

The Sea held my spirit

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Time to take leave, death to life, returning back to the womb

Born to die, death to life; heavens song but has not missed a beat because the spirit of life appears to be a state that is life's opposite, call it death! Life ah this life! Let it be what it may be; come what may, all of our thriving grinded by the elapsing time, ah the barometer of this life sooner or later shall reach its optimum for death shall bid farewell to the sense of life that held everything together as it were only a moment in time. Moment of death to life, moment of time to return back to the unknown mysticism of the spirit world, returning back to the dwellings of the spirit, for what is to die but the becoming of the wind that blows, the waters that rain, the earthen clay in ashes, the hue of agnee as pranna merges back to the light of million lights, the endless sky of empty space. Life ah life! Death ah Death let me now melt away into the pathless eternity, let my spirit of life now become beauty in the pathless eternity where none shall intrude my peace, ah the eternity, my foes would hurt me no more for I shall no longer be! Looking at the bright light so brilliant and beautiful, let my spirit of life follow the tunnel of death to free itself from the chains of physical body, seeing all of life flash back before my very eyes, a sense of oneness and complete sense of being dead of peace and painlessness greeting me with flashes of loved ones and passers who fill my remains with their love and wishes. Ah this death, it is not madness to think of life as being born, aging, losing vitality and eventually dying; alone and frightened death arrives uninvited, only a moment, only a snap, one can approach death with love; for life is weaker than death and death is weaker than love - a transient moment in which we stopped by to deny who we are. Each day, and every minute of each day, and every instant of that each minute held the spirit in tryst but to re-live the single instant when the time of terror took the place of love; and so we die each day to live again, until we cross the gap between the past and the present, which is not a gap anymore. Such is each life; a seeming interval from birth to death and on to life again, a repetition of an instant gone by long ago that cannot be relived. And all of time is but the mad belief that what is over is still here and now. Perhaps light may appear before the spirit of life taking a flight of delight outwards bound back to the spiritual world in wandering dream state, in a state of peaceful sleep, whereat no one shall dare disturb or hurt one anymore! Perhaps Death is the repose to life's dreary struggles; perhaps death is the eternal silence of the Great Grand Beautiful Divine Ocean; perhaps death is the sacred spiritual pilgrimage to the pathless eternity; perhaps death is the release of burdens too heavy to carry on a body worn out and tired! Perhaps life was born to die; as if from one womb to another womb, a change of cycle of karma.

Life is weaker than death and death is weaker than love

From the beginning of germination, there is a beat of rhythm; the winds blowing, birds singing, clouds hiding the Sun's beaming rays in an elixir, the seashore capering in tides to bring rainfall, the earthen clay germinating every minute - born with a cry, born with a heart beat, born with drum beat, the booming, never failing tide on the beach in time span, four seasons bound us in words, gliding smoothly, one from the other, in transient journey in the passage of time.

Time flies fast, tides come and go, birds singing, trees rustling, earth germinating! Unfathomable, yet bound in karma, my heart beats faster; as if it was a precise pulsating of life's drumbeats! 'Aum Ram Ram Ram Aum Aum Aum...'

From the blazing flame of Agnee, the light of life became 'Dawn', to the very hue of the Agnee; the light of life in twilight of delight becomes 'Dusk'.

Cold silence imprisons me in the blaze of my life burning away in time.

No pity or sympathy availed my blood stained words for now I must go!

All dreams that took birth in my quietness are broken, my solitude tampered!

I lay frozen cold as my body slowly dissolves in time, I began to belong to the Ocean without the past or the future; within something greater than my own life or the life of the humankind, to the wholesome life itself as if I was reaching the sky!

Only the self-same words chocked and disappeared, speech no more was.

Even the last tongue of fire that I had secured pledging away, has been swallowed.

The pyre derides me; the damsel of the saga of my dying declaration brings tears!

The gentle scintillating sea under the dark sky of the dusk, swans flying across returning to their homes, washes into the inlets, into the heart, into the memory, shadows fading away; ah the Sea held me in its net of vastness forever!

Before the arrival of my death, the last moments of my life, my whole life flashed back as if my mind were cured in tears, the chill that surges over the roots of my hair laps up the last remaining warmth of the breath, ah my dying moment has arrived, for now let my departure be sweet, let my return be sweet, let me be!

Let me churn in the fresh fire to be burnt into ashes, for this body, this attachment, this whole maya (illusion), is a mirage of mundane sorrows and grief; only death bringeth peaceful tranquillity in the silence that held my soul. Ah God! Let me for now die in peace, let me for now wither away in time to become the ethereal star; the wind the whooshes past my beloved; the agnee in the sun that never fails to shine; the sea that absorbs all names, forms, shapes, bodies, and sounds; the ashes that become the earthen clay. Barefooted the soil I have become alas in ashes

Ah Death, let me embrace you in love, let my last heart beat a beatitude of love be!

Prologue:

What is death?

Death is the completion of karmic journey of a jivan-atman [individual soul] a germination seed of earth that comprised of pancha-mahabhutta [five elements earth, water, fire, air, and ether], Ahamkara [ego], manas [mind], budhi [intellect], and pranna [spirit of life]. The triumphant spiritual death does not dissolve in the nine reminiscences that otherwise perpetually rotate, revolve and keep the currents of tides in cyclical circumferential transformation and dissolution. Every moment of time is dissolved therefore and time verily flies fast, just as tides never wait to go away from the shores. One cannot be free from the cycle of birth and death unless the desire is no more.

Desire is the criterion singled out in re-birth. The four purposes of human life according to the Vedas namely Kamma [Desire, attachments, ownership, control, power, identification of Ahamkara-ego]; Artha [proliferation, greed of profiteering, ambition to succeed, competition, fashion, prosperity, and wealth]; Dharma [righteousness, religion, devotion, servitude, satt-karma-good deeds, humanity, love, compassion, wisdom, knowledge, recital of Bhagavad Gita, regularity in sadhana-samndhya (worshiping at least at the dawn and the dusk), sattvic sauchna (purity in thoughts), sattvic vichar (purity of intention), sattvic svabhava (purity of nature), sattvic Daan (giving away), sattvic satt-samng (sharing); and finally Moksha-Cha-Muktee [broken into two first is emancipation and second is total liberation or spiritual liberation breaking away from the cycles of birth].

One is free when the desire of seeking freedom becomes a harness to one and when one ceases to speak of freedom as a goal and a fulfilment but one becomes it in the life of very life itself. Life of life; which is 'pranna' has wings to soar itself into the spacious firmament of eternal love and eternal freedom. Only those who seek Moksha-Muktee prior to death verily attain param-muktee [total spiritual freedom] from the cycles of birth and death in eternity. 'Manushya-jaati' [humankind] experience life on mortal plane of Earth [prithvee] that is elapsing in time [kaal]. Manushya-humankind is born to learn the lessons of karma in the passage of time within imperfect conditions, imperfect yogs (fortunes), imperfect challenges, imperfect limitations, imperfect life itself, coveting immortality of life [yearning for in endless desires] as if the song of karma repeats thrice yet the learning of death remains incomplete and death visits uninvited. The oppressed must break free from all confinements and therefore feel fearless. Only the fearless can die for freedom in the pursuit of death in noble thoughts, noble deeds, noble worship and courage.

One who embraces death with the awareness of eternal truth and divine courage of the spiritual will – that spirit of life will eternalise with the eternity of truth for life is weaker than death and death is weaker than truth.

Death is inevitable destiny of all spirits of life. Just as rivers loose their bonds to the seven seas and the seven seas finally merge in the grand ocean to become one Divine Ocean; our composite human life is destined to end in death for this is the plane of immortality. There remains a constant communication, a constant communion between the spirit world and the human world and the celestial world of Devas and Gods. This communion complies with the eternal laws of unseen power of eternal God Supreme. We therefore, dream of dead and in our dreams, they console us; yet our limitations do not allow us to see them albeit spirits can keep a silent mysterious watch over us.

There is peace in life hereafter if there is peace and tranquillity here and now in this lifetime, prior to death. We therefore emphasis spiritual mantras, shlokas, purity, cleanliness, rites and rituals all of which encourage a jivan-atman to return back to its womb. For this reason the first applause in Vedas is afforded to Agnee and the last sigh is saluted in highest obeisance to Agnee. From light of Agnee the 'pranna' came and towards the very light of Agnee in delight the 'pranna' returns. Just as a child, born out of the womb, no sooner died and returned back to earthen clay the very womb such is the fate of human life; the fate of nations; the fate of the dawn and the dusk, the fate of the moon; the fate of the stars; the fate of the whole 'prakruti' altogether in karma in perpetuity.

Manushya – human life spirit is like the foam of the sea at the sea shore that floats upon the soft sandy waters and churns its way inwards with the force of the winds and the very tidal foam finds itself helplessly taken back by the winds and the currents returning back into the sea vanishing as if it had never been. Thus are our lives blown away by death (mrityoor).

Life and death therefore are like tides that come and go in perpetual cycles of karmic currents and karmic winds blowing away the pranna from one state into another state. When the river merges with the sea and the sea finally becomes a deep ocean, all appears one.

Therefore, ATMAN (soul) has never been born neither has it died; for it verily is still and steadfast. All that has moved is the "PRANNA" or the jivan-atman or the individual spirit of life that karma binds itself in many desires comprising attachments, ownerships, and greed.

“Swastha” in Ayurveda therefore implies Spiritual health. Spiritual health frees one from the mundane gross desires of earthen clay. when the days are not without a care, love and compassion, nor nights without a want and a grief of hurt but rather when these realities girdle around one’s spirit of life one rises above them naked and unbound by them.

In my book ‘A Flight of Delight’ a 408 page Vedic anthology, constant reference is made to this life of life as ‘Hamnssa’ [swanlike] one with wings. ‘Hamnssa’ journeys across human lifetime, in four life purposes mentioned above, experiences the fifteen samskaras of manushya-jivan [human life].

*Garbhadhaan Punsavanam Seemanto jaatkarm cha, Naamkiyaa Nishkramane
annaashanam wapanakriyaa Karnavedho Brataadesho-
Vedaarambhakriyaavidhih Keshantam snaanmuddaho Vivaahagniparigrahaah
Tretaagnishangrahacheti Sanskaaraa Shodasha smritaah*

Solah Sanskars

1. Grabhaadhan: Conception
2. Punsavana: Fetus protection
3. Simanta: Satisfying wishes of the pregnant Mother
4. Jaat-Karma: Child Birth
5. Naamkarma: Naming Child
6. Nishkramana: Taking the child outdoors
7. Annaprashana: Giving the child solid food.
8. Mundan or Choula: Hair cutting.
9. Karnavedh: Ear piercing
10. Yagyopaveet: Sacred thread
11. Vedarambh: Study of Vedas and Scriptures
12. Samaavartana: Completing education
13. Vivaah: Marriage
14. Sarvasanskaar: Preparing for Renouncing
15. Sanyas (Awasthadhyan): Renouncing
16. Antyeshti: Last rite, or funeral rites

ANTYESTI (the Last Rite):

Some people are afraid of life, afraid of what is going to happen; therefore the many suicides and tragic deaths in fear even. Some have never learnt to live. People are afraid of what tomorrow holds, afraid of what they did yesterday, afraid to finish out today. For some, death or the thought of death can be very depressing or demitting.

For Hindus; Death is a process of transformation in karmic cycle. ¹

¹ However, for the Hindu, rituals serve a greater purpose and aim to bring future good to the dead themselves. The complex specifics of what is known as a “good death” are geared toward bringing the person a good next birth, or even *moksha* – salvation, or liberation, from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Though a constant regeneration of life may not appear from the outset as such a bad thing, the belief is that only after eight million four hundred thousand births, will a person be born as a human again, and even human lives are abundant with misery and pain. An escape from this forlorn eternity is appealing. Good death is seen as a conscious decision on the part of the dying, who control not only the conditions in, but the moment at which they die. A prime example of this is the well-known case of the *satī-stri* – a wife driven to self-sacrifice upon her husband’s funeral pyre, an act which may be judged by functionalists as strengthening the significance of familial ties in the society. The control of the wife over her decease appears to be the defining feature of a good death. A bad death is characterised by the deceased not having had a chance to prepare himself / herself. Dying is seen as a process rather than an event. Hence, untimely deaths – deaths by sudden accidents or as a result of violence – are considered bad deaths, and the term commonly used to refer to bad deaths, ‘*akāl-hanta-bhayankara-mrityu*’, in fact literally translates as “untimely sudden tragic violent death”. The Hindu ritual of cremation portrays a parallelism of the body and the cosmos; the burning of the body, and immersion of the ashes into water, as a necessary step toward re-creation, is symbolic of the perceived annihilation and rejuvenation of the world through fire and flood. From another angle, cremation of the dead body may be seen as a sacrifice, mirroring the believed creation of the universe through the dismemberment of the god Prajapati’s own body – a repetition of this act of creation is representative of a renewal of time. The belief is widely held that *moksha* can only be attained if the death takes place in a particular holy city. In the Hindu religion, the exact moment of death is defined as that at which the soul – or “vital breath”, known as *prāṇ* – leaves the body, through the top of the skull. This occurs during the cremation ritual, as the chief mourner cracks open the skull of the burned body with a stave. Until this moment, it is believed, the person is not technically dead. Hence, cremation occurs while the body is still animate. For many days following the cremation, too, the person is said to be a disembodied ghost, a form potentially dangerous both to itself and its living relatives. Only when all rituals have been completed is the person considered to be on their way into the next phase of existence. The Hindu belief is that the body is made of five matters: fire, air, water, soil, and sky. The result of the cremation of the dead body is that these five elements return to their natural origins. The spirit, meanwhile, leaves the body to embark upon its journey to the realm of death, which includes crossing the mythical Vaitarni River, which runs with bodily fluids such as blood, pus and urine, and is inhabited by vicious serpents and fish with sharp needle-like snouts. This river is seen as a metaphor for the body, in that falling into it represents falling into the womb, and thus, rebirth, whereas successfully crossing it results in achieving *moksha*.

Everybody Needs to Be Prepared to Die

Everybody needs to be prepared to die. Most people are afraid of death, yet death is but the graduation of life. Death is sort of an underpass to Glory. Slipping out into eternity is God's way of graduating you. There are a lot of false notions about death. People are afraid—afraid of life, afraid of death. Then they fear what will come after death. People are afraid of death. Now then, what is death?

There is one thing that is certain in this lifetime: eventually we must all die. A belief in the cyclical reincarnation of the soul is one of the foundations of the Hindu Vedic Dharma. Death is viewed as a natural aspect of life, and there are numerous epic tales, sacred scriptures, and Vedic guidance that describe the reason for death's existence, the rites rituals that should be performed surrounding it and the many possible destinations of the soul after departure from its earthly existence. While the ultimate goal is to transcend the need to return to life on earth, all Hindus believe they will be reborn into a future that is based primarily on their past thoughts and actions. Rig Veda and Atharva Veda deal with the death rites extensively. The first mortal to meet his fate with Death was named Yama. This dubious honour makes him uniquely qualified to lead the way for others after death. The sacred scriptures of the Rig Veda, which call him King Yama, promise that all who have been good will receive admission to Yama's paradise and the everlasting enjoyment of all the heavenly pleasures, include the restoration of a sick body, the maintaining of family relations and the highly desired apotheosis. Yama is aided by two killer guide dogs that are described as the four-eyed keepers of the path, who watch over humankind. These two dark messengers of Yama with flaring nostrils wander among human, thirsting for the breath of life – 'pranna'. Yet, once they have secured their prey, they lead them back to their heavenly realm, where Yama directs them to their appropriate destiny. Therefore, one's last days on earth are critically vital towards invoking the rightful spiritual grace from the 'Deva-lokka' and cosmic deities, such that one's thoughts, feelings, intentions, inner spirit of life, the mind, the whole 'prakruti-navadriya shareera' becomes divinely subtle immersed in mantras, hymns and sacred shlokas, recitals of Shree Bhagavad Gita and Sacred divine Kirtans. Whatsoever one is contemplating upon during the last moments, the spirit of life opts. According to 'Garuda Purana' [ancient anthology on death primordial times];

The Vedic Hindu final funeral and ancestral rites and rituals comprise:

- Antyesstti – rites and rituals of funeral and the dead (Priest is present).
- Shraaddh – memorial and post funeral ceremonial rites and rituals
- Tarpana – offering of peace to spirit world which is carried out by Brahmin

According to Vedas, there are seven lokas below the earth – the dark regions, and seven lokas above the earth – the light regions. The seven lokas below the earth that are dark regions are namely Atal, Bital, Satal, Rassatal, Mahatal, Talatal, and Paatal. The seven lokas of lights or seven regions of lights are namely Bhuh, Bhuvah, Svahr, Mahah, Jannah, Tappah, Sattayah –AUMSATCHITANANDA. The cosmic God Yamma is the God of death; 'Nirriti' is the God of dissolution; 'Varuna' is the God of compassion and resolution of love and forgiveness and transformation; Agnee is the God of 'Divya-Pranna' [divine spirit of life]; etc...So, the soul journeys through several phases and several lokas and several spheres of cosmic spiritual world going through gates in accordance with one's karma here on earth and one's last thoughts. Hindus believe in reincarnation and view death as the soul moving from one body to the next on its path to reach Nirvana, heaven.

Death is a sad occasion, but Hindu priests emphasise the route ahead for the departed soul and a funeral is as much a celebration as a remembrance service. Hindus cremate their dead, believing that the burning of a dead body signifies the release of the spirit and that the flames represent Brahma, the creator. Vedic Death or the study of ancient rites and rituals can be divided into three periods: The medieval Vedic period; the Grhya period [medieval]; and the Puranic period [primordial]. The Vedas state that the spirit of dead person firstly has to transit Yamma as a guest to Yamma lokka and thereafter the spirit has to visit the 'pitru-loka' transposing it either with divine exchange or otherwise.

Funeral rites (Antyesstti) and Shraaddh must be distinguished from each other. Funeral rites (Antyesstti) are amangal (inauspicious) while Shraaddh are mangal (auspicious).²

To give liberation to the 'pitru-loka' [ancestors]; the living relatives especially the closest family members perform 'ekoddista-sraddhas', 'Bhagavat-Sapta'; 'narayan bali'; 'shiva-maha-rudraabhishekha and shiva-hommamm'; and so forth usually after one year or three years.

² 'Shraaddh' is practiced one year after the death of the person. This can either be an annual event or a large one-off event. This is the Hindu practice of giving food to the poor in memory of the deceased. A priest will say prayers for the deceased and during this time, usually lasting one month, the family will not buy any new clothes or attend any parties. Sons are responsible for carrying out Shraaddh. Usually Hindus conduct Shiva-Rudra-Abhishekha and Rama-Raksha stotra puja with Vishnu-Sahasrnamavali and recital of Gitaji. In some states like Uttar-Pradesh and Maharashtra Ramayan is recited for fifteen days of the Vad Shraadh.

Furthermore, to free oneself from the bonds of vikarma [bad karma]; one offers 'tarpana' to the Sun-God standing in the rivers to the 'sarva-pitru' either in the River Ganges or River Narmada. Offering of water from the Shankha [conch] and giving of gold to the Brahmin who conducts the tarpana ceremony is normal rite. Shraaddh and Tarpana rituals are considered to be a rightful portion of Hindu worship and sacrificial offering and oblation towards the spirit world for five reasons:

- To give peace and pray for the release of the jivan-atman (individual soul) from the entrapment of the darkened dungeons of Yamma-Loka
- To grant solace to the spirit that had a tragic sudden death. For such deaths, the living relatives have to do much more rites and sacrifice much more than normal deaths.
- To free one from the dreadful vikarma (wrongfulness) of neglect and selfishness punishment after one's own life ends here on the human earth.
- To beseech blessings from one's kull (ancestry roots) for forgiveness and onwards journey towards spiritual emancipation
- To protect one's future generation children from having ill-luck, misfortunes, deformities, and curses.

Dead: In order to release the spirit of life [jivan-atman] from the mayic swaroop namely 'naama' [name] and 'roopa' [form], and four koshas [sheaths covering the soul]; the cremation is further followed by purakas rites and rituals performed by the living relatives. Hence, the attivaahika or the cremation stage lasts for ten days or 12 days depending upon the particular caste. "Ekadashi" fast is therefore observed to release the dead ancestors from their transitions and to help them complete their spiritual journey onwards towards peaceful pitru-loka. The three constituents that do not perish are 'satt' [existence], 'chitt' [consciousness], and 'Ananda' [blissfulness].³

The anandamaya kosha remains with the spirit of life. Hence, the rites and rituals of Vedic Hindu is more compositely geared towards freeing the soul divine and detaching the negative influences away from the spirit (jiva). So really the jivan-atman is a deepam jyott that disperses as a light. Hindus cremate their dead, believing that the burning of a dead body signifies the release of the spirit and that the flames represent Brahma, the creator.

³ Koshas are metaphysical elements above the pancha-mahabhuttas: they are namely: Annamaya (physical covering); Praannamaya (organic covering); Mannomaya (mental covering); Vignanamaya (covering of knowledge); Anandamayam (covering of bliss and peace).

Without the help and fullest commitment and contribution by the living families and close family members of the dead, performing particular rites and rituals at specific times, the departed soul {jivan-atman} is therefore unable to obtain the necessary shareera [re-incarnation] or the moksha-muktee [emancipation] or the param-shantih [eternal peace] as a result of which the dead can partake bliss in the pitru-loka [in the spirit world] or otherwise ascend towards its true destiny. Therefore, performance of rites and rituals towards the dead, the ancestors and the spirit world constitute a third of the twelve months of worship. So, we have a month of 'Bhadarvo' (after shravana in September), then we have fifteen days in the vad (dark cycle) of makara sankranti time, and again we have two 'ekadashi-vratt' every month when you add all together they will add up to exactly one third of the 360 lunar days. If one takes one third of 360 days: = 120 days. The Vedas recommend that if one cannot observe the fullest 120 days of rites and rituals, one must at least do the third of that which is equal to 40 days. Forty is a very spiritual number for Vedic-vratts.

Hindu Vedic Samskaras for Dead:

4000 years ago, human corporeal were exposed to the five elements of nature and fed to the birds or buried in the earth, immersed in the rivers and sometimes disposed in a cave or a pot. Cremation became more recommendable as the Vedas spread its light of knowledge and the Yogis, Sadhus, and saints continued to encourage cremation as a positive process of the jivan-atman becoming liberated from the ghostly attachments and ghostly misshape. It became a way of respecting and honouring the karmic journey of the spirit that cannot function anymore. Therefore, disposing off the dead body in cremation as soon as possible is considered to be healthy, scientifically clean, and spiritually aiding towards the dead, albeit the spirit lingers around the until all other rites and rituals are completed. Hindu funeral rites have four stages:

- The rituals and rites of the death bed; giving asana to the corpse.
- Rites which accompany the disposal of the dead body including cremation.
- Rites which enable the spirit of the dead to transit successfully from the stage of the ghost [avgatt-prettat] to the realm of the ancestors [pitru-lokka].
- Rites performed in honour of the dead ancestors – [Pitrus]

Wealth (artha) is like a dream (swapna) that can vanish. Death (mrityoor) can come during waking hours and during sleep.

We feed ourselves with sensual pleasures (kamma) but we forget to feed our souls with Dharma (righteousness, devotion, worship and sattvic or pureness of mantras, hymns, shlokas, recitals of Holy Scriptures, etc). Surrounded by love and hatred in compartments of selective lifestyles our bodies and our homes are filled with falsity of negative thoughts, negative worries and fear. Fear eats us alive and Chinta (worries) and uttpaddi (arguments) eat us whilst they feed the dead with greater unfruitfulness and greater chaos. Contentment and satisfaction in our homes, compassion and love brings happiness; dharma brings good health. But, miserable greed and miserliness and attachment produce illness. Bound by iron chains one can be loosened to be freed, but worldly attachments, which are invisible, are very difficult to detach from even when the worst of all illnesses comes uninvited.

Upon death, DharmaRaj and Yamaraja decides by which path or through which door the soul will enter domain of Yamma: East, West, North or South.

The good spirits enter by the East Gate. Those who during the rainy seasons give gifts or provide shelter to the homeless, those who serve their mothers and fathers and teachers, those who read religious books and the Puranas, worshippers of Siva and of deities, pure minded people enter through the East Gate. The West Gate (Paschima Marga) is for the worshippers of Lord Vishnu; those who read scriptures, make japas of Gayatri, who practice non-violence, non-stealing, agni-hotra or 'homman' ceremony, who recite the Vedas, who practice Brahmacharya, ascetics, hiwho have the attitude of non-attachment (vairaagya) and who have spiritual knowledge, enter through the West Gate. The North Gate is for Sommam and Shiva rescues his devotees at the Northern Gate. The South Gate is for the sinners who suffer the worst tortures in hell of the Baitarani river that holds boiling hot blood and flesh. ⁴

Home is like shelter to body; therefore, the last days of a dying humanbeing spent in the shrine of a happy hood will experience a peaceful death. Many who foresee death and become very quiet and subtle immerse themselves into deep bhaktee and sadhana and recite the Gita regularly; whereas those who fret in many directions in mayic attachments wonder from one place to another like a travelling bag. Eventually, one perches at the shrine of one's own umbrella, under whose spiritual security, the dying person becomes gracefully ready for death and when such deaths procure, peace prevails with the corpse being processed in rites and rituals. The author does not have any experience of this anthological tradition.

⁴ Mythological Vedic perceptions of Brahmins and Pundits, which have no proof as such but passed over from the ancient wise counsel of the Garuda Puranas. Only the hear say of the Garuda Purana.

Within a complex system of truths, “Death” remains an ambiguously mysterious subject that has neither any comprehensive elucidation nor any complete satisfactory conclusive knowledge of the life after life. Death is definite albeit its timing remains indefinitely unknown. Death is an opportunity for great spiritual achievement if one is prepared and remembers one’s spiritual practices and beliefs or understandings during the death process. Death according to Hindus and Buddhists is a separation from the physical form of body made of five elements, the four sheathes of the mind and the intellect, and the seven sheathes covering the spirit of life called the “pranna”. Death is not the stoppage of breathing or heartbeat or organ failure. Death is a process of elapsing of the “pranna” [the life breath] in gradual progression. How the ‘pranna’ [life breath] leaves the ‘sharira’ [body] is a significant aspect of dying. At death there is dissolution from the grosser matter of life to subtler metaphysical dissolution of the mind and the intellect. The four elements earth (hard substances of the body), water (fluids), fire (heat), wind/air (energy, movement) degenerate and dissolve in sequence and there are external signs and internal visions at each stage. From a priest, a Lama, the aspect I can summarise is as follows:

Stage	Factors Dissolving	External Sign	Internal Sign
1	Earth element; Form aggregate; Eye sense;	Body becomes thin, shrinks, weaker. Doesn't tolerate weight of bed clothes. Eyesight becomes unclear; Unable to open & close eyes.	Mirage
2	Water element; Feeling aggregate; Ear sense;	Body fluids dry up; Body becomes numb; Hearing ceases; Bodily feelings cease.	Smoke
3	Fire element; Discrimination aggregate; Nose sense;	Digestion ceases; Forget life's affairs; Inhalation weak, exhalation strong; Smell ceases. Can't remember names.	Sparks
4	Wind element; Compositional factors aggregate; Tongue & body senses;	Breathing ceases; Winds move to heart; Body can't move; Taste & touch cease; Lose awareness of external activities, etc.	Dying flame
5	Consciousness aggregate; Eighty conceptions.	Winds above heart enter into central channel.	White appearance
6	Mind of white appearance	Winds below heart enter central channel	Red increase appearance
7	Mind of red increase.	Winds gather at heart.	Darkness, then unconsciousness
8	Mind of black near-attainment.	Winds dissolve into very subtle wind at heart.	Clear light

According to the Lama, when the subtle light 'prana' enters the intermediate state, the heat leaves the body and the heart releases all the oxygen away. Dead bodies must NOT be touched until proper rites and rituals are carried out on it including the medical and spiritual processes. Hindus and Buddhists and Jains believe that the dead has an onwards journey of karma depending upon the stage of karma they reached whilst alive. Good deeds, good thoughts, good intentions, good humanity, good humility, good nature, good loving compassion, good kindness, good considerations towards others, good attitude to life, good manners, good cultured, good hospitality, good host, good giver, good helper, good provider, all contribute towards a better life after life into the journey of moksha.

Moksha, is attained by observing sutak or the period of prayers and peace offering from the time the ashes are kept in the pot until the time the ashes are dispersed off in the flowing sea or rivers with comprehensive rites and rituals. One who performs all prayers, rites and rituals for the dead for 40 days after the 11th or 13th day from the death day, will render spiritual emancipation to the spirit of life to move onwards progressively towards the light.

Hindus and Buddhists alike believe that a oil wick slanted be lit for the dead and flowers be offered as peace to the dead spirit regularly will help the spiritual journey of the dead. The ceremonial rites and rituals of conducting peace homam and peace offerings are done by priests and monks.

After one year, the close relatives and families conduct a memorial and offer hymns and peace mantras to the dead.

Many Hindu families conduct BHAGAVATT SAPTA or NARAYANA BALLI or VISHNU SAHASTRANAMAVALI or SHIVA-MAHA-RUDRA-HOMAMA or recital of GARUDA PURANA and SRIMAD BHAGAVAD GITA combined. Others recite Ramayana to the spirit for eleven days. Others recite the SRIMAD BHAGAVAD GITA for seven days. Others conduct the maha-rudra-abhishek and shiva homam at the Narmada river or Ganga river.

Vedas have thrice a year memorials for the dead during which time, the family of the deceased can offer mangal or auspicious rites and rituals for proliferation of the souls into the light.

The shraadh is the ceremonial occasion during which ancestors or those who have died can be given peace offering, rites and rituals and ceremonial hymns, mantras and pujas so that their souls can continue to move onwards into the spiritual world and attain moksha. As such, EKADASHI vratt [falling on eleventh day of the waning and waxing cycles of the moon] are for obtaining freedom from the bondages of the spiritual world and to offer moksha or liberation to the dead souls.

Amavasya [the darkest day of the dark cycle of the moon or the dusk of the new moon], represents time for SHIVA. Shiva puja and Shiva rudra-abhishekha and maha rudra abhishekha are all different pujas of shiva for the release from the bondages of karma. The time between the eleventh day of the dark cycle of the moon to the amavasya [the 15th day of the dark cycle of the moon or the 30th day of the moon cycle] in particular is the time to recite the RAMA-RAKSHA-STOTRA, and if possible contemplate upon the death as an inevitable destiny of all humankind.

For Hindus and Buddhists, one must set aside time for giving alms, food, charity, etc. during the times of shraadh or the pitru or the ancestry worship. During the Shraddha, ancestors are remembered in peace and tranquillity and serenity and much rites and rituals including the recitals on regular basis of the Holy Scriptures are conducted by the families of the dead.

If one is not sure what to do, one must consult a priest, a counsellor or a higher authority of one's religion to conduct necessary rites and rituals behind one's parents or elders or deceased.

Death is a very traumatic experience. Death is an inauspicious occasion.

The grief of hurt can never be understood, nor can solace or consolation comfort the grieving heart. Grief of hurt from the loss of someone we love leaves a significant impact upon our lives, our homes, and our inner most feelings and we sometimes become frightened and lonely and out on the limb.

In rejections we feel antagonised and almost alienated from the normal social buzz of noise, haste and waste.

We feel empty all of a sudden life means nothing to us.

Our whole entire livelihood comes to a standstill and nothing whatsoever moves in our world. All seems dead, everywhere we go we feel numbed by the absence of love, enthusiasm, and motivation no more is there. We feel betrayed, battered, and even lost. Not knowing that the earthen clay which we are part of is sinking with the elapsing time, and life will soon be converted and transformed into the mantle of ocean only, we wonder in transient thoughts and intrusions of the lands for seeking gains and treasures; ah but how inappropriately we become attached to all that is less powerful than the influence of the whispering wind, humming music of the seas, and the nightingale. It stares at us all the time, but we ignore or choose to ignore it, escaping the deep silence in many wonders of the mind. We forget that the where the eternity is in deep silence, thereat the heart no longer can speak and thereat the silence sets our souls free from the entanglements of the imperfect world of humankind filled with imperfections, false attachments, desires, illusions, things, ambitions, ownerships, all of which we only own transiently in time and give it up!

Grief of hurt:

Oh God, grant each one of us our own death.

Oh God, give us each our own peaceful passing away in time.

Oh God, Divine Great Spirit of all life, grant us the serenity to die peacefully

Oh God, the dying that proceeds, from each of our lives seeks no pity.

Oh God, let us each recall flashbacks of the way we loved, the meanings we made, our need to belong to love and our need to be embraced in love.

Oh God, grant us each solace and compassion benign to prepare for death.

Oh God, grant us each the courage to face death; frightened and alone we beseech.

Hemmed in life, the horror of human tension, human pressures, mundane insanity of machine persistence, the motion of the routine struggles, the agony of the long tiring journeys, the drawn out resilient of people, the draining hatred, the horrid hurt, the horrid misunderstandings between relatives and family, the noisy disturbances, the vivid dreams, the hardships and adversities, the pains and sorrows, the aching heart, the horrid tension of the earthen pastures thirsty of the sea; takes away our life of life towards the waters and the sea finally beholds us. Death brings to us a call from the seas that we are all different ships sailing in different directions, alas, eventually we meet in destiny in the deepest ocean where the sea no more is and where the tryst of the sea-the sun-the sky merge in infinity! Mysteriously mystical, the sea is, thereat there is a society where none intrudes, none causes pain, none hurts, by the deepest seas and the music of the wind, the silent roar, thereat the heartbeat no more is; only the sound of 'aummm'. The sea drowns out humanity and time, it has no sympathy nor pity, for it belongs to eternity and of that it sings its every perpetual song for ever with the winds blowing! The sky kisses the seven seas and the deepest waters of ocean almost as if it were an elixir of the celestial supreme!

Of death, ah God, the feel of the long slow lift and the drop of this almost empty ship as she took the waters; ah God; let me for now bid farewell and let me for now wish my soul a voyage into the deepest seas to merge into the grand divine ocean whereat my spirit might float not in the wavering, tremulous, yet long pulsation while ever time lasted, space never exhausted, and no turning back, no looking back even, ah God, let my spirit of life drown in the deepest seas and let me merge in the Grand Divine Ocean as if I returned back into the womb of my spiritual mother. Ah the Great Divine Ocean, the teeming vast sky, the hue of the orange Sun, in tryst my soul lit in million delights as the light of my soul merged with thine light! What to say!

The Sea held my spirit

Never a ship sails out of the bay but carries my heart as a stowaway into the deeper seas, as music flexes dancer's muscles, even so, the sounds of a ship capers when she leaves the anchor and the shore behind.

A ship I am, a ship you are, each one of us is sailing towards the deep seas into the Divine Ocean; I love the sea as I love my soul, for we are married in destiny!

*A ship I am, a ship you are, each one of us is sailing outwards into the deep seas, away from the earthen clay, in dissolution of elapsing time, to return back to the womb of the mother eternal supreme. A ship sails for now away from my, my heart numbed by the grief of hurt, stood still on the earth seashore, gazing in the distant seas, as I stand watching the ship that sailed away from me till she fades on the horizon and someone at my side says She is gone, she is gone, the ships gone. Gone where? Gone from my sight, that is all. She is just as large now as when I last saw her. Her diminished size and total loss from my sight is in me, not in her. And just at the moment when someone at my side says she is gone there are others who are watching her coming over their horizon and other voices take up a glad shout 'There she comes'! That is what dying is; a horizon and just the limit of our sight. Lift us up, Oh Great Divine Lord, so that we may see further; farther; in the distant mystical unknown. Alone I stand still, in the deepest ocean – the world seems itself just the emptiness and space surrounding a silence. Away from the life of noise, almost as if entirely self-sufficient, beyond the grasp, the pathless eternity filled with beauty, light and glory of triumph over life even! The wind I became, the Sea I became, the sun I became, the sand I became in ashes, the space I became in sky returning back to eternity almost as if it were an end of the road, nay, I shall lie still and let the splash return back to the womb. After a time, my spirit married, and moved into the spiritual eternity of mysticism, and thoughts all forgotten, memories all left behind on the seashore for my brethrens and fellows to remember me by; only a moment, and all was gone, the sea smiling knowing it still held my soul and would forever. The sea held my spirit; to the Grand Divine Ocean I belonged now forever, without a past or future; within peace and unity and eternity greater than my own life or the life of human, to life itself; all else dissolved. ***The Sea held my spirit****

Jyotikar Pattni

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