182

Is Death Time Predestined

(Writer: Dr. Kala Singh)

Is our time of death predestined? Are we born with certain number of breaths and will die after that? In most religions, the random cause of death through which people lose their lives like car or plane crashes are fated, according to their Karma in their previous life. Otherwise, natural death occurs after a set period or after certain number of breaths. Death is said to be very punctual, never late and never early. Does this mean we have specific time to live, and nothing can lengthen or decrease it? Most religions believe that our life span is allotted in breaths, not in days or years or seconds. According to yogic philosophy short lived animals like monkeys or rats have a rapid breathing rate, many shallow quick breaths. Long lived creatures like elephants, whales and tortoise have a low breathing rate, slow, long, deep breaths. Those who practice yoga, meditation, tai chi etc. breath slow, long, deep breaths with low breathing rate and live long lives compared to those who breath shallower or more quickly. Those who avoid situations and indulgences which cause shallow and quick breathing live longer. To live longer we should control anger, stress, sexual activity, anxiety and avoid alcohol and drugs. According to them high breathing rate in running and exercise is not bad because it will return to slow breathing even after exertion, so exercise is not bad. The effect of pollution, which is caused by heavy industrialization, contamination of food grains with chemicals of pesticides, burning ghee in fire altars, burning candle lights etc. Comes under the imaginable domain. Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology has revealed in Delhi, life expectancy reduced by 6.4 years due to pollution. The report titled "Premature mortalities due to PM 2.5 (Finer particulate matter) and Ozone exposure in India" state of Maharashtra recorded 10% and UP 15% of country's death due to pollution. The 66000 Hiroshima deaths were never repeated in the entire city of Hiroshima to date. In fact, the 66000 deaths within a very short period were never repeated in any city with either more than or less than 255000 inhabitants anywhere in the world. For tens of thousands of deaths to occur in a predetermined way, God would then also have to decree all those exact people to move to a few square miles patch within Hiroshima. Furthermore, those not decreed to die to move out of that area, far out. We are not only talking about the time of death but the movement of people, the transportation means to get to a designated place, the interaction between hundreds of thousands of people required to achieve it. In short, the suspension of free will of an entire city and by extension, the very act of dropping the atomic bomb as a predetermined event will have to be introduced for it to make any sense.

According to UN World Population Prospects 2010, Japan tops the life expectancy at birth and Swaziland is at the bottom of the list. That means God is decreeing people be born in Japan who are to live longer and in Swaziland who must live short lives, which does not make any sense.

Everyone is concerned about death which is inevitable and none knows Its time. Even Science has failed to conquer it completely. It is the law of the nature that everyone who is

born will die, but still, everyone wants to avoid it. It does not differentiate between rich and the poor or between the young and the old. Most of us believe that God creates and destroys the world. Let us see what Gurbani says about it.

There are three types of death mentioned in Gurbani, body death, spiritual death and shabad (Jivat Marna) death.

Body Death

Gurbani teaches us that death of this body is inevitable. It is law of the nature. Who so ever is born must die. Rich and poor, young and old all dies.

- ਜੋ ਆਇਆ ਸੋ ਚਲਸੀ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਈ ਆਈ ਵਾਰੀਐ॥ (੪੭੪)

Whoever is born shall die according to their turn.

- ਮਰਣੁ ਲਿਖਾਇ ਮੰਡਲ ਮਹਿ ਆਏ॥ ਕਿਉ ਰਹੀਐ ਚਲਣਾ ਪਰਥਾਏ॥ (੧੦੨੨)

Everyone born in this world is ordained to die. No one can live in this world forever.

- ਜਿਤੁ ਦਿਹਾੜੈ ਧਨ ਵਰੀ ਸਾਹੇ ਲਏ ਲਿਖਾਇ॥ (੧੩੭੭)

The way day of the bride's wedding is definite after writing saha, same way death is definite after birth.

Nobody knows the time of death. Some die in infancy while others die in old age. Death does not consider time, age or place. Sometimes it occurs due to unexpected causes.

- ਮਰਣਿ ਨ ਮੂਰਤੁ ਪੁਛਿਆ ਪੁਛੀ ਥਿਤਿ ਨ ਵਾਰੁ॥ (੧੨੪੪)

Death does not ask the time, the date or the day of the week.

- ਹੁਕਮੇ ਆਵੈ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਜਾਵੈ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਰਹੈ ਸਮਾਈ॥ (੯੪੦)

We have no control over birth and death. By God's Command we come, and by same Command we go, and lives life in this world according to same Command.

- ਗੁਣਦਾਤਾ ਵਰਤੈ ਸਭ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸਿਰਿ ਸਿਰਿ ਲਿਖਦਾ ਸਾਹਾ ਹੇ॥ (੧੦੫੫)

The giver of virtue, the God is pervading in all beings, God knows when the wedding (Death) of the (body) bride is.

- ਹਮ ਆਦਮੀ ਹਾਂ ਇਕ ਦਮੀ ਮੁਹਲਤਿ ਮੁਹਤੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ॥ (੬੬੦)

We are human beings of the briefest moment; we do not know when this moment of taking breath will finish.

Spiritual Death

- ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਲੈ ਸੁ ਮਰਣੁ ਦਿਖਾਏ॥ ਮਰਣੁ ਰਹਣ ਰਸੁ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਭਾਏ॥

ਗਰਬੁ ਨਿਵਾਰਿ ਗਗਨ ਪੁਰੁ ਪਾਏ॥ ਮਰਣੁ ਲਿਖਾਇ ਆਏ ਨਹੀ ਰਹਣਾ॥
ਹਰਿ ਜਪਿ ਜਾਪਿ ਰਹਣੁ ਹਰਿ ਸਰਣਾ॥ਰਹਾਉ॥
ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਲੈ ਤ ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਭਾਗੈ॥ ਕਮਲੁ ਬਿਗਾਸਿ ਮਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਲਾਗੈ॥ ਜੀਵਤੁ ਮਰੈ ਮਹਾ ਰਸੁ ਆਗੈ॥
ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਮਿਲਿਐ ਸਚ ਸੰਜਮਿ ਸੂਚਾ॥ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਪਉੜੀ ਊਚੋ ਊਚਾ॥ ਕਰਮਿ ਮਿਲੈ ਜਮ ਕਾ ਭਉ ਮੂਚਾ॥
ਗੁਰਿ ਮਿਲਿਐ ਮਿਲਿ ਅੰਕਿ ਸਮਾਇਆ॥ ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਘਰੁ ਮਹਲੁ ਦਿਖਾਇਆ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਹਉਮੈ ਮਾਰਿ ਮਿਲਾਇਆ॥ (੧੫੩)

In this Shabd Guru is talking about spiritual death, not body death. We all are born with pre-ordained spiritual death because we are born with Maya as per Shabd.

- ਮਾਇਆ ਮਮਤਾ ਕਰਤੈ ਲਾਈ॥ ਏਹੁ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਕਰਿ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਿਟ ਉਪਾਈ॥ (੧੨੬੧)

True Guru makes us realized spiritual death and birth. Overcoming egotistical pride while living now, we can get rid of spiritual death and remain spiritually alive for ever in a blissful state **"ਜੀਵਤੁ ਮਰੈ ਮਹਾ ਰਸੁ ਆਗੈ॥"** The True Guru teaches us how to become truthful, chaste and pure. Climbing up the steps of the Guru's Path, one becomes the highest of the high. Nanak says by conquering ego we are absorbed into the God while living. We kill our ego while living now **(ਜੀਵਤੁ ਮਰੈ)**. This is what True Guru **(ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਲੈ ਸੁ ਮਰਣੁ ਦਿਖਾਏ॥)** makes us realize.

- ਜਗਿ ਮਰਣੁ ਨ ਭਾਇਆ ਨਿਤ ਆਪੁ ਲੁਕਾਇਆ ਮਤ ਜਮੁ ਪਕਰੈ ਲੈ ਜਾਇ ਜੀਉ॥
ਹਰਿ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਏਕੋ ਇਹੁ ਜੀਅੜਾ ਰਖਿਆ ਨ ਜਾਇ ਜੀਉ॥
ਕਿਉ ਜੀਉ ਰਖੀਜੈ ਹਰਿ ਵਸਤੁ ਲੋੜੀਜੈ ਜਿਸ ਕੀ ਵਸਤੁ ਸੋ ਲੈ ਜਾਇ ਜੀਉ॥
ਮਨਮੁਖ ਕਰਣ ਪਲਾਵ ਕਰਿ ਭਰਮੇ ਸਭਿ ਅਉਖਧ ਦਾਰੂ ਲਾਇ ਜੀਉ॥
ਜਿਸ ਕੀ ਵਸਤੁ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਲਏ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਜਨ ਉਬਰੇ ਸਬਦੁ ਕਮਾਇ ਜੀਉ॥
ਜਗਿ ਮਰਣੁ ਨ ਭਾਇਆ ਨਿਤ ਆਪੁ ਲੁਕਾਇਆ ਮਤ ਜਮੁ ਪਕਰੈ ਲੈ ਜਾਇ ਜੀਉ॥ (੪੪੭)

People are indulged in vices hiding them from the world. At the same time are afraid that they do not get caught and punished. They must remember that God is everywhere and we cannot hide anything from the God. The mind (mann) has both maya and light of the God. Whatever one works for gets it. If one is living life in ego is always indulged in Maya and its vices. They try to conceal their actions in many ways and are in a vicious circle of spiritual death and birth. Those who conquer ego and lives life of purity merge with the God while living. **ਜਗਿ ਮਰਣੁ** is spiritual death **ਨਿਤ ਆਪੁ ਲੁਕਾਇਆ** is hiding from the world **ਮਤ ਜਮੁ ਪਕਰੈ ਲੈ ਜਾਇ ਜੀਉ** is being caught and punished.

<u>Jivat Marana</u>

- ਜੀਵਤ ਮਰੈ ਮਰੈ ਫੁਨਿ ਜੀਵੈ ਐਸੇ ਸੁੰਨਿ ਸਮਾਇਆ॥
ਅੰਜਨ ਮਾਹਿ ਨਿਰੰਜਨਿ ਰਹੀਐ ਬਹੁੜਿ ਨ ਭਵਜਲਿ ਪਾਇਆ॥ (੩੩੨)

Bhagat Kabir says someone who dies repeatedly from ardent worldly temptations and controls the mind (mann) of worldly passions (Maya), then one lives a perfect spiritual life. Such a person dies spiritually many times a day and has lived spiritually many times a day,

merges into the Primal void of the Absolute God while living and will never get into the cycle of spiritual death and birth. Remaining pure during impurity of world by passions, one will never again fall into the terrifying world ocean of Maya.

- ਅਨਿਕ ਜਤਨ ਕਰਿ ਕਾਲੁ ਸੰਤਾਏ॥ ਮਰਣੁ ਲਿਖਾਇ ਮੰਡਲ ਮਹਿ ਆਏ॥
ਜਨਮੁ ਪਦਾਰਥੁ ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਖੋਵੈ॥ ਆਪੁ ਨ ਚੀਨਸਿ ਝੂਮਿ ਝੂਮਿ ਰੋਵੈ॥ (੬੮੫)

A person who is cheat and cunning like a crane (Bagla) and does not understand spirituality in life is always suffering. Being dependent upon worldly passions (Maya) such person gets spiritual death and sufferings only. Like all of us are born in Maya and spiritual death, such person also dies while in spiritual death without realizing and enjoying spiritual life.

- ਕਬਹੂ ਜੀਅੜਾ ਊਭਿ ਚੜਤੁ ਹੈ ਕਬਹੂ ਜਾਇ ਪਇਆਲੇ॥ ਲੋਭੀ ਜੀਅੜਾ ਥਿਰੁ ਨ ਰਹਤੁ ਹੈ ਚਾਰੇ ਕੁੰਡਾ ਭਾਲੇ॥
ਮਰਣੁ ਲਿਖਾਇ ਮੰਡਲ ਮਹਿ ਆਏ ਜੀਵਣੁ ਸਾਜਹਿ ਮਾਈ॥
ਏਕਿ ਚਲੇ ਹਮ ਦੇਖਹ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਭਾਹਿ ਬਲੰਤੀ ਆਈ॥(੮੭੬)

Without spiritual knowledge and wisdom mind (mann) is always indulged in worldly passions. When these passions are fulfilled temporarily one feels like in heaven and when they lose them one feels like in hell. Greedy mind (mann) of such person is always wandering, looking to fulfill worldly desires and is always suffering is pain. We die spiritually many times a day trying to make our life happy. This is our destiny because we all are born in Maya and spiritual death. Everyone is burning in the fire of worldly passions (Maya). We see that some have already left this world while in spiritual death and that fire is engulfing others.

- ਛਣਿ ਘਾਲੇ ਸਭ ਦਿਵਸ ਸਾਸ ਨਹ ਬਢਨ ਘਟਨ ਤਿਲੁ ਸਾਰ॥
ਜੀਵਨ ਲੋਰਹਿ ਭਰਮ ਮੋਹ ਨਾਨਕ ਤੇਊ ਗਵਾਰ॥ (੨੫੪)

Spiritually dead person is always pondering (counting) how to increase some worldly passions like wealth and decrease other passions. Nanak says those who live life like this, are foolish because they never get peace in life.

- ਛੰਛਾ ਝ੍ਰਾਸੈ ਕਾਲੁ ਤਿਹ ਜੋ ਸਾਕਤ ਪ੍ਰਭਿ ਕੀਨ॥ ਅਨਿਕ ਜੋਨਿ ਜਨਮਹਿ ਮਰਹਿ ਆਤਮ ਰਾਮੁ ਨ ਚੀਨ॥
ਛਿਆਨ ਧਿਆਨ ਤਾਹੂ ਕਉ ਆਏ॥ ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਜਿਹ ਆਪਿ ਦਿਵਾਏ॥
ਛਣਤੀ ਛਣੀ ਨਹੀ ਕੋਊ ਛੂਟੈ॥ ਕਾਚੀ ਗਾਗਰਿ ਸਰਪਰ ਫੂਟੈ॥
ਸੋ ਜੀਵਤ ਜਿਹ ਜੀਵਤ ਜਪਿਆ॥ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਭਏ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਹ ਛਪਿਆ॥ (੨੫੪)

Those who are not connected with the God, spiritual death takes them into its fold. They continue into the cycle of spiritual death and birth. Those who prepare themselves to receive the God get spiritual knowledge and wisdom. Rarely someone receive the Virtues of the God in life and escape spiritual death. Otherwise mostly all die spiritual death in their life. Only consider such a person alive who has accepted the spiritual knowledge and lived life

accordingly (ਸੋ ਜੀਵਤ ਜਿਹ ਜੀਵਤ ਜਪਿਆ॥). Nanak says such a person is respected everywhere.

In these shabads Guru is talking of spiritual death, not body death. Accepting the spiritual knowledge and living life accordingly (ਸੋ ਜੀਵਤ ਜਿਹ ਜੀਵਤ ਜਪਿਆ॥) is spiritual birth. Such people have killed their ego and ardent worldly desires (Jivat Marey) and live forever.

Conclusion

Everyone who takes birth on this earth, have to die one day. No one knows the day, date, time and moment of death. Nowhere in Gurbani is mentioned that one is born with certain number of breaths. Even science has proved that pollution and other man-made predetermined instances like bombing of a city and pollution can reduce the life expectancy of hundreds of people. People live longer in certain countries and die early in others also proves that people are not born with number of breaths because life can be prolonged with better food, exercise, environment and health facilities. A person with heart attack or accident in a poor country with poor health facility will die and in a country with better health facility and air ambulance can be saved.