

Grief Is an Object Known to You

Sundari (Isabella Viglietti)

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Bob: Hi, Isabella. I consider James my teacher of Vedanta. I have been reading and rereading *How to Attain Enlightenment* for about 14 months or so. All I can say is the wisdom and knowledge are working.

Sundari: Hello, Bob. My apologies for the delay in replying; we have been away teaching a camp-out seminar with restricted time and internet access.

Bob: Just this Saturday I had to put down my 14-year-old Boxer-mix doggy. And, man, is this *jiva* in grief. I was wondering, knowing the truth of we are all the self and also aware of the zero-sum game of life, this loss is as hard as the death of my father and fiancée three years ago. I know that I am the light, like the whole living creation and, from reading James, the duality is illusionary. I've not been dipped in the waters of non-dual reality. My question is: Is this pain of the loss of my dear pet something that is experienced by folks whose vision has come to the ground of being I seek to open to? I guess I'm trying to hope, and escape pain, by asking this. I read somewhere, I think it was from one of the famous teachers who had lost a daughter, that they were not very grieved by it. Is the kind of love we have when we care for loved ones and pets something that changes when the *jiva* has been tempered, full in the knowledge and awareness of who we all are? I like to think I'm on the bus, as James says, but I'm just in pain, so I'm asking this.

Sundari: I think the reason you are suffering is that you are so identified with and attached to an object. You are not seeing yourself and the dog as eternal awareness. When we love an object like a dog or a person so intensely, it usually means that we don't love ourselves properly and the object of love seems to fill this lack. However, nothing can fill that lack, because there is no lack, other than in the identification with objects because we do not know that we are awareness. When you love the dog (or any object), you are only loving the dog in your awareness. So when the dog's body is no longer present – like when the dog went for a walk or you were away from the dog for some reason – you still loved the dog. So it shows that you do not need the physical presence of the dog to experience love for the dog. Your grief is a form of love for the dog, so did you actually lose the dog? Your love for the dog is love for yourself in the form of the dog.

When we are ignorant of our true nature as whole and complete, non-dual awareness, we think we depend on objects to make us happy. We suffer when we lose them – or, as inevitably happens because life is a zero-sum game, the objects (whatever they are) fail to deliver what we want from them – or they leave us. This is because no object is capable of giving us what we want, which is to be whole and complete, because we already ARE whole and complete. We just don't know this, because ignorance, or duality, clouds the mind.

Having said that, when self-knowledge has removed ignorance from the mind and one knows that one's true nature is limitless, unborn, non-dual, unchanging, whole and complete awareness, emotions like grief will still occur in the mind. There is no problem with this though, because you know yourself to be the knower of the grief and do not identify with it. So a loss like a loved one or a dog would still be

experienced, but from the standpoint of awareness, the knower, or non-experiencing witness, the grief will sting the person but it will not sting you, awareness.

Moksa, or liberation, does not make the person limitless. The person remains a person: enlightenment is not a magic pill for the ego, making everything perfect and blissful all the time. The *jiva* still thinks and feels. *Moksa* means that you know you are not the person, your dog is not a dog, "other" people are not other people. Non-dual vision means that you see that all objects are made up of you, awareness, and arise from you, awareness; all objects depend on you to exist and all objects dissolve into you. But you, awareness, do not depend on the objects to exist or be happy. Therefore the presence or absence of objects does not affect you. You are prior to all objects and the knower of all objects – all thoughts and feelings, like grief, also being objects known to you.

Moksa is the ability to discriminate you, awareness, from the objects that appear in you – like your dog and your grief at his death.

I hope this helps. Keep subjecting the mind to self-inquiry. Keep reading James' book *How to Attain Enlightenment*. Read as many e-satsangs as possible, and watch as many DVDs as possible. The desire for liberation has to be more important to you than anything else if you want *moksa* to obtain in the mind and suffering to end.

~ *Namaste*, Sundari