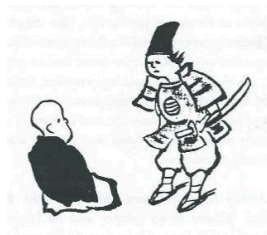
Without Batting an Eye

During a time of civil war in Korea, a certain general led his troops through province after province, overrunning whatever stood in his path. The people of one town, knowing that he was coming and having heard tales of his cruelty, all fled into the mountains. The general arrived in the empty town with his troops and sent them out to search the town. Some of the soldiers came back and reported that only one person remained, a Zen priest.

The general strode over to the temple, walked in, pulled out his sword, and said, "Don't you know who I am? I am the one who can run through you without batting an eye."

The Zen master looked back and calmly responded, "And I, sir, am one who can be run through without batting an eye."

The general, hearing this, bowed and left.



The Wise King

Told by Sant Kirpal Singh



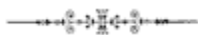
There is a story of a kingdom wherein they chose a new king every five years. During the five years, the king was the supreme ruler and his every word obeyed; but at the end of this period, the people would take the king to a dense forest full of wild animals and reptiles and leave him there. On the day the king was chosen he would rejoice at his good fortune, but on the expiration of five years, he would be led off to the jungle sadly lamenting his lot in life.

Many kings came and went in their turn, until one day a man was chosen who had the serious thought, "What will happen to me after five years?" He was a man of considerable intelligence and was duly concerned for his future life. So after some careful thought, he secretly started to send workers into the forest to cut some of the trees and make a huge clearing. They then made orchards, gardens, beautiful buildings, and appropriate surroundings, until the whole place became a luxurious kingdom. A man can do wonders in five years, and when the time was up and he was told that he must leave the throne, he smiled happily and said, "Yes, let's go."

The people were naturally amazed and asked why he was rejoicing. He told them, "I have already prepared my destination and have taken possession there; so I have no fear of going. What is more, I will actually enjoy more comfort there, for here I had many responsibilities, yet there I will have none."

All souls have this golden opportunity while in the human form and so we should make use of it and prepare while we can, for the day will come when we have to leave.

(uhanisatsangusa.org/dieb4death.htm)



Few are the wise ones who turn the heart away from worldly objects
and spend their time in gathering riches for the life beyond
before departure from this lonely earth.

(Ansari of Herat: 1006-1088, Sufi saint)



Quotes

The first sign of love of God is not to be afraid of death, and to be always waiting for it. For death unites the friend to his Friend - the seeker to the object which he seeks.

(Al Ghazzali: 1058-1111, Iran, Sufi mystic, philosopher, theologian)

To run away from trouble is a form of cowardice and, while it is true that the suicide braves death, he does it not for some noble object but to escape some ill. (Aristotle: 384-322 BC, Greek philosopher)

Spare me the whispering, crowded room, the friends who come and gape and go, the ceremonious air of gloom - all, which makes death a hideous show. (Matthew Arnold: 1822-1888, English poet, cultural critic)

Life is pleasant. Death is peaceful. It's the transition that's troublesome. (Isaac Asimov: 1920-1992, American author)

Attar

(1119-1221, Persian Muslim mystic, poet, and theoretician of Sufism)

Whatever you collect here chains you. When that night arrives which does not contain tomorrow's promise, one who possesses the least and knows peace steps lightly and welcomes the release.

How can one remember death and still cause torment and be unjust? Some days death clutches at my heart, yet other times I take solace in its approach and find peace, for from this dust bin it heralds my soul's release.

When one dies one of two things happens: if he arrives filthy he is scrubbed, if he arrives pure he is clothed in peace.

In the dead of night, a Sufi began to weep. He said, "This world is like a closed coffin, in which we are shut and in which, through our ignorance, we spend our lives in folly and desolation. When death comes to open the lid of the coffin, each one who has wings will fly off to eternity, but those without will remain locked in the coffin. So, my friends, before the lid of this coffin is taken off, do all you can to become a bird of the Way to God; do all you can to develop your wings and your feathers."



Death is a release from the impressions of sense, and from impulses that make us their puppets, from the vagaries of the mind, and the hard service of the flesh.

(Marcus Aurelius: 121-180, Roman Emperor, Stoic philosopher)

Despise not death, but welcome it, for nature wills it like all else. (Marcus Aurelius)

Just as the womb takes in and gives forth again, so the grave takes in and will give forth again. Death is very good because it takes man to a sinless world, where the battle with his impulses is ended. The mystics conceived of the body as an encumbering garment which falls away at death and leaves the true man free to rise into the Light of the heavenly life.

(Bereshit Rabbah: a religious text from Judaism's classical period)

It is not hard to die. It is harder, a thousand times harder, to live. (Henry W. Beecher: 1813-1887, American clergyman, social reformer)

Death consists, indeed, in a repeated process of unrobing, or unsheathing. The immortal part of man shakes off from itself, one after the other, its outer casings, and - as the snake from its skin, the butterfly from its chrysalis - emerges from one after another, passing into a higher state of consciousness. (Annie Besant: 1847 – 1933, British theosophist)

Never is the undying Self born nor does it die; never did it come to be nor will it come not to be: Unborn, eternal, everlasting is the primordial Self. It is not slain when the body is slain.
(Bhagavad Gita: One of the greatest of the Hindu scriptures. Composed in the 1st or 2nd century)

For certain is death for the born and certain is birth for the dead; therefore over the inevitable thou should not grieve. (Bhagavad Gita)

Buddha

(563-483 BCE, founder of Buddhism)

Everything together falls apart. Everything rising up collapses. Every meeting ends in parting. Every life ends in death.

Life is as fleeting as a rainbow, a flash of lightning, a star at dawn. Knowing this, how can you quarrel?

A mock show, dew drops, or a bubble, a dream, lightning flash, or cloud, so should one view what is conditioned.

All things conditioned are unstable, impermanent, fragile in essence as an unbaked pot, like something borrowed, or a city founded on sand, they last a short while only. They are inevitably destroyed, like plaster washed off in the rains, like the sandy bank of a river – they are conditioned, and their true nature is frail. They are like the flame of a lamp, which rises suddenly and as soon goes out. They have no power of endurance, like the wind or like foam, unsubstantial, essentially feeble.

This existence of ours is as transient as autumn clouds. To watch the birth and death of beings is like looking at the movements of a dance. A lifetime is like a flash of lightning in the sky, rushing by, like a torrent down a steep mountain.

When a man considers this world as a bubble of froth, and as the illusion of an appearance, then the king of death has no power over him.

Death is the temporary end of a temporary phenomenon.

Even death is not to be feared by one who has lived wisely.

Remember that this body will soon lie in the earth without life, without value, useless as a burned log.

Yellow leaves hang on your tree of life. The messengers of death are waiting. You are going to travel far away. Have you any provision for the journey?

This world is swept away by aging, by illness, by death. For one swept on by aging no shelters exist. Keeping sight of this danger in death, do meritorious deeds that bring bliss. Make merit while alive.

Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark; and as that natural fear in children is increased by tales, so is the other. (Francis Bacon: 1561-1626, English philosopher)

Readiness for death is that of character rather than occupation. It is right living which prepares for safe or even joyous dying. (Jacques Bossuet: 1627-1704, French theologian)

For every person who has ever lived there has come, at last, a spring he will never see. Glory then in the springs that are yours. (Pam Brown: 1948-present, Australian poet)

Smiles, tears, of all my life! - and, if God choose, I shall but love thee better after death. (Elizabeth Barrett Browning: 1806-1861, English poet)

What is the worst of woes that wait on age? What stamps the wrinkle deeper on the brow?
To view each loved one blotted from life's page, and be alone on earth, as I am now.
(Lord Byron: 1788-1824, English romantic poet)



I love the name of honor, more than I fear death. (Julius Caesar: 100-44 BC, Roman general, dictator)

Death is caused by swallowing small amounts of saliva over a long period of time.
(George Carlin: 1937-2008, American comedian)

Guilt is perhaps the most painful companion of death. (Coco Chanel: 1883-1971, fashion designer)

We are not victims of aging, sickness and death. These are part of scenery, not the seer, who is immune to any form of change. This seer is the spirit, the expression of eternal being.
(Deepak Chopra: 1946-present, alternative medicine advocate, spiritual lecturer)

The ancient masters slept without dreams and woke up without worries. Their food was plain. Their breath came from deep inside them. They didn't cling to life, weren't anxious about death. They emerged without desire and reentered without resistance. They came easily; they went easily. They didn't forget where they were from; they didn't ask where they were going. They took everything as it came, gladly, and walked into death without fear. They accepted life as a gift, and they handed it back gratefully. (Chuang-tzu: 369-286 BC, Chinese philosopher)

I am prepared to meet my Maker. Whether my Maker is prepared for the great ordeal of meeting me is another matter. (Winston Churchill: 1874-1965, British statesman)

What a wonderful life I've had! I only wish I'd realized it sooner. (Colette: 1873-1954, author)

Death -- a friend that alone can bring the peace his treasures cannot purchase, and remove the pain his physicians cannot cure. (Mortimer Collins: 1827-1876, English author)

Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies inside us while we live.
(Norman Cousins: 1915-1990, American political journalist, author, professor)

Body lying flat on a last bed, voices whispering a few last words, mind watching a final memory glide past: When will that drama come for you? (Seventh Dalai Lama: 1720-1757, scholar, writer and poet)

Awareness of death is the very bedrock of the Path. Until you have developed this awareness, all other practices are obstructed. (Dalai Lama: 1935-present, spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism)

Death means change our clothes. Clothes become old, then time to come change. So this body become old, and then time come, take young body. (Dalai Lama)

Just as a well spent day brings happy sleep, so a life well used brings happy death.
(Leonardo da Vinci: 1452-1519, Italian artist)

While I thought that I was learning how to live, I have been learning how to die.
(Leonardo da Vinci)

Death in itself is nothing; but we fear to be we know not what, we know not where.
(John Dryden: 1631-1700, English poet)

There's nothing like impending death to rouse you from existential boredom. (Roger Ebert: 1942-2013, American film critic)

Now he has departed from this strange world a little ahead of me. That signifies nothing. For us believing physicists the distinction between past, present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion. (Albert Einstein: 1879-1955, physicist)

When death, the great reconciler, has come, it is never our tenderness that we repent of, but our severity. (George Eliot: 1819-1880, English novelist, poet)

Our fear of death is like our fear that summer will be short, but when we have had our swing of pleasures, our fill of fruit, and our swelter of heat, we say we have had our day.
(Ralph Waldo Emerson: 1803-1882, American, Transcendentalism)

It is possible to provide security against other ills, but as far as death is concerned, we men live in a city without walls. (Epicurus: 341-270 BC, Greek philosopher)

Who knows but that this life is really death, and whether death is not what men call life?
(Euripides: 480-406 BCE, Greek playwright)

No one can confidently say that he will still be living tomorrow. (Euripides)

A friend who dies, it's something of you who dies. (Gustave Flaubert: 1821-1880, French novelist)

I look upon death to be as necessary to our constitution as sleep. We shall rise refreshed in the morning. (Benjamin Franklin: 1706-1790, writer, scientist, inventor, statesman, diplomat)

Some people die at 25 and aren't buried until 75. (Benjamin Franklin)

Perhaps the gods are kind to us, by making life more disagreeable as we grow older. In the end, death seems less intolerable than the manifold burdens we carry. (Sigmund Freud: 1856-1939, founder of psychoanalysis)

Man always dies before he is fully born. (Erich Fromm: 1900-1980, sociologist, philosopher)

Let us all be brave enough to die the death of a martyr, but let no one lust for martyrdom.
(Mahatma Gandhi: 1869-1948, political ethicist)

I became a very simple person. The simple things are the most precious to me. I don't ascribe much significance to the things I have now. That feeling of touching death has never left me.
(Yossi Ghinsberg: 1959-present, stranded in the Amazon jungle for three weeks in 1981)

Your fear of death is but the trembling of the shepherd when he stands before the king whose hand is to be laid upon him in honor. Is the shepherd not joyful beneath his trembling, that he shall wear the mark of the king? Yet is he not more mindful of his trembling? For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun? And what is it to cease breathing, but to free the breath from its restless tides, that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered? (Kahlil Gibran: 1883-1931; author of *The Prophet*)

If my survival caused another to perish, then death would be sweeter and more beloved.
(Khalil Gibran)

I'm not afraid of death. It's the stake one puts up in order to play the game of life.
(Jean Giraudoux: 1882-1944, French playwright)

The ship you are riding on, look where it is heading: Your body's port is the graveyard. Realizing the destiny of each clay bowl tossed into the sky with no one to catch it, I finally accepted the Beloved's kind offer to enroll in His sublime course of Spirit Love.
(Hafiz: 1320-1389, Sufi mystic, poet)

The impermanence of the body should give us great clarity, deepening the wonder in our senses and eyes of this mysterious existence we share and are surely just traveling through. (Hafiz)

We sometimes congratulate ourselves at the moment of waking from a troubled dream; it may be so the moment after death. (Nathaniel Hawthorne: 1804-1864, American writer, novelist)

There is no lonelier man in death, except the suicide, than that man who has lived many years with a good wife and then outlived her. If two people love each other there can be no happy end to it. (Ernest Hemingway: 1899-1961, American author)



Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death! (Patrick Henry: 1736-1799, American politician, orator)

Birth is not the beginning of life - only of an individual awareness. Change into another state is not death - only the ending of this awareness. Most people are ignorant of the truth, and therefore afraid of death, believing it to be the greatest of all evils. But death is only the dissolution of a worn out body. Our term of service as guardians of the world is ended when we are freed from the bonds of this mortal frame and restored, cleansed and purified, to the primal condition of our higher nature. (Hermes Trismegistus: legendary sage of Ancient Egypt)

Death is like an arrow that is already in flight, and your life lasts only until it reaches you. (Hermes)

Death is a delightful hiding place for weary men. (Herodotus: 484-425 BC, Greek historian)

The call of death is a call of love. Death can be sweet if we answer in the affirmative, if we accept it as one of the great eternal forms of life and transformation. (Hermann Hesse: 1877-1962, German author, wrote *Siddhartha*)

And some day there will be nothing left of everything that has twisted my life and grieved it and filled me so often with such anguish. Some day, with the last exhaustion, peace will come and the motherly earth will gather me back home. It won't be the end of things, only a way of being born again, a bathing and a slumbering where the old and the withered sink down, where the young and new begin to breathe. Then, with other thoughts, I will walk along streets like these, and listen to streams, and overhear what the sky says in the evening, over and over and over. (Hermann Hesse)



(In Tibet, instead of burial or cremation, after a person dies, their body is taken to a special monastery. There a sky burial operator will dismember, or chop into pieces, the corpse. They will then lay out the remains at a special sky burial site to feed vultures. Vultures are considered sacred by the Tibetan people.)

In a cemetery in England: Remember man, as you walk by, as you are now, so once was I. As I am now, you soon will be. Prepare yourself and follow me.

I am in the night. There is a being who has gone away and carried the heavens with her. (Victor Hugo: 1802-1885, French novelist, poet)

Death has its revelations: The great sorrows which open the heart open the mind as well; light comes to us with our grief. As for me, I have faith; I believe in a future life. How could I do otherwise? My daughter was a soul; I saw this soul. I touched it, so to speak. (Victor Hugo)

A belief in hell and the knowledge that every ambition is doomed to frustration at the hands of a skeleton have never prevented the majority of human beings from behaving as though death were no more than an unfounded rumor. (Aldous Huxley: 1894-1963, philosopher, writer)

No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because death is very likely the single best invention of life. It is life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new. (Steve Jobs: 1955-2011, American businessman)

Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything - all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure - these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. (Steve Jobs)

To the psychotherapist an old man who cannot bid farewell to life appears as feeble and sickly as a young man who is unable to embrace it. (Carl Jung: 1875-1961, founder of analytical psychology)

Shrinking away from death is something unhealthy and abnormal which robs the second half of life of its purpose. (Carl Jung)

I have two luxuries to brood over in my walks, your loveliness and the hour of my death. O that I could have possession of them both in the same minute. (John Keats: 1795 – 1821, English poet)

The body is nothing but a covering over our soul, and when it is gone we are not dead; just as we do not think that we are dead when our coat is worn out, or if someone tears our shirt. The moment when a person dies is the only moment when he feels he is dead. The impression of this dying condition, the hopelessness of the doctor, the sorrow and grief of the family cause this impression. After death, as he recovers from this, he gradually finds himself alive...for the great burden has been removed. (Hazrat Inayat Khan: 1882-1927, Sufi mystic and teacher)

Death is a tax the soul must pay for having a name and form. (Hazrat Inayat Khan)

If physical death is the price that I must pay to free my white brothers and sisters from a permanent death of the spirit, then nothing can be more redemptive. (Martin Luther King, Jr.: 1929-1968, civil rights leader)

Death gives meaning to our lives. It gives importance and value to time. Time would become meaningless if there were too much of it. (Ray Kurzweil: 1948-present, American author, inventor)

Life is going forth, death is returning home. (Lao-tzu: 6th century BC, founder of Taoism)

Life and death are one thread, the same line viewed from different sides. (Lao Tzu)

Thou, divine death, to which everything returns and disappears, receive thy children into thy star-studded bosom; free us from time, number, space; give us back the peace that life interrupted. (Leconte de Lisle: 1818-1894, French poet)

Old age is the supreme evil, for it deprives man of all pleasures while allowing his appetites to remain, and it brings with it every possible sorrow. Yet men fear death and desire old age. (Giacomo Leopardi: 1798 – 1837, Italian philosopher, poet)

The gods conceal from men the happiness of death, that they may endure life. (Lucan: 39-65 AD, Roman poet)

I've looked that old scoundrel death in the eye many times but this time I think he has me on the ropes. (Douglas MacArthur: 1880-1964, American military leader)

The dead are indeed happy, having gotten rid of the incubus of the body; the dead do not grieve. Do men fear sleep? No, they court it and prepare for it. (Ramana Maharshi: 1879 – 1950, Hindu sage)

The death of someone we know always reminds us that we are still alive - perhaps for some purpose which we ought to re-examine. (Mignon McLaughlin: 1913-1983, American author)

Life is a series of experiences which need innumerable forms. Death is an interval in that one long life. (Meher Baba: 1894-1969, Indian guru)

Neither seek death nor fear it, and when death comes to you it is converted into a stepping stone to the higher life. (Meher Baba)

Death is someone you see very clearly with eyes in the center of your heart: eyes that see not by reacting to light, but by reacting to a kind of a chill from within the marrow of your own life. (Thomas Merton: 1915 – 1968, Christian monk, writer, theologian)

Death and love are the two wings that bear the good man to heaven. (Michelangelo: 1475-1564)

If we have been pleased with life, we should not be displeased with death, since it comes from the hand of the same master. (Michelangelo)

You should strive for a readiness to die! Be certain and ready; when the time comes, you will have no fear and no regret. (Milarepa: 1028–1111, one of Tibet's most famous yogis and spiritual poets)

When you are strong and healthy, you never think of sickness coming, but it descends with sudden force like a stroke of lightning. When involved in worldly things, you never think of death's approach; quick it comes like thunder crashing round your head. (Milarepa)

Death is a golden key that opens the palace of eternity. (John Milton: 1608-1674, English poet)

If you don't know how to die, don't worry; Nature will tell you what to do on the spot, fully and adequately. She will do this job perfectly for you; don't bother your head about it. (Michel de Montaigne: 1533–1592 one of the most significant philosophers of the French Renaissance)

All days travel toward death; the last one reaches it. (Michel de Montaigne)

It is not death, it is dying that alarms me. (Michel de Montaigne)

We should weep for men at their birth, not at their death. (Baron de Montesquieu: 1689-1755, French political philosopher)

Death, when we consider it closely, is the true goal of our existence. I have formed during the last few years such close relations with this best and truest friend of mankind, that this image is not only no longer terrifying to me, but is indeed very soothing and consoling! And I thank my God for graciously granting me the opportunity of learning that death is the key which unlocks the door to our true happiness. (Wolfgang Mozart: 1756-1791, Austrian composer)

I thank my God for graciously granting me the opportunity of learning that death is the key which unlocks the door to our true happiness. (Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart)

Generally speaking, the Way of the warrior is resolute acceptance of death. (Miyamoto Musashi: 1584-1645, Japanese philosopher)

You are living amidst the causes of death like a lamp standing in a strong breeze.
(Nagarjuna: 150-250, Buddhist monk, philosopher)

Death is nothing but a gateway to birth. Nothing that lives ever dies, it only changes form. When a man's body is weary the soul leaves the body to receive newer and fresher garments. And so on goes this great play of God – from eternity to eternity. (Guru Nanak: 1469-1539, founder of Sikhism)

How confusing the beams from memory's lamp are; one day a bachelor, the next a grampa. What is the secret of the trick? How did I get so old so quick? (Ogden Nash: 1902-1971, poet)

The only way to take sorrow out of death is to take love out of life. (Russell M. Nelson: 1924, president of LDS church)

No university will teach you how to live so that when the time of dying comes, you can say: "I lived well, I do not need to live again." (Sri Nisargadatta: 1897-1981, Indian guru)

In reality, there is no death because you are not the body. Let the body be there or not be there, your existence is always there; it is eternal. (Sri Nisargadatta)

Death is less bitter punishment than death's delay. (Ovid: 43 BC-18 AD, Roman poet)

The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways - I to die, and you to live. Which is better God only knows. (Plato: 428-347 BC, Greek philosopher, student of Socrates, teacher of Aristotle)

Death is not the worst that can happen to men. (Plato)

The soul is immortal and clothed in many bodies successively. (Plato)

Plotinus on his deathbed – "I am making my last effort to return that which is divine in me to that which is divine in the universe." (204-270, philosopher)

Not by lamentations and mournful chants ought we to celebrate the funeral of a good man, but by hymns, for in ceasing to be numbered to mortals, he enters upon the heritage of a diviner life. (Plutarch: 46-120, Greek historian, biographer)

We say that the hour of death cannot be forecast, but when we say this we imagine that hour as placed in an obscure and distant future. It never occurs to us that it has any connection with the day already begun or that death could arrive this same afternoon, this afternoon which is so certain and which has every hour filled in advance. (Marcel Proust: 1871-1922, French novelist)

"I am the murderer of joy, the widower of wives, the orphaner of children" said the Angel of Death. "Why always run yourself down?" said Rabia. "Why not say instead, 'I am he who brings friend and Friend together?' " (717-801, Muslim saint and Sufi mystic)

I don't sleep. I hate those little slices of death. (Walter Reisch: 1903-1983, director and screenwriter)

Each departed friend is a magnet that attracts us to the next world.

(Jean Paul Richter: 1763-1825, German novelist)

Even if death were to fall upon you today like lightning, you must be ready to die without sadness and regret, without any residue of clinging for what is left behind. Remaining in the recognition of the absolute view, you should leave this life like an eagle soaring up into the blue sky. (Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche: 1910-1991, Tibetan Buddhism master, teacher)

I don't fear death so much as I fear its prologues: loneliness, decrepitude, pain, debilitation, depression, senility. After a few years of those, I imagine death presents like a holiday at the beach. (Mary Roach: 1959, American author)

Absence and death are the same - only that in death there is no suffering. (Theodore Roosevelt: 1858-1919, American president)

To the well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure. (J. K. Rowling: 1965, author)

Rumi

(1207-1273, Persian poet, jurist, Islamic scholar, theologian, and Sufi mystic)

If I die, don't say that he died. Say he was dead, became alive, and was taken by the Beloved.

Do not cry, "Alas, you are gone!" at my graveside: for me, this is a time of joyful meeting! Do not bid me farewell when I am lowered into my grave: I have passed through the curtain to eternal grace!

Carry the bier when I die, and forget about my heart, for it's gone from this world. Never cry for me, for this is the Devil's work. Don't follow my hearse with your eyes or heart, for union and meeting are mine in this hour. When you watch my coffin disappear, forget your goodbyes to me. The grave simply hides Paradise. Don't look down, look up at the sun and moon, who set in joy for me.

When I die and you wish to visit me, do not come to my grave without a drum, for at God's banquet mourners have no place.

The body, like a mother, is pregnant with the spirit-child: death is the labor of birth. All the spirits who have passed over are waiting to see how that proud spirit shall be born.

Death is in reality spiritual birth, the release of the spirit from the prison of the senses into the freedom of God, just as physical birth is the release of the baby from the prison of the womb into the freedom of the world. While childbirth causes pain and suffering to the mother, for the baby it brings liberation.

Die happily and look forward to taking up a new and better form. Like the sun, only when you set in the west can you rise in the east.

Our death is our wedding with eternity.

Those to whom death seems as sweet as sugar, how can their sight be dazzled by the temptations of this earthly realm? Physical death holds no bitterness for them; they see it as a blessed refuge from a prison cell into a glorious garden. It will deliver them from a world of torment: No one weeps for the loss of such nothingness!

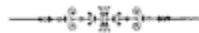
The worm is in the root of the body's tree; travelers, it is late! Life's sun is going to set. During these brief days that you have strength, be quick and spare no effort of your wings.

Everyone is so frightened of death, but the true Sufis just laugh; nothing overpowers their hearts. What strikes the oyster shell does not harm the pearl.

When you die, death will disclose the mystery – not the death that takes you to the dark grave, but the death whereby you are transmuted and enter into the Light.

It is not death that will take you. It is a tomb. Death is a change that will usher you into light from darkness, and bestow eternal bliss upon you. You need have no fear of death, for apart from the physical body you have other bodies. Therefore, do not be afraid to come out of this body.

The dead regret not dying, but having lost opportunities in life. Well said that leader of mankind, that whosoever passes away from the world does not grieve and lament over his death, but grieves ever over lost opportunities. He says, "Why did I not keep death always in view, which is the treasury of wealth and sustenance? Why did I blindly all my life set my affections on vain shadows which perish at death? My regret is not that I have died, but that I rested on these vain shadows in life. I saw not that my body was a mere shadow or foam, which foam rises out of and lives on the Ocean (God).



Death is not a deplorable event; it is the journey's end, the owner getting out of the car when the time is up and the goal is reached. It is a consummation, a happy conclusion, or at least it ought to be, if only all are wise enough to treat it as such and be prepared for it.

(Sathya Sai Baba: 1926-2011, Hindu guru)

There is no cure for birth and death save to enjoy the interval. (George Santayana: 1863-1952, Philosopher, poet, novelist)

I believe that when death closes our eyes we shall awaken to a light, of which our sunlight is but the shadow. (Arthur Schopenhauer: 1788-1860, German philosopher)

Each day is a little life: every waking and rising a little birth, every fresh morning a little youth, every going to rest and sleep a little death. (Arthur Schopenhauer)

Seeing death as the end of life is like seeing the horizon as the end of the ocean. (David Searls: Contemporary author)

The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch, which hurts and is desired. (William Shakespeare: 1564-1616, English playwright, poet)

I don't have no fear of death. My only fear is coming back reincarnated. (Tupac Shakur, 1971-1996, American rapper)

Never halting night or day, my life drains constantly away, and from no other source does increase come. How can there not be death for such as me? (Shantideva: 685-763, Buddhist monk, poet)

Death is for many the gate of hell; but we are inside on the way out, not on the outside on the way in. (George Bernard Shaw: 1856-1950, Irish playwright, critic)

Nothing can be accomplished after death in the way of spiritual liberation unless it is at least begun during this life. (Santon ki Shiksha: another name for the yoga of the celestial sound current)

It is old age, rather than death, that is to be contrasted with life. Old age is life's parody, whereas death transforms life into a destiny: in a way it preserves it by giving it the absolute dimension. Death does away with time. (Simone de Beauvoir: 1908-1986, philosopher, writer)

A man of discrimination and wisdom is not afraid of death. He knows that death is the gate of life. Death to him is no longer a skeleton bearing a sword to cut the thread of life, but rather an angel who has a golden key to unlock for him the door to a wider, fuller and happier existence. (Swami Sivananda: 1887-1963, Hindu guru)

I shall be dead in a few months. But it hasn't given me the slightest anxiety or worry. I always knew I was going to die. (B.F. Skinner: 1904-1990, famous psychologist, behaviorism)

To fear death is nothing other than to think oneself wise when one is not; for it is to think one knows what one does not know. No man knows whether death may not even turn out to be the greatest of blessings for a human being; and yet people fear it as if they knew for certain that it is the greatest of evils. (Socrates: 470-399 BC, Greek philosopher)

Be of good cheer about death and know this as a truth – that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death. (Socrates)

I am confident that there truly is such a thing as living again, that the living spring from the dead, and that the souls of the dead are in existence. (Socrates)

Death may be the greatest of all human blessings. (Socrates)

Ordinary people seem not to realize that those who really apply themselves in the right way to philosophy are directly and of their own accord preparing themselves for dying and death. (Socrates)

Not even old age knows how to love death. (Sophocles: 497-406 BC, Greek playwright)

Disciples of a saint do not feel any pain at the time of death. They rather enjoy great peace at that time. (Swami Ji Maharaj: 1818-1878, Sant Mat Guru)

Death is not extinguishing the light; it is putting out the lamp because dawn has come. (Rabindranath Tagore: 1861-1941, India, poet, philosopher)

Birth and death are like ships: Why do we rejoice over a ship setting out on a journey when we know not what she may encounter on the seas? We should rejoice when the ship returns safely to the port. (Midrash Tanhuma: Jewish text)

While we are mourning the loss of our friend, others are rejoicing to meet him behind the veil.
(John Taylor: 1808-1887, was the third president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

We die into this world and are born back into the oneness. (Taoist saying)

When your time comes to die, be not like those whose hearts are filled with fear of death, so that when their time comes they weep and pray for a little more time to live their lives over again in a different way. Sing your death song, and die like a hero going home. (Tecumseh: 1768-1813, Shawnee chief and warrior)

Death surrenders us totally to God: it makes us enter into him; we must, in return, surrender ourselves to death with absolute love and self-abandonment since, when death comes, all we can do is to surrender ourselves completely to the domination and guidance of God.
(Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, 1881-1955, French priest, theologian, philosopher)

Death is the bright side of life. (Alfred, Lord Tennyson: 1809-1892- British poet)

After you die, you wear what you are. (Saint Teresa of Avila: 1515-1582, Roman Catholic saint)

I leave this world without a regret. (Henry David Thoreau: 1817-1862, American philosopher)

The more you live in the present moment, the more the fear of death disappears. (Eckhart Tolle: 1948-present, spiritual teacher, self-help author)

The fear of death follows from the fear of life. A man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time. (Mark Twain: 1835-1910, American author)

All say "How hard it is that we have to die" - a strange complaint to come from the mouths of people who have had to live. (Mark Twain)

After death, the soul goes to the next world bearing in mind the subtle impressions of its deeds, and after reaping their harvest returns again to this world of action. (The Upanishads: Sanskrit texts that supplied the basis of later Hindu philosophy)

I see clearly that there are two deaths: to cease loving and being loved is unbearable. But to cease to live is of no consequence. (Voltaire: 1694-1778, French poet, historian, and philosopher)

The safest course is to do nothing against one's conscience. With this secret, we can enjoy life and have no fear from death. (Voltaire)

You live on earth for a few short years which you call an incarnation, and then you leave your body as an outworn dress and go for refreshment to your true home in the spirit. (White Eagle: 19th century Native American spiritual teacher)

Come lovely and soothing death, undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving, in the day, in the night, to all, to each, sooner or later, delicate death. (Walt Whitman: 1819-1892, poet)

Nothing can happen more beautiful than death. (Walt Whitman)

Do you suspect death? If I were to suspect death, I should die now. Do you think I could walk pleasantly and well-suited toward annihilation? Pleasantly and well-suited I walk, whither I walk I cannot define, but I know it is good, the whole universe indicates that it is good, the past and the present indicate that it is good. (Walt Whitman)

Death is not an event in life: We do not live to experience death. If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present. (Ludwig Wittgenstein: 1889-1951, Austrian philosopher)

Tagore

(1861-1941, poet, mystic, winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature)

Oh, the last fulfillment of life, Death, my death, come and whisper to me! Day after day I have kept watch for you; for you have I borne the joys and pangs of life. All that I am, that I have, that I hope and all my love have ever flowed towards you in depth of secrecy. One final glance from your eyes and my life will be ever your own. The flowers have been woven and the garland is ready for the bridegroom. After the wedding the bride shall leave her home and meet her Lord alone in the solitude of night.

Death, your servant, is at my door. He has crossed the unknown sea and brought your call to my home. The night is dark and my heart is fearful – yet I will take up the lamp, open my gates and bow to him my welcome. It is your messenger who stands at my door.

I know that the day will come when my sight of this earth shall be lost, and life will take its leave in silence, drawing the last curtain over my eyes. Yet stars will watch at night, and morning rise as before, and hours heave like sea waves casting up pleasures and pains. When I think of this end of my moments, the barrier of the moments breaks and I see by the light of death your world with its careless treasures. Rare is its lowliest seat, rare is its meanest of lives. Things that I longed for in vain and things that I got - let them pass. Let me but truly possess the things that I ever spurned and overlooked.

I have got my leave. Bid me farewell, my brothers! I bow to you all and take my departure. Here I give back the keys of my door - and I give up all claims to my house. I only ask for last kind words from you. We were neighbors for long, but I received more than I could give. Now the day has dawned and the lamp that lit my dark corner is out. A summons has come and I am ready for my journey.

I was not aware of the moment when I first crossed the threshold of this life. What was the power that made me open out into this vast mystery like a bud in the forest at midnight! When in the morning I looked upon the light I felt in a moment that I was no stranger in this world, that the inscrutable without name and form had taken me in its arms in the form of my own mother. Even so, in death the same unknown will appear as ever known to me. And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well. The child cries out when from the right breast the mother takes it away, in the very next moment to find in the left one its consolation.

At this time of my parting, wish me good luck, my friends! The sky is flushed with the dawn and my path lies beautiful. Ask not what I have with me to take there. I start on my journey with empty hands and expectant heart. I shall put on my wedding garland. Mine is not the red-brown dress of the traveler, and though there are dangers on the way I have no fear in mind. The evening star will come out when my voyage is done and the plaintive notes of the twilight melodies be struck up from the King's gateway.

On the day when death will knock at your door what will you offer to him? Oh, I will set before my guest the full vessel of my life – I will never let him go with empty hands. All the sweet vintage of all my autumn days and summer nights, all the earnings and gleanings of my busy life will I place before him at the close of my days when death will knock at my door.

The following life expectancy table is compiled from information published by the Office of the Actuary of the Social Security Administration. It shows the average number of years of life expectancy remaining for individuals at various ages. (annuityadvantage.com/resources/life-expectancy-tables)

<u>Current Age</u>	<u>Years Remaining – Male</u>	<u>Years Remaining – Female</u>
50	29.6	33.2
51	28.8	32.3
52	28.0	31.4
53	27.1	30.5
54	26.3	29.7
55	25.5	28.8
56	24.7	28.0
57	23.9	27.1
58	23.1	26.2
59	22.3	25.4
60	21.6	24.6
61	20.8	23.7
62	20.1	22.9
63	19.3	22.1
64	18.6	21.3
65	17.9	20.4
66	17.2	19.6
67	16.4	18.8
68	15.7	18.1
69	15.0	17.3
70	14.4	16.5
71	13.7	15.8
72	13.0	15.0
73	12.4	14.3
74	11.8	13.6
75	11.1	12.9
76	10.5	12.2
77	10.0	11.6
78	9.4	10.9
79	8.8	10.3
80	8.3	9.7
81	7.8	9.1
82	7.3	8.5
83	6.8	8.0
84	6.3	7.5
85	5.9	7.0

One can savor sights and sounds more deeply when one gets really old. It may be the last time you see a sunset, a tree, the snow, or know winter. The sea, a lake, all become as in childhood, magical and a great wonder: then seen for the first time, now perhaps for the last. Music, bird songs, the wind, the waves: One listens to tones with deeper delight and appreciation.

(Helen Newaring: 1904-1995, American author)

The Line

Marianne Baum (1912-1942) was a German woman
executed for her anti-Nazi activities.

Every minute someone leaves this world behind.
Age has nothing to do with it.
We are all in this line without realizing it.
We never know how many people are before us.
We cannot move to the back of the line.
We cannot step out of the line.
We cannot avoid the line.
So while we wait in line: Make moments count.
Make a difference. Make the call.
Make priorities. Make the time.
Make your gifts known.
Make a nobody feel like a somebody.
Make your voice heard. Make the small things big.
Make someone smile. Make the change.
Make yourself a priority.
Make love. Make up. Make peace.
Make sure to tell your people they are loved.
Make waves. Make sure to have no regrets.
Make sure you are ready.
This world will often leave you wishing
you had just five more minutes.
Feel free to share this powerful reminder on perspective
and wake up each day realizing it is a gift
and to make the most of it!



For man, the vast marvel is to be alive.
For man, as for flower and beast and bird,
the supreme triumph is to be most vividly, most perfectly alive.
Whatever the unborn and the dead may know,
they cannot know the beauty, the marvel of being alive in the flesh.
The dead may look after the afterwards.
But the magnificent here and now of life in the flesh is ours,
and ours alone, and ours only for a time.
We ought to dance with rapture that we should be alive and in the flesh,
and part of the living, incarnate cosmos.
(D. H. Lawrence: 1885-1930, English writer, poet)



It is a strange fact that though the whole world is frightened of death,
the disciples on the holy path want to die.
He who has mastered the science of dying with the grace of the Master,
will depart finally with laughter on his or her lips,
as in the case of my earthly companion.
(Sant Kirpal Singh, Sant Bani Magazine, 10/88, p.30)

Lord, remind me how brief my time on earth will be.
Remind me that my days are numbered,
and that my life is fleeing away.
(Psalm 39:4)

It was a privilege to have lived.
(Quoted in *Travels with Epicurus*)

Death plucks my ear and says, "Live - I am coming."
(Virgil: 70 BC-19 BC, Roman poet)



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