



attachments, the longings and the desire to understand with his mind something of what was happening, flashing across his face. First he was very angry. He fought; God, how he fought: "I don't want to go!" I stood there, dumb, feeling awed by death; how it ignores our wants, how it is without bias to our preferences. We were close in those moments. It was cold, but so real, and the realness, the truth of it, gave me a kind of relief. It was clean; so rarely in my life had I felt anything so clean.

I remember the moment he allowed the thought, "I am dying." His face relaxed and he seemed to enter a state of waiting. He refused painkillers. He understood that there was nothing he could do.

The night before he left, we knew that there were only a few hours more, so I stayed with him the whole night. I wanted to be alone with him and his death. I didn't want people there; I was afraid they would project death as the enemy. After what I had seen, I wasn't so sure that death was an enemy.

He was afraid to sleep. He asked, "How come you're like you are? Is it meditation? Is it Bhagwan?" "Yes", I said, and took the opportunity to tell about my life and Bhagwan, and the things Bhagwan had said in lectures about life, and death. He listened

gravely, ravenously. I showed him a meditation that Bhagwan had told me to give him that would help him to die. He opened his eyes very wide and asked for Bhagwan's picture. His face looked as if he had seen into death's bowels. He was so beautiful! He lay back and started to leave—his breath was less and his pulse was positively racing. I muttered things about awareness, about acceptance. I repeated, "You are not the body", over and over, and felt a shock—I was saying these things, and as I said them they were being realized in some unknown depth of me. I said, "Goodbye. I love you," and he was jolted by it. He lay back and said, "Not yet!" I sensed that he didn't want to leave without a farewell to my mother. He then laughed with an energy I couldn't believe he had and said, "You see, it can't lick me, I can still laugh!" A wave of lightness hit us and we laughed together. I wanted to thank him, praise him, bow to him; it was all said in the laughter.

When my mother arrived that morning I went to the rest room and cried my guts out.

I returned after a sleep to find my mother crying and begging him not to leave her. She had been finding it difficult not to hope. We left the room to allow the anguish in ourselves. Then an aunt came running, looking terrified

and panicked. We rushed back; there was a gentle vapor of breath on the oxygen mask... the last breaths.

Priya held him, catching his last breath over her heart. I got into the bed with him, closed my eyes, whispered "Bhagwan", was as 'simply there' as I could be. He breathed out, opened his hands, and was gone. I could somehow 'smell' him spreading out into the room. As he left his body, his presence was there unmistakably. He collected himself over the bed and watched us all. I knew this. I simply knew it.

Then there was the absence, the vacuum. And this presence! Completely out of my head, I had never felt so closely in touch with him.

I am helpless. The flow of life is so invisible but so all-powerful. What is this death? What has it to do with sunshine and laughter and love and birds... and this presence? Only this perhaps: night follows day, day follows night. I feel the impermanence. I look at my own hands in wonder, and I am grateful.

