



Death (continued)

Talks with Babaji

People who have near-death experiences come back with feelings of bliss rather than fear. How can the near-death experience help us in our progress on the spiritual path?

At the time of death, the elements in the body start changing very quickly. The mind gets confused and the person feels fear. Then the elements stop and the mind gets fixed. If it's fixed in a positive state, then bliss is experienced. In some it doesn't (get fixed in the bliss). When they come back they talk about their fearful experiences. In some, insight dawns because the mind is fixed in a positive state and that memory exists in coming back. One soldier in war when a bomb dropped his whole company was killed and he lived half buried in the trench. When he was dug out and came back to his senses, he was a different person. He developed firm belief on God and finally became a renunciate.

What determines whether a person will experience a bliss state or not at the time of death?

The karmas. Life from birth to death is guided by karma samskara. If a person lives a virtuous life, then virtuous samskaras will guide the person's life.

At the time of death when the elements are changing rapidly and there is confusion and fear, what is the method to fix the mind in positivity?

It depends on regular practice. It can't be done without prior practice of concentration. At the time of death, people lose control over the mind. Only a few keep awareness of God at that moment.

If there is prior practice, is there a specific method for that time?

Concentration on your inner Self in a form of light.

For a loved one's peace, how important is it to be quiet with a loved one as they are dying?

We are quiet with people we know. We are related or deeply attached. At the time of death, there is fear. The dying person needs a support even though we can't save the person. "I am here for you." It's a big support. "Quiet" in that situation means not to create any negative feelings.

My mother is elderly and I travel a lot. There's a good chance that I won't be there for her when she dies. I worry about it.

What is destined can't be changed. When my mother was dying, she was far away and I did not see her for years. Somehow unknowingly, I reached there when she was dying. She said, "I was waiting for you" and died. So this mechanism is unknown. Your worry will not change the destiny.

When I say the healing mantra at the bedside of someone who is dying, is that helping the person who is dying or is it simply helping me? Or both?

1) It is helping you keep the mind in a positive state. 2) It is helping the dying person because your positive state of mind is reaching out to the person.

My father died several years ago. He had a lot of negativity in his life. I am saying prayers for him now. Will that help him at all in his future birth?

It will help you, that I can tell. If it will help him in his future birth can't be proved. But we believe it does.

I was interested in the story of the soldier who changed into a different person. I have spiritual awakenings on a regular basis but then go back to sleep. Can the transformation happen in an instant?

What was changed in him? He got retirement and renounced the world and became a hermit. You have spiritual awakening on a regular basis but nothing changes. Spiritual awakening means "change": change towards a virtuous life. Spiritual enlightenment is not time bound. It can happen to anyone at any time.

Can you experience fear of death during sadhana or meditation? If so, what do you do?

Yes, it happens. Why it happens? We are attached to our egocentric existence. In sadhana, the ego starts fading away and we don't know "who am I now." This fear of death disappears when one develops knowledge of one's real Self.

When I was faced with a life-threatening situation, I felt a fear of death and then it changed into attachment to life. Is that a disguised form of fear of death?

Both mean the same. Abhinivesha Klesha. It is one of the five afflictions in life: 1) ignorance, 2) egoism, 3) attachment, 4) aversion, 5) fear of death or attachment to life.

Could there come a point at which there is no value to prolonging one's life?

When living becomes more painful than the pain of dying, then we cry out "I would rather be dead." So we accept it in one level. We want to live if the quality of life is good. But on the other hand, the attachment to life doesn't leave us. I saw a leper in India: no hands, no feet, no nose; all rotted away. I asked her if she wanted to die. She said, "No, I can still move around."

Ramana Maharshi and other realized beings suffered so much pain in their life. If God loves these realized beings so much, why do they have to suffer so much?

Samskaras of this body are worked out by going through physical sufferings. Ramana Maharshi lived in very bad conditions which affected his body. The question is how it affected his mind. Only one who did not relate oneself with body-mind complex can tell. I knew a saint from Kausani, "Brahmachari of Kausani." He was from a kingly family and renounced everything. In his youth, he was worshipped as a siddha. In his old age, he had abdominal cancer. Two of his disciples were taking care of him. Brahmachari would cry out of pain. The two disciples would say, "he is above all pain," and ignore his cry. How did he feel? Body samskaras are worked out when the body dies.

Is it necessary to go through intense physical suffering, like self-torture, in order to detach from our bodies?

A wild horse gets punished in training. After the horse is trained, only words are enough to guide the horse. Ignorant mind needs torturous austerity until one understands the truth of life.

Or does somebody have to get cancer or something in order to realize they don't want to be in this body and detach from it?

Pain in life, whether it is physical, emotional or devotional, develops dispassion for the world. It is not necessary to get some serious illness in order to achieve dispassion. Intense devotion to God is also painful but it brings dispassion.

In order to detach from the body, do we have to go through the pain of the body or can we just learn to detach through our mind?

Those who are intelligent understand the way to remove themselves by self-reflection. Those who are not so intelligent go through hard austerities.

What about an individual who feels so much deep pain, or they hate themselves so much, that they inflict pain upon others?

Yes, that can happen because they don't accept the law of nature. When living becomes harder than to die, then people do such things to die. They inflict pain upon others in various ways.

How can we accept that pain?

It's very hard to accept pain or to make someone else accept pain because we cling to life and we don't want to lose our existence. But it's our duty to express compassion and love to sufferers.