

Learning to Die

A talk given by Master Kirpal Singh on January 22, 1964 in Washington D.C.; the talk is preceded by conversation of Master with the disciples. Master asks about one man at whose house He had stayed about three months before.

The reader may also wish to consult the book *Wheel of Life / Mystery of Death* for an in-depth discussion of this topic. This was originally published in the August 1976 edition of *Sat Sandesh*.



Sant Kirpal Singh - Juli/August 1974, Guestroom
Master's House, Sawan Ashram Delhi 7, Shakti Nagar,
Ruhani Satsang Centre

DISCIPLE: *Mr. ——?
You asked about
him?*

MASTER: Yes, yes,
yes, yes. How can I
forget him?

DISCIPLE: *He's just
fine. He's keeping
his diary.*

MASTER: [*chuckles*]
That's all right. I
have to remember
so many people.
You have to think of
one man, and I
have to think of so
many [*laughter*].
And that is also not
superficial; it is
remembrance from
the heart of hearts.

COMMENT: *Now Madame Hardevi will sing a song.*

[*Madame Hardevi (Taiji) sings a hymn to the Master: "It is strange, but people who are afraid to die come to you to learn to die untimely deaths."*]

Whoever has been born must leave the body someday. There is no exception to the rule. This leaving of the body is what is called "death." All men, whether they are high or low, rich or poor, have to leave the body. The man-body has been given to us only for a temporary period. This is a golden opportunity, for in this body we can know God and know ourselves. To know God, we must know ourselves first — who we are and what we are.

Most of our life has already passed. This physical body is the first companion that we have when we enter the world, but it does not go along with us. So, naturally, all the things with which we come in contact through this physical body cannot go along with us. A wise man is one who works with foresight: he asks "What is that thing that we can keep, that we can take with us, even after leaving the body?"

All Masters say, "We cannot know Him unless we learn to die while alive." The last enemy that we have to conquer is death. But how can we conquer death? There is no escape from it, no exception to the rule. Even the Masters who came here — the very incarnations of God — had to leave the body; and we also have to leave it. How are we to conquer death when there is no escape? I think the only victory over it we can have is to learn how to die.

What happens at the time of death? The soul leaves the body: the life-force is withdrawn from underneath the feet, goes up and reaches the back of the eyes; the eyes are upturned, and the *drop-scene* falls [a term used for drop or act-drop; also for the final scene of a play or drama in real life, that on which the curtain drops]. Now, if we know how to leave the body at will and rise above body-consciousness — if we die daily by learning to leave the body daily — then there is no fear of

death. Death is no bugbear; it is a change from the physical world into the Beyond.

So all Masters who came said, "Learn to die so that you may begin to live." Death appears to be a bugbear to each one of us. If anyone says, "Oh, you have to die," we do not like to hear the word of death. But we have to leave the body.

Why are we afraid of death? For two reasons: one, we do not know how to leave the body. You might have seen on the faces of men dying what agony they are passing through. The second thing is, we do not know what our fate will be after leaving the body. Where are we to go? So these are the two main causes of fearing death. So Master says, "You must learn how to leave the body." He tells people who are afraid of death to pass through this death process while they are alive, and there are many ways for that. Some are artificial, man-made; and some are natural, God-made. The man-made ways are difficult, arduous, and time-consuming; and we are by heredity not fit for them. But there is a natural way too.

When you leave the body, it is said you see that all glory and beauty lie within you. But now we have no glimpse of it, no experience of it. Tulsidas, a great Saint, tells us that when he left the body and reached the causal plane, it was so beautiful and so enchanting that he thought this is the best of all that a man can have. But, he says, when he transcended the causal plane into the *Mahabrahmand*, the pleasure and bliss that he felt there was so much greater than the bliss he had while in the causal plane, that it seemed in comparison to be a washroom. Do you see? We hear so much about the Beyond, but we still do not know how to leave the body and enter the inner planes.

So when Masters come they advise, "Learn to die so that you may begin to live." One man went to Prophet Mohammed and said to him "You tell us to learn to die, to 'die while alive.'" And Prophet Mohammed said, "If you want to reap the full fruit of

having the man-body, then go, learn to die! Leave the body at will."

Then the man was perhaps afraid of leaving the body, and he asked, "Is it a death that will lead me to the grave?"

And Prophet Mohammed said, "No, it is not such a death that will lead you to the grave; but it is a death that will lead you from darkness to light."

This is what all other Masters said. Is it possible to die, to leave the body at will? Masters say yes. It was asked of St. Paul whether men can die. He said, "I die daily." Guru Nanak was also asked, and he said, "I die a hundred times a day." So all Masters give us that advice: death now appears so fearful to us; but those who have learned how to die, to leave the body at will and traverse into the Beyond, who have tasted the bliss of the Beyond, want to leave the body; but they are controlled — they have to work in this plane under the will of God.

It so happened at the time of death of Maulana Rumi, a Mohammedan Saint, that as he was on his death bed and leaving the body, some friends of his came in and prayed, "O God, let him recover." And he opened his eyes and said, "Let this recovery be for you."

And they asked him, "Don't you want to recover?"

He said, "No."

"Why?" they asked.

He said, "In my daily life I could hardly snatch away some time to leave the body and go into the lap of my Father. The body stands in the way between me and God. Now the time has come for this curtain of the body to be rent asunder, once for all. Wouldn't you like me to leave the body and go into the lap of the Father, once for all?"

Do you see the angle of vision? That is why it is said, "Why should we weep for the Saints? Why should we weep for the Master? They go to their homes." We should weep for those who have spoiled their lives, who have not learned how to die while alive. If you once know how to leave the body at will and traverse into the Beyond, to have an experience of that beauty and bliss, then naturally, you would like to be there. For that reason, you will find as Kabir says, "Every day man is dying. But he has not learned to die while alive — the true living — the death, while alive. That is why he comes again and again, again and again: because man goes where he is attached."

Can we leave the body at will? — That's the point. Mira Bai says yes, "Now I am convinced," she says, "that my soul, my *surat* can traverse into the Beyond — can fly into the Beyond." Tulsidas was asked the same thing, and he said that we can traverse into the Beyond. Who can? — The Saints and others who sit at their feet.

So when you go to a Master, the first lesson he gives you is to die while alive, and how to die. He gives an experience of it; you forget your body for a while; and your inner eye is opened; you have the experience of God in the form of Light and Sound Principle. If you are regular in doing this from day to day, you will have no fear of death.

The hymn she was just singing was to the Master. It goes: "We have seen a very strange event. People are afraid of death, and yet they are coming of their own will and pleasure: they want to die while alive. And these same men are having their untimely deaths daily at the feet of the Master."

Whoever can tell us how to leave the body at will and go into the Beyond can give us an experience of how to do it, by demonstration. Then, by regular practice, we must learn how to die at will. If we once know how to leave the body, then our whole angle of vision will be changed. The Master gives us some experience on the first day of Initiation of how to rise

above the body, of how to open the inner eye; he gives us something to start with. Then, by day to day regular practice, we learn to die.

Regular practice makes us regular. If you know how to leave the body daily, when the time of death comes, you will go willingly. So I have now, for instance; I am going back; I have no fear of going back.

Unless a man learns how to leave the body at will, how can he enter the Kingdom of God? It is within you. "The Kingdom of God cannot be had by observation; it is within you."

This is the first step; it begins, you might say, where the ABC of *Para vidya*, the knowledge of the Beyond, starts. This is a religion above all religions of rites, rituals, and dogmas. It is one for all. Plutarch tells us, "The soul that is initiated into the mysteries of the Beyond has the same experience that it has at the time of leaving the body at death." So, this is perhaps a very wonderful thing: people are afraid of dying, and they are willingly coming and asking, "Master, tell us how to die!" There is no question of being a Hindu or a Mohammedan or of belonging to any other religion. Those are outward forms — badges we are carrying. But this fate awaits us all, without exception. This is what the Masters teach. This is one thing that awaits everyone; and if you do not learn how to leave the body, you must be in the agony.

This is the mystery of life that has to be solved. "There are so many mansions in the house of our Father"; there are so many planes in all of creation. God has given us bodies, according to those planes, to work through, when we want to. But the pity is that we cannot transcend the physical body. All the methods that we follow pertain to the outgoing faculties. They are meant for the preparation of the ground, for developing love and devotion in us. They are good actions. But unless you learn to leave the body at will and be conscious of that God Power controlling all of creation, you cannot become selfless.

So all Masters say that the world at large bases its knowledge either on feelings or on emotions, or on inferences drawn to come to some conclusion. But they are all subject to error. Seeing is above all. Seeing arises when we shake off this physical body; then it develops more and more as we rise above the other bodies. The macrocosm is in the microcosm of the man-body. We have bodies, relating to the various planes, that enable us to traverse those planes at our will and pleasure. Suchlike personalities who know the Way and can put you on the Way have been rare in the past, and are rare even now. To advance requires development by regular practice. Perseverance, steadiness and good character are three things of the utmost importance.

So the hymn that you have just heard was addressing the Master: "O Master, we see a very strange thing: we see that people are afraid of death, and yet they are coming to you to learn that very thing — how to die." It is because there lies the door to heaven; it opens when you rise above body-consciousness. This is what Christ said: "Except you be born anew, you cannot enter the Kingdom of God." And then Nicodemus said, "Lord, I am an old man; how can I re-enter the womb of the mother and be reborn?" And Christ said to him, "Marvel not I say unto you, you must be reborn."

First learn to die. The first birth we have is in the flesh. This is the second birth: to be reborn. "Flesh is born of the flesh and spirit of the spirit." (John 3:1-7) The first is born of the "corruptible seed," and the other of the "incorruptible seed." (I Peter 1:23)

This is not a new thing: all Masters have been referring to it. In the olden days in India, the *rishis* had the custom to make children twice-born. Reborn or twice-born means the same thing. First they were born in the flesh; then they were made to be born into the Beyond — that is counted as being twice-born. That twice-born custom was performed only by the religious

leaders who were competent to give the children an experience to be born anew into the Beyond. Even now the system continues. They used to give them the *Gayatri mantra*. They had the competency to raise their soul above body-consciousness and to open their inner eye to see light compared to the sun rising. Now the system is there; the same mantra is given; but they are not competent to give them the experience of being reborn or twice-born.

So these truths are not new ones. All past Masters always gave them out. These are the old, old truths that we have forgotten. You cannot learn them from those who are merely adept in the elementary steps, although we have many people like that.

[A new arrival comes in, and Master greets him, and seats him with, "We were just sitting here talking all about our problem of life — the main problem of life." He then goes on to repeat for him, almost word for word, the talk he had given up to now. Then he continues:]

So what is death? Death is only a transference from the physical world into the Beyond. When you first learn to die, your whole angle of vision is changed. When you get more bliss inside, you naturally become unattached outside. If you do serve humanity, you will serve it from the angle of vision of the soul and of God residing in every heart.

So these are the truths that have been given by almost all Masters. Strangely enough, we find that people are afraid of death, yet they are coming to the feet of the Master to learn how to die willingly. Untimely deaths are occurring. Those who come to the Master are given a meditation sitting. They rise above body-consciousness for a while; they see, "Oh, this body is gone!" The inner eye opens; they begin to see the Light and hear the Voice of God, too. That is why Christ said to his disciples, "Blessed are you, for you see things that the old prophets and righteous men could not see; you hear things that the old prophets and righteous men could not hear."

So when you come to a Master, you know how to die. When you know how to die, then there is no fear of death; you die daily. As Guru Nanak said, "Learn to die a hundred times a day at will." So the first step that we have to take is to rise above the iron curtain of the man-body. Then you know yourself; you come in contact with God; you have the Bread of Life and the Water of Life, which is Word personified; you become spiritually healthy. On the spiritual health depends the health of both the mind and body.

These are the teachings that were given by all Masters who came in the past. These teachings still stand. But for want of practical people, we have forgotten them, that's all. For that, of course, purity of heart is required. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." This is what all Masters have said.

[*Master speaks to the visitor.*] This is the talk that was going on just before you came here.

We have joined various schools of thought only for that purpose: the solving of the mystery of life. When you solve it; then you can help others, too. This is a practical subject of self-analysis. The elementary steps we have in almost all religions. To remain in some religion is a blessing. If you don't remain there, either new ones will have to be formed or there will be corruption. So it is better to remain in your own truth; there is no need of changing; it is the first step you have taken; that's all right. Reading scriptures and performing rites and rituals are meant only for developing love and devotion for God and a desire to know God. They are good actions. But the mystery of life is to be solved in this way: by knowing oneself.

We now say, "This is my watch, I can lay it aside"; I say, "This is my coat, I can take it off"; but I say, "This is my body, I cannot remove it altogether." This is something to be learned at the feet of the Master.

So the poet of this hymn says, "Strangely enough, people are afraid of death and they are coming willingly to the feet of the Master to die: not only to die, but to meet with untimely deaths, deaths which do not lead them to the grave, but give them more light"—from darkness to light. This subject is common to all.

[*Master again speaks to the new arrival:*]

I am just repeating in a few words what we were talking about before. I am so very glad to see you; — was speaking about you this evening. We never expected you, but you've come—so very glad to see you.

So I have a common ground for all. To practice it requires no change of religion, but to be true to one's own religion. These truths already stand; but we have forgotten them — that's all. A true Christian is one who sees the Light of God, and a true Sikh, Hindu, or Mohammedan is also one who sees the Light of God. Those who see the Light of God are nearer to God, and they derive the full benefit of joining any particular religion.

These truths already exist in all scriptures. But to have the right import of them, we need some man who knows the Way. If we want to interpret them only at the level of the intellect, then we cannot do full justice to the work. The intellectuals say it is the light of the intellect. Well, it is true Light; people see it; even children see it. Every day, they are having it. Persons who can give that experience were rare in the past; even now they are rare; yet the world is not without them. But we can have the right understanding and the true import of the scriptures only at the feet of someone who has had that very experience in life and who is competent to give us Light. That is why it was said, "The Son knows the Father and others to whom the Son reveals Him." The Son-ship continues. Christ existed before Jesus and exists even now. Christ is the God Power; it continues working at different human poles for the guidance of

the child Humanity. They called it Christ power; they called it Master Power; they called it Guru Power.

Blessed are they who, with the Grace of God, have this man-body. The highest aim before us is to know God. And to know God, we must know ourselves; not as a matter of feeling or emotions or drawing inferences, but as a matter of self-analysis. Seeing is above all.

If people understand from this level, there will be no duality. Unity already exists. The way back to God is also very natural; but they have forgotten, that's the pity. In their own zealotry, people consider perhaps that they have the only truth. Truth is for all. And there is a religion of religions, a religion above all other religions; it is Truth.

[Master is told about plans for a meeting the next morning and is asked now if he can attend. The representative says there will be no meditation in the morning so Master can go there.]

MASTER: I will learn something. *[He laughs.]* A man learns and unlearns all through life, you see. Wherever I go, I go as a student. I'm still a student; I've been a student all through my life.

[There is more discussion about the next morning's meeting.]

MASTER: Has anybody anything to say? Yes?

QUESTION: *We have to rise above and overcome the body. Suppose a person has been initiated not too long and he passes on. Will the Master meet him there?*

MASTER: Surely, surely. It is God in him, not the son of man, mind that.

QUESTION: *No, what I mean is, the Master meets him; he doesn't go through the angel of death or anything?*

MASTER: Well, look here, I tell you. Those who have got the contact with the God Power, with the Light within them, why should they go to the angel of death?

QUESTION: *I'm not talking about your older initiates, but the new ones that have just come in.*

MASTER: The new ones, also. They must have some experience to start with. The seed is there; that is not lost, you see. That should have been developed; if not, well, even then the seed is not lost. Yes, please?

QUESTION: *If the initiation experience is one to learn to leave one's body in order to see God, are we to conclude that there is no hope or means for those who have not experienced initiation ? Are they lost?*

MASTER: I tell you. There is food for the hungry and water for the thirsty. Demand and supply is the law of nature. Where fire burns, oxygen comes to help. The *guru* appears when the *chela* is ready. If a man has desire in his heart to know God, as God resides in every heart, He knows this child is after Me; He makes some arrangement to bring him in contact somewhere where he can be put on the Way.

And who can put him on the Way? No son of man can do it. When God has no equal — no brother, no father, no mother — who can give you a contact with Him? God is Light; God is Sound Principle, the Music of the Spheres. Wherever God is manifest, that manifested God at the human pole will be able to raise your soul above body-consciousness and give you a contact with God Himself.

And those who have the desire for it are having it. "Ask and it shall be given unto you." "Knock and it shall be opened unto you." Those who are ready are having it. This readiness might come as a reaction of the past. And sometimes, when a man

passes through many vicissitudes of life, he looks to some safer haven. They have a sort of awakening; they have some inkling of a desire to know God. And God makes some arrangement for them. They are all children of God. God the Father loves the children. Those who are not initiated are not because they are not ready yet. If they are, they must have it.

QUESTION: *Master, you indicated the other day that, without your knowledge, they have prepared a big celebration for you on February 9, that is, a convocation of Saints, through the World Fellowship of Religions; and they want to welcome you back to India. This is separate from the big birthday celebration to be held on February 6.*

MASTER: Yes, they have sent me that word. I told them not to do it, but with all that, they have done it.

QUESTION: *Are there to be two celebrations? — The 6th and the 9th?*

MASTER: The 6th is continuous.

QUESTION: *Is the celebration to be at the Ashram?*

MASTER: When I go, they will run there by the thousands.

QUESTION: *I know. Master, you said fifty religions were to be represented.*

MASTER: There are many religions. There are Christians, too. I have been in contact with them, with all these people. That is why. They love me, I love them.

It is God's arrangement, not mine, you see. I am dragged on, like anything. It is His grace. The credit does not go to me, I tell you; it goes to God. I am the same man as you, you see.

QUESTION: *Every day somebody wants the Master.*

MASTER: Well, it is God's grace. We had a response everywhere, with whomever we met, whether he was of one religion or the other, whether he was a social head or a religious head, or a political head. And I see it is by the grace of God or the God in our Master — it is His grace working, you see. Master is one.

That's the awakening: not from man, but from God above, everywhere. And we had a great response everywhere. Well, it is His work going on, you see. We find this awakening everywhere.