

# A Gift That Keeps on Giving

Ram (James Swartz)

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**Joanna:** Dear James and Sundari, I hope you are both healthy and well in body – as I have no doubt you are well in mind!!

It is a while since I saw you during those wonderful *bhakti* days at Trout Lake and I feel drawn to write and communicate about my experience with the teachings since then. Bottom line, I am truly happy and I thank *Isvara* all the time because I feel so blessed to have found you and these beautiful Vedanta teachings. I am filled with gratitude for the freedom and peace that is becoming more and more evident in my life as the teachings take root. It's the gift that keeps on giving, truly.

In terms of my *jiva* life – awareness of my true nature is never obscured for too long, and although I am seemingly constantly bumping up against some emotional hook or other, the knowledge of the *gunas* and the *vasanas* is available and eventually and inevitably takes me back home to the truth of my being and peace of mind. Sometimes it's almost effortless observation and "adjustment" and other days my mind struggles and kicks about some stupid thing – always the need for constant vigilance is there. Sometimes though, something in the world gives me a reflection and I realize that I am both perceiving and understanding my apparent existence completely differently than I did before and I am almost surprised to notice that I feel so free, deeply. Wow.

It is becoming more clear to me what the apparent obstacles to my peace of mind are – and some letting go comes easily while other things arise that have more of a grip and I have been making some life style simplifications (being apparently still a bit too *rajasic*), especially around my work. The relationship with David (who was also at Trout Lake) which historically has been a challenge for both of us – is changing since we now come together in our love of Vedanta. It has been a delight to sit in bed reading the *Baghavad Gita* out loud together or watching a "James video" in the evening. It is my hope that we can continue to find a way to be together in creating a "non-dual loving relationship" *vasana* rather than the complicated *vasanas* that bind our *jiva* existences. We were both students of Andrew Cohen, and it has been such a revelation to come out from under that cloud of misunderstanding into the true light of Vedanta.

To make a long story short, it's a work in progress – which sounds silly as I write those words because there is really no work and no progress, but this is the nitty-gritty, rubber-meets-the-road experience of finding freedom in all of my *jiva* life rather than just as a mental concept that I cannot apply (as was the case since I left Andrew Cohen).

The teaching that both of you give so generously on how to discriminate *satya* and *mithya* and how to actualize non-dual awareness is better than any passing spiritual epiphany could ever be!!

Thank you again from the bottom of my heart.

~ With love, Jo

**James:** Dear Joanna, we think of you fondly and often, and were so happy to get your letter. Yes, Vedanta is a gift that keeps on giving. You are obviously assimilating the knowledge well but, as you perceptively note, eternal vigilance is required, although as time passes and the shift from the *jiva* to the self takes place, one's grip on one's vigilance relaxes until it merges into effortless awareness. Thank you so much for this report; it means the world to us. Give my regards to David; he's a really good guy. Relationships work best when the focus is on something higher than the likes and dislikes of both people and there's a court of higher appeals – non-duality – to adjudicate conflicts. So this is a heartfelt thumbs-up! God bless you both, and I hope that our paths cross again in the not too distant future.

~ Much love, James