

I will present three perspectives on death and my interpretation of these. These perspectives come from the Buddha, Gandhi, and President George W. Bush.

Gautama, the Buddha, as quoted in *Hinduism Today*, July/August/September 2018, page 41.

As he was approaching his own death, Gautama, the Buddha, ... said: "It is not appropriate to grieve in an hour of joy ... You all weep, but is there any cause for grief? We should look upon a sage as a person who has escaped from a burning mansion ... It does not matter whether I am here or not; your salvation does not depend on me, but on practicing the Dharma ... Recognize that all that lives is subject to the laws of impermanence. ... When the world is seen as without substance, the end of life is seen as peace and as a cure to a disease. Everything that exists is bound to perish."

My comments: The Buddha denies his own importance and the ending of his life. His message at the end to his disciples is to practice what he taught them. He teaches that all living things are impermanent, and that death brings peace.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, who said that being called a Mahatma pains him. The following are excerpts from the book "Bapu's Letters to Mira", August 1949, published by Navajivan Press (India). Letter numbers 125, 127, and 128.

From a verse of first morning prayer: I am that immaculate Brahma which ever notes the states of dream, wakefulness and deep sleep, not this body, the compound made of the elements (earth, water, space, light and air).

Gandhi's commentary on this is: "It is a solemn declaration that we are not the changeful bodies which require sleep etc. but deep down, we are the Being, the witness pervading the countless bodies."

"The idea is that the universe is not real in the sense of being permanent, it is neither a thing to be hankered after nor feared because it is supposed, to be God's creation."

"I shall at once reduce myself to dust and rejoice in establishing kinship with not only the lowliest of human beings, but also with lowest forms of creation whose fate — reduction to dust — I have to share with them."

My comments: Gandhi's message is also on the impermanence of bodies and the universe (perceived by us) and the ultimate destiny of all bodies as being "reduction to dust".

President George Walker Bush, in his eulogy to his father, President George Herbert Walker Bush, at the Washington National Cathedral, in Washington, D.C., on December 15, 2018.

"And we are going to miss you. Your decency, sincerity, and kind soul will stay with us forever. So, through our tears, let us see the blessings of knowing and loving you – a great and noble man, and the best father a son or daughter could have.

And in our grief, let us smile knowing that Dad is hugging Robin and holding mom's hand again."

My comments: President George W. Bush finds happiness in grief of the passing away of his father, knowing that his father will be reunited with his father's daughter and wife, who have passed on. Further, the president notes that the qualities exhibited by his father and his kind soul will stay with them forever.