

Podcast 155: RIGHT TIME

Om Sri Sai Ram

Welcome to Prasanthi Sandesh.

What is it that frightens us? What are we most fearful of? What is it that when we are thinking about it or watching it, we feel afraid of it? What is that? I mean, we are mostly afraid of one thing all over the world. What is it? It is death.

Death is the most misunderstood phenomenon, according to elders. This is due to a basic misunderstanding that death is the end of life. But it is not so. Death is not the end, but the beginning of a new life. A crescendo of what we call life.

So, in a way death is the ultimate experience of this life. As has been pointed out, it is the beginning experience of another life. Death is the door between two lives. One is left behind, while one is waiting ahead.

But really speaking, out of fear, which is man-made, even the word 'death' is ugly and unutterable. In fact, we see others die, so death is only watched from the outside. But death is an experience of the innermost being.

For example, love is also like that. Watching love from a distance is different from being in love. After all, we may watch the different manifestations of love, but that's not all love at all.

So this is also true about death. Watching death happen is different from the experience of death. Death is the transfer of the soul from one body to another body. That's what *Bhagavad Gita* says. But in the case of awakened, enlightened souls, it is the transfer of the physical body to the 'body' of the whole universe. It's a great journey indeed.

So, death has to be known from the inside. What is the use of knowing death from the inside? Then one loses the fear of death. He is no longer fearful and death is no longer ugly. But on the other hand, it changes into the purest and most silent phenomenon. In fact, even it's a sublime experience where one experiences existing without the prison of the body for the first time, thereby gaining the experience of absolute freedom, feeling unhampered and uncaged. That's what death is when watched from the inside.

But one thing I would say is that in one sense, love and meditation are one. Lovers have no fear of death, no. Meditators also don't fear death. Yes, because in love what happens, particularly in total love, nothing is held back. Nothing is held back so a kind of death happens. You feel that you are no more the body. While in love you are no more the mind. You are the pure spirit.

The same thing applies in respect to meditation also: the meditator experiences bodiless-ness, mindless-ness, absolute consciousness and aliveness. In that way

lovers and meditators don't fear death. But here one point is to be noted. A certain depth has to be touched. That depth could be touched through love, through meditation and through creativity only because in that depth you are no longer your physical body, nor are you any longer your mental body. You are just pure awareness, a pure sky with no clouds, unbounded. So even just with a glimpse into it, death becomes a glorious experience.

As we observe, many die too late. So what? What do you observe? We observe in their lives that those who die too late go on living meaninglessly without joy, without any song. Nothing blossoms in their life, nothing. They have forgotten even how to die. They go on living, although life has no juice for them. There is no excitement, no ecstasy and they are not brave enough to let the body drop. Yes. That's what we find in the lives of those who die too late.

In fact, towards the end what we find is that they live unnecessarily like a burden on earth, living like parasites, uncreative or even destructive. They don't know how to live so they cannot live, and they are jealous of those who are still singing, dancing and loving. They condemn all those who are living. This is the thing that we find among those who die too late. So those who die too late are condemners. They condemn the whole world because they are unable to live happily.

There is a Greek philosopher by the name of Zeno, Z E N O. This philosopher went on condemning life. He had many followers. Even Zeno used to teach suicide to his disciples. And many of them committed suicide. But this philosopher, Zeno lived long enough, up into his nineties.

Some asked him, "When you ask your followers to commit suicide, why are you living this long?" You know what he said? "There should be somebody to tell people that life is meaningless. Therefore, I am alive," he said.

On analysis we'll come to know that he who condemns life is spending his life in a crippled way. His life is crippled and this condemner has not developed his heart. He has no roots and no flowers are blossoming in his being. He cannot accept that he is at fault.

At this stage, some of them say, "Renounce life, renounce life." I see! What do you find in them? They are not capable of living life; therefore they want you to renounce life! They don't know the very art of life. This is what we find among those that die too late.

But we also find some who die too early. What do you find among them? They are living a posthumous life. They die at thirty, and are buried at seventy. But what happens in between? During these forty years, they are just empty. Their life is almost a desert. Nothing grows in their life. Nothing is green in their life. They are barren. They don't bother about painting, poetry or dance. There is not a stream running through their lives with songs and sounds. In other words, metaphysically they are dead.

Actually, we can say one is dead metaphysically on the day when he stops loving, when one stops creating, when one stops growing. That is a metaphysical death. We cannot say that one is alive simply because he is breathing. Breathing is not synonymous with life. No. It is only vegetation. They truly say that some are vegetating in their life. It is just vegetation.

Now having known something about those who die too late and those who die too early, let's come to those who die at the right time. What do we find among this category? This one dies at the right time when he has lived rightly, intensely and totally. It is the right time when death is ripening a harvest.

In this case death is a fulfilment; it is a fulfilment. He has lived so much, he has loved so much. He used all his energy in being creative. He has enjoyed so much that he comes to a point where he wants to rest as he feels that his cup of life is full. That is the right time.

The right time comes for the one who has lived totally without any inhibitions, not according to any scriptures, no, no, no, but according to the living source of their own being. Therefore, these people who die at the right time reach a tremendous ecstasy or fulfilment. Their death is a completion. That is the right time. Then death is the actualization of your whole life potential. There's no more point of being in the body. You can die joyously with a smile on your face, with a tremendous mystery in your eyes. That is the right time.

For example, take the life of Buddha. It was Buddha who lived long, having preached all over the length and breadth of this country. He called all His disciples and said, "It is time for me to leave." They thought that their Guru Buddha was trying to leave to go to some other place. No, no, no. Buddha meant that his end is approaching, that it is the time for Him to leave this world. That's what He meant.

Then He said to His disciples, "I lived beautifully amongst the mountains, with the trees and the wild animals, and with the meditators. I want to die there. He pointed out two Sal trees to all of them. Sal, S A L. He said He would like to die there. This is the way to let us know that His death was His decision. Death did not come to Him; instead He Himself made the body available for death.

So, death is an enemy for some. Death is an enemy for greedy people, for emperors who still want to occupy, to invade, to conquer, where their greed has no limits. Their greed is endless - the sky's the limit!

Now, the man who has lived totally will open the doors and welcome death because death is not his enemy. It is only a change of house, from one body to another, from one form to another, and ultimately from form to a formless life that surrounds the earth.

A religious man not only lives religiously, but he also dies religiously. A man of art lives artfully, but also dies with a great heart, dying in such a beautiful way as if you are playing. It should be a simple thing for all those who have lived perfectly and totally.

In this connection I would like to draw your attention to a Zen Master by the name of Bokoju. B O K O J U. On observation we'll come to know that death is a beautiful experience not only for Bokoju, but for the others around him. Bokoju was a very special man. He called all his disciples and told them that he wanted to die in a special way. He didn't want to die like others. He wanted that his death should not be a repetition of anyone else's death, but should be very special.

So somebody said, "Master! You can die sitting in a lotus posture." Another disciple said, "Many die like that." Another one suggested, "You can die in a standing posture." Someone said, "One sage died like that." So now they suggested to him to stand on his head. What to do? "Stand on your head and in that posture you can die." So, this seemed to be the unique way of dying that Bokoju wanted. Yes, he will stand on his head, what is called *Sheershasana*.

But then they don't know what to do with the body. This man was ready to die but what to do with this body after death? They were confused so the disciples ran hither and thither for advice. They knew that Bokoju's sister was a nun, a great seeker living in the vicinity. So they went and approached and begged her to help them.

Then his sister came all the way to Bokoju who wanted to die standing on his head. Being elder to Bokoju, she said this: "Oh Bokoju! You are a nuisance to all, all your life. Now you are enlightened. Yes, many say so. Get down! Lie down properly! Now you can take rest."

At that time they checked the body of Bokoju. The heartbeat and the pulse and the breath were all normal. When he decided to lie down in obedience to the orders of his elder sister whom he had to obey, he just lay down and breathed his last. That was the situation. In other words, death had become a matter of play for Bokoju. It was not a serious matter to him, just a playful thing. That's all. A joke! Really unbelievable!

As most of you know, in these eastern countries many sages announce their death beforehand. It is not announced as a prediction. It means they have come to a fulfilment and there is no more in life, no more to be discovered. Their journey is completed. So, they decide to say good-bye to this earth.

So, if you want a glorious death and not an ugly, contemptible one, you should start living from this moment. Totality should be your concern. Live totally so you don't cling to life anymore. If you cannot die as a sage, then at least die as a warrior. If you are not the Master in your life, then how can you be the Master of your death?

There was one German professor by the name of Herrigel, H E R R I G E L. Herrigel was a learned Master. In Japan learning archery is important, even for a meditator. In Japan archery is a meditative process. The Master observes keenly how the disciple practices.

In general, what do we know about archery? Any archer has to hit a target. He will focus his attention on the target before shooting his arrow, before releasing the arrow from his bow. That is what often happens.

But what happens in Japan is different. They are not bothered about the target. There you are an archer indeed. But I don't want you to focus on the target, not the target. When you release the arrow, just let it happen. Don't let the target be your finale or be your goal. So, in eastern countries it is the man, the archer, who counts, not the target. But the western mind is concerned only with the target, yes.

So, a disciple stayed with Herrigel in Japan for three years. He could not learn anything. Finally he said, "Master, I am leaving tomorrow. I am leaving tomorrow."

"Alright, since you are leaving tomorrow, just let me have a cup of tea tomorrow morning with you. You meet me."

When the disciple went there, he saw Master Herrigel shooting an arrow in a relaxed way. His hands, his face, everything, were relaxed. There was no tension on his face at all. When the disciple noticed this, he fell at the feet of the Master and then told him, "I have learnt from you."

In other words, when there was no tension, no trembling, no worry, he just let it happen. He just let the arrow go towards the target. He just let it happen.

In fact, as I said about Buddha, in the first step Buddha said, "I am no more the body." Then in the second step He declared, "I am no more the mind"; and then in the third step, "I am no more the heart." He finally declared, "I have entered into my consciousness."

So, if you can meditate, you can experience death without dying and you can come back. It is a passage from the body to the mind to the heart, and finally to the being.

Therefore by and large there are those who die too late, there are those who die too early, and there are those who die at the right time. Those who die too late live in the past, in their memories. This coming late or leaving late has become a matter of routine for them, while those who die at the right time live in the present. They live moment to moment. They live in a relaxed way with love, intelligence and are conscious of their being.

So, those who live in the future, planning for tomorrow, are ahead of time. They miss the right time because they are just future-oriented. As we know, it is just like when someone misses the train. If you go on thinking and get relaxed planning for tomorrow, you have already missed the train. Or when you come too late to the platform, you have missed the train. It is also so for those who die too early and for those who die too late, but not for those who die at the right time. So, one should be at the right time to catch the train.

If you live one moment totally, you'll know the whole secret of life. Having the right death has to be earned by right living. It has nothing to do with the past. No. After all, the past and present are only divisions in your mind. Time knows only one tense and that is the present. Time only knows one place that is here and now. We have got to understand that.

Therefore, those who don't live at the right time cannot die at the right time either because life and death are not separate. Either death is the end of an unfulfilled life of frustration, despair and anguish, or death is the fulfilment of joy, the fulfilment of love, and the fulfilment of gratitude. It's a prayer to the whole existence. That's what it is.

As I want to complete this topic, though I know it's time to conclude, I beg your pardon. Therefore, I am taking some more of your time.

Then finally I also want to bring to your attention the last category, the superfluous. Who are the superfluous people? They don't know life, and they don't know death. The superfluous people make greater noise. They want to make death a great thing as a superfluous person has missed life. So only their death remains. A superfluous person has no intrinsic value. He only thinks that money, power, and prestige are to be valued in life. But, in fact, nothing outside can make your life rich. It is only an inner subjectivity that gives value, power, life and dance.

So, now we find many prestigious people occupying prestigious posts, clinging to life. Why? Because they don't want to be forgotten. Have you heard of a past Prime Minister, Kerensky, K A R E N S K Y, in the Russian Revolution? During the time of the Russian revolution, Kerensky escaped from Russia and settled in New York. He maintained a grocery store, and led a very, very simple life. Only after his death people came to know that he was still alive till then, but before nobody knew him.

So, your death needs to be a ceremony, a festival, if your life has been full of love, and not left any part unlived, if it has been a life of creativity and sharing. Otherwise death becomes a moment of mourning, sorrow, and misery due to living an unfulfilled life, a life unlived, which is a waste.

Death should be a triumph, a victory, a coming home, lived like a natural human being, without any fear or greed. Let this moment be enough unto itself. Create this moment to be as sweet and as beautiful as you can. Then life becomes a garland of flowers.

So, death is inevitable, yet one has to die gracefully at the right time.

Sorry for taking your time.

Thank you.