CHAPTER IV: LIFE AND DEATH

Unless we understand what life is, we cannot understand death and also if we understand death it is easy for us to know about life. Both things are not opposed to each other but they are complementary to each other. The search of Ultimate Reality is a long way search. Many lives are required to reach to the final stage of Realisation. So meaning of life is found in eternity and not in endless time. Heidegger is right in saying that the herd-mentality is insensitive to the anguish of death. Death not merely makes life senseless and corruptible, it also is a sign, coming from the depths of there being a higher meaning in life, not base fear but horror and anguish which death creates, it proves that we belong not only to the surface but to the depths as well, not only to temporal life but also to eternity. While we are in time, eternity both attracts and horrifies us, we feel horror and anguish not only because all that we hold dear dies and comes to an end, but still more because we are conscious of a yawning abyss between time and eternity. Horror and anguish at having to cross the abyss contain at the same time a hope that the final meaning shall be revealed and realized. Death holds hope as well as horror for man, though he does not always recognize this or call it by an appropriate name.

The meaning that comes from the other world is like a scorching flame to us and demands that we shall pass
through death. Death is not only a biological and psychological fact but a spiritual fact as well. The meaning of death is that there can be eternity in time and that an endless temporal series would be meaningless.

Death is the most profound and significant fact of life, raising the least of mortals above the mean commonplaces of life. The fact of death alone gives true depth to the question as to the meaning of life. Life in this world has meaning just because there is death, if there were no death in our world, life would be meaningless. The meaning is bound up with the end. And meaning lies beyond the confines of this limited world, and naturally the discovery of meaning presupposes an end here. Immortal and eternal life proves to be only attainable through death. Man's last hope is connected with death, which manifests so clearly the power of evil in the world. This is the greatest paradox of death. So spiritual enlightenment and an extraordinary intensity of spiritual life are needed to give us a right attitude towards death. In this respect Plato was right in teaching that philosophy was the practice of death. Because life is noble only because it contains death, an end which testifies that man is destined to another and higher life.

Death does not exist, it is only an element in the eternal life. Death exists only "on this side of things", in temporal being, in the order of nature. The unfolding of spirituality, the affirmation of the eternal in and
participation in a different order of being means transcendence of death and victory over it. To transcend it, but to accept it within one's spirit so that it ceases to be a natural temporal fact and becomes a manifestation of meaning which proceeds from eternity.

Death is the manifestation of life, it is found on this side of life and is life's reaction to its own demand for an end in time. Death cannot be understood merely as the last movement of life followed either by non-being or by existence in the world beyond. Death is an event embracing the whole life. Our existence is full of death and dying. Life is perpetual dying, experiencing the end in everything, a continual judgement passed by eternity upon time. Life is a constant struggle against death and a partial dying of the human body and the human soul. Death within body is due to the impossibility of embracing the fullness of being either in time or in space. Nicholas Berdyaev says that: "Time and space are death-dealing, they give rise to disruptions which are a partial experience of death. When in time human feelings die and disappear this is an experience of death. When in space we part with a person, a house, a town, a garden, an animal, and have the feeling that we may never see them again, this is an experience of death. The anguish of every parting, of every severance in time and space is the experience of death. I remember what anguish I felt as a boy at every parting. It was so all-embracing
that I lived through mortal anguish at the thought of never seeing again the face of a stranger I met, the town I happened to pass through, the room in which I spent a few days, a tree, or a dog. I saw. This was, of course, an experience of death within life."

After death the soul is believed to go on living on other planes of being, just as it had lived on other planes before birth. The life in our world between birth and death is merely a small fragment of the human destiny, incomprehensible when regarded by itself, apart from the eternal destiny of man.

Space and time cannot enfold the wholeness of being but condemn us to severance and separations, and death always triumphs in life, it testifies the meaning to be found in eternity and in fullness of being, that in the life in which meaning will triumph there shall be no parting, no dying, no corruption of human thoughts and feelings. We die not only in our own death but in the death of those we love. We have in life the experience of death, though not the final experience of it. And we cannot be reconciled to death - to the death neither of human beings nor of animals, plants, things or houses. The striving for eternity of all that exists is the essence of life. And yet eternity is reached only by passing through death, and death is destiny of everything that exists in this world. The higher and more complex a being is, the more it is threatened with death. Mountains
live longer than men, although their life is less complex and lower in quality. Mont Blanc appeared to be more immortal than a saint or a genius. Things are comparatively more stable than living beings.

If death is accepted as a part of the mystery of life, it is not final and has not the last word. Rebellion against death in our world is rebellion against God. But at the same time we must wage a heroic struggle against death. Conquer it as the last evil and pluck out its sting. The work of Christ in the world is in the first instance victory over death and preparation for resurrection and eternity. The good is life, power, fullness, and eternity of life. Death proves to be the greatest paradox in the world which cannot be understood rationally. Death is folly that has become commonplace. The consciousness that death is an ordinary everyday occurrence has dulled our sense of its being irrational and paradoxical. The last achievement, of the rationalized herd-mind is to try to forget about death altogether, to conceal it, to bury the dead as unobtrusively as possible. It is very opposite of the spirit expressed in the Christian prayer "ever to remember death". In this respect, modern civilized people are incomparably inferior to the ancient Egyptians. But at the same time struggle with death in the name of eternal life is man's main task. The fundamental principle of ethics may be formulated as follows: act so as to conquer death and
affirm everywhere, in everything and in relation to all eternal and immortal life. It is base to forget the death of a single living and to be reconciled to it. The death of the least and most miserable creature is unendurable, and if it is irremediable, the world cannot be accepted and justified. All and everything must be raised to eternal life. This means that the principle of eternal being must be affirmed in relation to human beings, animals, plants and even inanimate things. Man must always and in everything be a giver of life and radiate creative vital energy. Love for all that lives, for every creature, rising above the love for abstract idea, means struggle against death in the name of eternal life. Christ's love for the world and for man is victory over the powers of death and the gift of abundant life.