

Grieve Happily

Ram (James Swartz)

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Cindy: My dear James, I hope you and Sundari are both well and have managed to find some “downtime” from your busy travels and work.

James: No such luck.

Cindy: It has been a while since I last wrote, and since I am fortunate to be able to see you very soon but want to give you a little idea of my “progress” with Vedanta, I have one question.

The one word that describes everything and always will is gratitude – to you, to *Isvara* and to my self, who are all ONE and the same. I will never have enough words to thank you for giving so many of us Western seekers the REAL deal and making these pristine teachings accessible and practical.

It has been an interesting and challenging few months for my little *jiva* and her ongoing *nididhyanasana*. I spend some time every day watching videos, reading and simply contemplating. I have been seeing more deeply how subtle the teachings are when it comes to understanding and actualizing them in one’s daily life. It’s one thing to experience and to understand intellectually and another to apply them diligently, consistently, no matter what. Of course sometimes it’s a breeze and then there is no problem, just a free me. Then I watch as emotional issues arise and I feel the bind. Then there can be a struggle, a wrestling match even, as I watch my *jiva* and her mind having a field day with some issue or other, and I try to stay watching and remember what I know to be true, that this is all *mithya*, every last screaming grasping complaining thought. All *mithya* and not ME. This is when I recognize the importance of the qualifications, especially forbearance and dispassion, and sometimes I have to beg *Isvara* to help me find those qualities in myself. Sometimes I have to laugh at the drama of it all!!! I say to myself, “Woman – you know you are the self –just live that!” And in some ways I do – because I am “on the bus.”

This struggle has been especially present in these last few months, as I am dealing with the situation of my mother slowly passing, and that involves a lot of both emotional and practical stuff. I do not know from one day to the next whether I will need to drop everything and go home to both spend the last days of my mother’s life with her and to support my sister, who is there also.

This has obviously caused me to think a lot about death and the reality of that apparent ending as the body vehicle is left behind. I witness my *jiva* grieving and at the same time I know that death of the body is also *mithya* and that there is no separation, ever. In your book, *The Yoga of Love*, you write that the enlightened person does not grieve. This thought is with me every day, as I know it to be true, and I am not there yet. My question is just about death and how we leave the body behind. If you have the chance, could you talk a little about that, please?

James: An “enlightened person” is the self, so the self doesn’t grieve. An enlightened person’s

jiva may or may not grieve. I didn't feel a thing when both my father and my mother died, but if an enlightened person's *jiva* does feel grief at the idea of death, he or she knows that it is just *mithya* and grieves happily.

Cindy: I really look forward to seeing you and to immerse my *jiva* in the company of you and other Vedanta-lovers. Seeing and hearing you teach always drives the teachings a little deeper, reinforcing and adding such subtlety to this wonderful truth.

Thank you, dear James, and see you soon!!