

A Celebration of Death

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मृत्युमहोत्सवः

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A Celebration of Death

मृत्युमहोत्सवः



Introduction:

Death is one of the imponderables that one invariably encounters. Often, death is perceived as the final act in one's life. A tumultuous parting of ways of consciousness (the soul) with the mortal coil where the soul remains behind like a lamp of light, carrying with it memories of love, passion, understanding, knowledge and perception. Jainism believes that consciousness can never be extinguished. Death is merely an exchange of the corporeal self. A comma in the chain of existence which is eternally free of full stops.

We regret that we are not aware of the identity of the original writer of this concise work in Sanskrit. But whosoever he/she may be, he/she has left behind a beautiful text which gives solace and guidance to all.

ॐ ह्रीं श्रीपार्श्वनाथाय नमः ।

जय जीनेन्द्र

अथ मृत्युमहोत्सवः ।

मृत्युमार्गे प्रवृत्तस्य वीतराग ददातु मे ।

समाधिबोधौ पाथेयं यावन् मुक्तिपुरी पुरः ॥ १ ॥

I have begun my journey on the path of voluntary death.

May the supremely detached ones provision me for my journey

With profound meditation and enlightenment

Until I reach my destination - liberation.

कृमीजाल समाकीर्णे जर्जरे देहपञ्जरे ।

भज्यमाने न भेतव्यं यतस्त्वं ज्ञानविग्रहः ॥ २ ॥

O soul,

This frail body is infested with worms.

Do not fear its destruction

For you are the embodiment of knowledge.
(And distinct from the body).

ज्ञानिन् भयं भवेत् कस्मात् प्राप्ते मृत्युमहोत्सवे ।
स्वरूपस्थो पुरं याति देही देहान्तरस्थिति ॥ ३ ॥

O soul,

Why fear death?

For the wise, death is a celebration.

You will retain your identity

Even when the body is exchanged for another.

सुदत्तं प्राप्यते यस्मात् दृश्यते पूर्वसूतमैः ।
भुज्यते स्वर्भवं सौख्यं मृत्युभीतिं त्यजेत् शनैः ॥ ४ ॥

O soul,

Give up the fear of death!

It is evident from the scriptures that,

Your conduct is responsible

For the happiness you attain.

आगर्भाद् दुःखसन्तप्तः प्रक्षिप्तो देहपञ्जरे ।
नात्मा विमुच्यतेऽन्येन मृत्युभूमिपतिं विना ॥ ५ ॥

O soul,

Since the time of conception,

You have been scorched by sorrows.

You are imprisoned by this body.

Only the king named death can set you free.

सर्वदुःखप्रदं पिण्डं दूरीकृत्यात्मदर्शिभिः ।
मृत्युमित्रप्रसादेन प्राप्यन्ते सुखसम्पदः ॥ ६ ॥

O soul,

This body is the root of all sorrow.

Thanks to the friend called death,

Those who perceive the true self,

Rid themselves of the body

And attain the wealth of bliss.

मृत्युकल्पद्रुमे प्राप्ते येनात्मार्थो न साधितः ।

निमग्नो जन्मजम्बाले स पश्चात् किं करिष्यति ॥ ७ ॥

O soul,

Those who do not pursue the path of spiritual perfection,
Even when faced with the wish-fulfilling tree called death,

What will they do when confronted

By the quagmire of transmigration?

जीर्णं देहादिकं सर्वं नूतनं जायते यतः ।

स मृत्युः किम् न मोदाय सतां सातोत्थितिर्यथा ॥ ८ ॥

O soul,

When death causes the worn-out, aged body

To be exchanged for a brand new one,

Then why not rejoice at death,

Especially since death is instrumental

In the salvation of saints?

सुखं दुःखं सदा वेत्ति देहस्थश्च स्वयं व्रजेत् ।

मृत्युभीतिस्तदा कस्य जायते परमार्थतः ॥ ९ ॥

O soul,

When you are shackled to the body,

You have to constantly suffer pleasure and pain.

You even take another birth on your own.

So why fear death?

संसारासक्तचित्तानां मृत्युभीतिर्भवेत् नृणाम् ।

मोदायते पुनः सोऽपि ज्ञानवैराग्यवासिनाम् ॥ १० ॥

O soul,

Death terrifies those

Who are enmeshed in the world

But delights those

Who are wise and free from worldly desires.

पुराधीशो यदा याति सुकृतस्य बुभुत्सया ।
तदाऽसौ वार्यते केन प्रपञ्चैः पञ्चभौतिकैः ॥ ११ ॥

O soul,
When lifespan determining karmas cause you to leave the body,
Then how can anything hold you back?
So do not concern yourself with the five elements, etc.

मृत्युकाले सतां दुःखं प्रभवेत् व्याधिसम्भवम् ।
देहमोहविनाशाय मन्ये शिवसुखाय च ॥ १२ ॥

O soul,
Sorrow and disease afflict saints at the time of death
To annihilate their attachment for the body
And help them attain eternal bliss.

ज्ञानिनोऽमृततुल्याय मृत्युस्तापकरोऽपि सन् ।
आमकुम्भस्य लोकेऽस्मिन् भवेत् पाकविधिर्यथा ॥ १३ ॥

O soul,
The anguish caused by death
Is like ambrosia for the learned ones.
Because it is well known
That an earthen pitcher has to bear the heat
Before it may be used for cooking.

यत् फलं प्राप्यते सद्भिः व्रतायासविडम्बनात् ।
तत् फलं सुखसाध्यं स्यात् मृत्युकाले समाधिना ॥ १४ ॥

O soul,
Upon venturing forth on the path of voluntary death,
You will comfortably attain the spiritual wellness
Which would, otherwise,
Only be attained
By ascetics through extreme penance.

अनार्तः शान्तिमान् मर्त्यो न तिर्यङ् नापि नारकः ।
धर्मध्यानी सदा मुक्तो मर्त्यो नित्यं महेश्वरः ॥ १५ ॥

O soul,

One without saturnine meditation dies peacefully.

And is reborn as a human being,

Not as a sub-human or a hellish being.

One who has pious meditation is always free

And, upon dying, is sure to attain the great wealth of liberation.

तप्तस्य तपसश्चापि पालितस्य व्रतस्य च ।

पठितस्य श्रुतस्यापि फलं मृत्युः समाधिना ॥ १६ ॥

O soul,

Those who practise penance,

Follow the vows and study the scriptures

Attain serene, peaceful voluntary death.

अतिपरिचितेष्ववज्ञा नवे भवेत् प्रीतिरिति हि जनवादः ।

चिरतरशरीरनाशे नवतरलाभे च किं भीरुः ॥ १७ ॥

O soul,

It is well known

That familiarity breeds contempt, and

That one is fascinated by novelty.

When the older body is destroyed,

You will get a new one.

So why fear death?

Epilogue

स्वर्गादेत्य पवित्र निर्मल कुले सस्मर्यमाना जनैः

दत्त्वा भक्तिविधायिनां बहुविधं वाङ्छानुरूपं धनम् ।

भुक्त्वा भोगमहर्निशं परकृतं शित्वा क्षणं मण्डले

पात्रावेशविसर्जनामिव मृतुं सन्तो लभन्ते स्वतः ॥ १८ ॥

O soul,

The pious ones descend from heaven,

Take birth in families with pure conduct

and are worshipped.

They never lack for wealth, and

(*Indulge in sensual delectation day and night.

This is how they spend a short time on earth.

At the end, just as actors shed one persona to don another,

They shed this body and attain liberation.

- Manish Modi

(*The Jain religion does not promote sensual indulgence or any behaviour that increases the soul's attachment to the body, to other people and worldly objects. What the epilogue says is that even those who indulge in temporal delectation can attain liberation provided they take up the path of asceticism and shed all attachment.

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