

ADYASHANTI

R. My name is Rick Archer, and my guest this week is Adyashanti, Adya for short. And Adya is pretty well-known in the spiritual hierarchy or universe of teachers these days. And you will get to know him better if you don't know him already in the course of this interview. And I will say from the outset that Adya, I am not going to hit you with a lot of biographical questions.

A. Oh, thank you, Rick.

R. Yeah. You did a great interview about a month ago with Renate McNay over in London on Conscious TV, and that went into great detail on your biography, and I am going to actually link to that from my website so people can listen to it if they haven't already. And if I do ask you any biographical questions, they will be more subjective in nature rather than about events in your life. So, now in preparing for these interviews I listen to people that I am going to interview for about a week beforehand, just, you know, maybe four or five hours altogether over the course of the week. And I have listened to you, probably an entire week, 24 hours a day over several years because I really enjoy listening to you, and the funny thing is when I have listened to someone for a week I can usually summarize pretty well what it is they say. And in your case the funny thing is, I can't do that very well. It's like as I am listening, every single sentence kind of resonates with me on a deep level, and it feels enlivening and, um, you know, confirming of my own experience, and, um, just generally very enjoyable to listen to, but when people ask me, "What does Adya teach?" I say, "Well, I don't know actually. He is just really clear! You know. And I really enjoy listening to him." So perhaps for the benefit of those who aren't familiar with you, maybe you could give the bus-stop, the bus-stop rap on what it is you like to say, in a nutshell.

A. Well, that is a hard question for me, too, 'cause it is not really something I reflect on a lot. Um, I think that your experience is not unusual in the sense of, I don't even think of myself as having like a set kind of teaching. There are many themes that come up in the teaching. I mean in the broadest possible sense the, what the teaching's focused on is, I guess you could say, spiritual awakening and also what happens after a spiritual awakening, that whole vast terrain of what unfolds after that. Um, as far as the more specifics of it, it is very individual, for, often it's whoever I am talking to — the audience I am talking to — of what I will give them to aid them. I think the spirit of inquiry underlies all the teachings, the spirit of questioning, you know, of a deep, deep questioning. It is not just the questioning of, you know, of "Who am I?" or "What am I?" That is part of it, too. But it is the, an underlying questioning, where we really look at all of the, the entire belief structure that we have — whether it is about ourselves or others or the world or, um — the belief structure, they are the things that tend to limit and confine the consciousness, so the spirit of inquiry is a really important part of the teaching.

R. So do you kind of respond to individuals or audiences according to what they ask you? Or is it more on an intuitive level, where you just sort of, kind of tune into them, and the right thing comes out of your mouth?

A. It is really more an intuitive thing. Like when I speak at a meeting, I'll often speak for a half hour, sometimes an hour, and that is before I have talked to anybody or get a read on where they are at. So sometimes it is just sort of what I am inspired to talk about, you know. And even when you are doing that there is still a, an unspoken relationship between the audience who came energetically, and I can sense what resonates for them, what seems to be important. Of course, when I talk to individuals I am always interested in OK, what is the next step for this person? What is the next step they need to see? You know, some people will tell you what that is. They really will be, they will have their direction. They will know exactly what the direction they want to go in. Many people they really don't know the direction they really want to go in, you know. They don't know what the next step is, so that is part of helping them clarify what that is — very important.

R. Mmm. Another thing I noted, that you just reminded me of, that when I, um, listen to is that I am really rather astounded by the fact that you can go on for an hour without really repeating yourself. And, you know, and I can listen to hour after hour in different talks, and you are not just beating the same point to death. You, it is like there is always a fresh presentation and new points and new ideas and all sorts of different things. It really seems to be coming — unless you have little teleprompters in your glasses — it really seems to be coming from a kind of an intuitive wellspring of knowledge.

A. Yeah, I really never prepare for any of the talks I give or any of the teachings I give, so they are always extemporaneous, spontaneous, at the moment. And, you know, I am somebody that, I get very, very bored with hearing, even myself say the same thing in the same way. So sometimes, I can say, you know, you can say the same thing in a hundred different ways, two hundred different ways. And for the people who are listening, you may be saying the same thing, but if you put it in just a particular way it resonates for them. For somebody else they need to hear it just a little bit different. So if there is, if there is sort of any intention, it is, the intention is to not use the same words all the time — to really, to really keep it fresh, you know. Keep it fresh and keep it sort of on the edge, too.

R. Do you ever find yourself getting into a groove? Where you feel like, "This is getting a little old here, I keep saying this thing."

A. Sure. If I find myself speaking, even to me, it sounds like, even something I did a week ago, already I am thinking it feels ... it is not as vital. And to me the most important part of when I am speaking is, to me, it is more important to have that feeling of fresh inspiration. That is more important to me than simply the content of the teaching. Because I think it is inspiration that human beings ... we all connect in an intuitive way really deeply with

anything that someone is doing from a standpoint of inspiration. It could be anything. But somehow it really connects, and it communicates; it opens a line of energetic communion that, that is not there if it is just repeating the teaching.

R. Well, I think that is what I was alluding to earlier when I said that I can listen to you for hours and hours. And it is not like I come away with some zingy little bits of content that I can regurgitate for someone, but it is more like there is sort of an inspirational affinity or resonance or something that I find enlivening on a very deep level.

A. I am glad it works that way for you. But it also comes from my perception of truth, and I find that the deeper one's realization goes, the more paradoxical it becomes. It becomes something that often holds what, into our minds, are totally opposing viewpoints. In deep experience totally opposing viewpoints can be held effortlessly, easily. And since that's, I think the deeper you go that becomes more and more. It stands out. The view gets vaster and vaster, and it contains more and more and more what seems like opposites. You know, like: What are you? You know, something or nothing? And depending on, you know, where you are stuck, oftentimes the nothingness is, or the formlessness is emphasized, but if you are stuck in the formlessness, then you have to see that everything, all the forms are a manifestation of the formless. See, those are two totally opposite things, right? The formless or the formed, which one is it? And so I think that is one of the reasons that, as a teacher, I kind of try to speak of what is relevant to ... When I am talking to one person, I am only talking to that one person. When I am talking in general, I tend to paint with a bigger paintbrush, you might say. I paint ... I am not concerned with the next step for a particular person, so often the teaching comes out much more paradoxical. 'Cause life itself is very paradoxical, isn't it?

R. It is. I love that word. I should have a T-shirt made with "Paradox" on the front, and I think I would put "Ambiguity" on the back. That is another good one.

A. That is a wonderful one!

R. In fact, someone quoted Nisargadatta as having said that paradox and ambiguity ... "The ability to appreciate paradox and ambiguity are good measures of the degree of one's spiritual maturity."

A. I would agree. I absolutely agree. Yeah, yeah, and it is one of the tricks of any spiritual teaching that someone engages with, is that certain elements hopefully for the person really resonates, you know. It will be what they need to hear at just that time, and it might spark insight or some revelation. And then the tendency of the mind is, if something really sparks revelation or insight, the mind tends to hold onto it and wants to hold onto that which

sparked the insight, you know, that which kind of caused the, in a certain sense, how the causal relationship with the revelation, that is a natural

tendency of mind; it wants to sort of concretize. And that is a really, really subtle thing that for, I think a lot of people, it is hard to, um, it becomes hard for them to let go because you are often ... the farther you go, you are letting go of your attachment to things and ideas and concepts that may have really worked for you, spiritually, may have been really important for you. And then later to get a vaster view, you have to sort of let go of any clinging to them.

R. Yeah, I was listening to a talk, I think, like yesterday, in which you were saying that your definition of enlightenment was "not believing one's thoughts," which sort of pertains to what you are saying, just, you know ... and people do have a tendency to take their thoughts very seriously, don't they?

A. Absolutely, and I think, you know, it is easy ... for some people it can be easy to, say, see where somebody else is grasping their thoughts, you know, some other form of religious fundamentalism, let's say. You know, someone looks at the preacher that is on at 2:00 in the morning, and they're asking for all your money. And you say, "Oh, that is a fundamentalist," but it is really ... it is more delicate to really realize that we can turn anything into a fundamentalist doctrine, including non-dual teachings. In fact, non-dual teachings are some of the easiest to turn into a sort of fundamentalism because they have a very precise logic to them. And so they really appeal to the mind, which is good, that they have a precise logic. But it is not so good in the sense that it becomes very easy to, you know, to become a non-dual fundamentalist.

R. I have run in to a few of them.

A. Yeah.

R. In this interviewing business, you know.

A. I bet you have. It is a very hard thing to break somebody out of, too.

R. Yeah.

A. 'Cause it's very well-defended.

R. It is, and I don't really feel qualified to break them out of it. But I do sort of tackle them and then try to ... I mean, I was going to bring that up later, but since you have brought it up, I would like to run through a few of those points that sort of the non-dual, so-called fundamentalists tend to um, emphasize. Well, for one thing, a lot of them just say, you know, well ... Perhaps I could ask you this before I itemize some of these things. Um, it seems to me that the mistake that is most often made in that arena is that a description of the experience that a person is having or the perspective from which they are living is offered as a *prescription* for everybody else. And everybody else is not necessarily at that level of experience.

A. Right.

R. Would you agree with that?

A. I would agree. Yeah.

R. And so, you know, statements come out like "Quit seeking," you know, which obviously that person has done, but to me, that is like the mountain climber on the peak shouting down to everybody, "Quit climbing!" You know. Whereas, for them it's appropriate, you know?

A. Yeah, and it is also it's, it's not just, so it might be appropriate, say, if you have already got to the top of the mountain, right? So when you are yelling back "You don't need to climb any more" to somebody else. But it is also, it gets to a subtler point about any spiritual teaching is: I tell people that *all* spiritual teachings, at the very best of them, are, they are strategies for awakening. They are strategies. That is what they are, and they are not the truth because you can't put the truth into words. And a lot of people say that, and then the next thing they do is believe the words they are utilizing, you know. But if you see them as strategies, then let's say, for somebody they have been seeking and seeking and seeking for 20 or 30 years, right? They've become like a contracted ball of seeking. And for that person if at just the right time, if you can say, "Let go of all ... drop all seeking *now*." For that person it can have a tremendous impact. And then the seeking drops spontaneously and "Oh!" Then they can see what was always there. But they couldn't see it because they were so wrapped up in their seeking. Now somebody else that's sittin' on their couch, crackin' a beer, surfin' the internet through non-dual websites, and someone says, "You don't have to seek." Well, you know, and you just grab over and get another beer out of your six-pack. "That is pretty much what I wanted to hear anyway." That is not, that is not the right strategy for that person. It's not necessarily what they need to hear.

R. Right.

A. Who knows what they need to hear? It may not be that they need to seek, but you know, like I say, it is like, a, teachings are medicines for different states of dis-easement, right? And it would be, you know, if you gave the same, if you gave antibiotics to every person who came to you as a doctor for every disease, it would be ridiculous, wouldn't it? It would just be silly. But that's sometimes what happens in spirituality. It would also be silly to say that because you maybe got cured from something by the use of antibiotics that you think that the antibiotic itself is, is health.

R. Right.

A. It's like mistaking the teaching for the truth. No, where it helped you return to was health; the teaching might have helped you return to the

truth, but it is not in the ... you know, it's not in the strategy; it is not in the medicine.

R. There is that popular Indian saying: it takes a thorn to remove a thorn, you know. And, of course, there are also boat analogies

about, you know, going across a river in a boat. When you get to the other side it may be appropriate to get out of the boat, but getting out of the boat is not necessarily the best instruction when you are halfway across the river. (Laughter)

A. Good point. I like that. Right, right, yeah. So it is always ... it just depends on the person themselves, doesn't it? What does that person need to hear? You know, to think they all ... they need to hear one spiritual teaching, is you know, it's naïve, at best, and it can be destructive, at worst.

R. Yeah, and harkening back to the paradox point, you know, in my own case I feel like simultaneously I am not seeking, I am very content, resting in, you know, presence. But at the same time I am seeking like a son of a gun in terms of my fascination with this stuff, you know. I just love it. I love reading about it, talking to people, all that. So, but it is not like it used to be, you know 24/ ... you know.

A. You're not driven, like you were.

R. Yeah, and I don't feel the sort of desperate yearning and longing, like "Oh God, when is it going to happen for me?" You know, it is like, eh.

A. Yeah. Yeah, and that can be ... the common mistake I hear with quite a few folks is, is that, um, sometimes even for them through their own realization, the, that kind of seeking, that ardent striving for something that isn't, isn't, they haven't found. When that falls away there can be this sort of misunderstanding that, "OK, it has fallen away; therefore, that means I have arrived. And that is it; there is absolutely nothing more to see." And actually, OK, yeah, there is, in one sense, if we really see the truth, if we really perceive it, in one sense there is not more of it because there is not more or less of truth, but simultaneously that one truth has an infinite depth.

R. Yeah.

A. Right. And so that infinite depth, there is an infinite capacity for it to reveal itself, even though it is the same one truth. And I think there is often a lot of confusion about that: That the seeking can disappear, but if the devotion or the love affair with truth disappears, then, you know, then we usually have gotten stuck somewhere.

R. Yeah. I am glad you brought that up. That is a point I bring up in almost every single interview, usually towards the end, you know. I say to the person, "Well, do you feel like there is more that can be unfolded or more that can be gained?" And a large, well, at least half of them say, no. You know, they say, "Well, this is it. I can't see any possibility of further refinement or development or anything else." Others, you know, they have more of an attitude like you just stated, and they acknowledge that there could probably be no end to the

refinement of the heart, of the perception, of the, you know, emotions — all sorts of things have ...

A. The human capacity to express what you realize.

R. Yeah.

A. Right? 'Cause people can have really quite profound insights. But when it comes to their ability to express them as a human being they can, they can constantly be reverting back to their whole conditioned sense ... conditioning. So, yeah, there is another paradox, isn't it? When, when you really bump into the truth, there is not more of it, you know. There is not something behind it; there is not something different than it. But, and then you can make certain conclusions based on that. And that's, that's really easy to understand because there is no paradox in it. There is no confusion in it. But when you really start to open up, then you realize there is a paradox. There is not more or less truth, but there is an infinite capacity for truth to reveal itself. And it will, right up until you decide that there is nothing else for you to see. If you have decided that, and that's what you believe ...

R. Oh, *if* you have decided.

A. Right, then very often that will be it.

R. Huh, that is interesting. Intention can be quite powerful.

A. Very powerful, which then will be self-fulfilling, right? Because you don't see anything more or deeper, you assume there isn't anything more or deeper to ... So it is like a self-fulfilling prophecy.

R. Some would say that is the value of having a teacher, or the value of knowledge. It sort of doesn't enable you to kind of rest on your laurels. Like I think you said when you had your first awakening, there was as if some voice that came to you that said, "This isn't the end of it; keep going."

A. Yeah, yeah. It wasn't *as if* it said something; it *did* say something.

R. It did say that. (Laughter)

A. You know, and as my own teacher used to say, she would say, "Well, you know, awakening means that we have now made a start."

R. Right.

A. You have started now, when you have awakened, now we can really start, which was, you know, when I heard that so many years ago, it was quite honestly quite disappointing. You know, because I am waiting for some great

event, which will be the *end*, and I can be done with all this, you know,
terrible drive for

enlightenment and all that. And she would say, "Well, yeah, but also remember that when you have awakened it means that we have just started." It took me years to realize what she meant was actually true, not that you have just started in the sense that there was going to be more to seek and strive for, not in that sense, but in the sense of, you know, awakening is the end of something. It is the end of that desperation, isn't it? The end of that feeling like you have to find more or different or better. So it is a very definite end when it is authentic. But it also opens up other doors that are just beginning to open. And those doors are ... that's infinite capacity.

R. Yeah. I would like to probe into some of those doors with you a little bit more. But, um, let's define "awakening" a little bit. Because everybody throws that term around, you know. And it kind of reminds me of the Eskimos with their 32 names for snow, you know. And I really wonder if everyone's referring to the same thing.

A. They are not.

R. I don't think so. So how would you define that term, in a nutshell?

A. Wow, you know even for me it is really hard to do. Um, because from what I have seen awakening can happen on many different levels, and it can be more or less complete. And so what I mean by that is, what awakening — the common thread of it, no matter how deep it is or shallow it is — the common thread, the difference, let's say, between a spiritual awakening and a spiritual experience is that an awakening always involves some fundamental shift in your sense and view of self, of yourself, who you take yourself to be. If there's awakening, that fundamental sense of who you are, shifts, right? And so that is, that is like the groundwork for the difference between spiritual experience ... You can have all sorts of spiritual experiences, some very powerful. They can even be quite transformative and quite amazing. But the difference between the spiritual experience and awakening is that awakening does have as its effect a fundamental shift in identity. Now that fundamental shift where it shifts to, that is where it can maybe, say, for instance, for people it is really common to, their sense of self is very much limited to their ego and their ideas and their beliefs and all of that, about themselves, even if they have spiritual beliefs otherwise, you know, but they emotionally and psychologically, they are identified on ego level. They have a spiritual awakening, and all of a sudden their identification spontaneously leaves that and goes to, let's say, very common, people then go "OK, now my new identity is awareness. I am pure awareness." And that is not just a thought or a concept. It is like a lived experience, right? Almost like your locus of where you are and what you are shifts. But that in itself, so it has gone to ... and that is a huge transformation. It is a big shift, right? Life will not be the same after that as it was before. But that just, what I just mentioned, that is not the end of the line of awakening, by any means. That is not even full awakening. It is awakening, as I would define it, but it is not the whole

picture because it is still dualistic in the sense that often you have the sense of you

being awareness. maybe without location, but then you have the whole world of form. What's all that? What's ... 'cause a lot of times, at that point like I tell people, "OK, now you have got the world down to a nice manageable duality. You have got you as awareness, or consciousness, and everything else."

R. Right.

A. That is a nice manageable ... now there's only two things in all of existence where there used to be billions, you know. But still there's a duality that needs to be seen through, needs to be penetrated because in reality there isn't that duality.

R. It's funny ... I'm sorry. Go ahead.

A. I'm done.

R. Oh, I was going to say, it's funny because people have that initial awakening you are talking about, and then they say this is non-duality, you know, but like you just said ...

A. It's often, it's a radical duality.

R. Yeah.

A. It has gone from garden-variety duality to sort of duality pushed to its zenith, right? The nothing and the something. Now for some people they might go right beyond that and will actually see that the nothing and something are actually the same. They are actually two aspects of the same truth.

R. Right.

A. The same Being. And I mean that just the something and nothing, right. That is just form and formlessness. That's not all that happens in spiritual awakening, too. There's ... it can have much, it can go much, much deeper than that as well. So there are lots of levels, and you are very right, different people do mean ... It's like saying the word "ego." And you just assume that everyone is talking about the same thing. I asked a friend of mine about six months ago, who is a psychologist, has been a psychologist for about 40 years. I was writing something, I was writing the word "ego," and I thought, hmm, it occurred to me: I don't think there is any consensus. So I wondered, I wonder in psychology if there is a consensus, so I asked him. I said, "So in psychological work, what is the definition of 'ego'?" And he said, "Which one do you want? I can think of 10 right off the top of my head." And this is somebody who got a doctorate in psychology from Stanford, some 40 years ago. So often when we use these terms, you are very right, we are not talking about the same thing. And it is always important to define exactly what we mean by the words we use.

R. It is. Otherwise I mean you are saying one thing, and everybody's hearing something else.

A. Right, or like you said, they just lump it all together. And it's ... I have been looking for 15 years for a different word than "awakening." I just haven't come up with one. I would love to come up with something different, just because, you know, once people use the word too much, and it means too many different things, then it almost loses all of its meaning.

R. Yeah. Well, you know, like the Eskimos with all their names for snow, the Indians since they specialized in this for thousands of years, they have all their different types of Samadhi and all kinds of gradations and flavors and whatnot that they have actual words for, and presumably they can communicate with each other about them. But here in the West we kind of, kind of more simple about it, I guess.

A. Well, I think we, there is a, in a certain segment of the spiritual population has been drawn to that simplicity. The reason some of the non-dual teachings have caught on, I think, is because there is a certain type of non-dual teaching that, it can be pointed to and delivered in a very simple way. And what it has done for a lot of people is — that have come from very more complex spiritual backgrounds — is they get lost in that complexity. They, you know, there is *so much* there. It is like what happens when you have 30 generations or 50 or 100 generations of monks sitting around all day gazing at their navel. Well, they tend to start slicing the pie of Oneness into ever more subtle and smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller and smaller bits, not that there is anything wrong with that. But from the seeker's perspective it is easy to lose yourself.

R. Yeah.

A. I think that is one of the reasons why right now — which isn't just right now; things will change, but right now — sort of, almost like a radical non-dual teaching resonates with so many people it's because a lot of people have been lost in that. And it's like they suddenly come out of this fog of concepts. And it can be really useful for them. However, there is the, there is the other side of it that things can get so simplified that they almost get kind of dummed down. And the subtlety and the true richness of the potential of human realization ... what one realizes can get lost, you know, in these broad, simple concepts.

R. Perhaps the right way to go about it is to uh, to just avoid being a fundamentalist, like we were saying earlier. I mean, find the level of complexity that that works for you, but don't insist that that is the way it has to be for everybody.

A. Sure. Well, isn't that the birth of ... that's fundamentalism right? "What works for me, it's, it's the only thing that can work for everybody else. And it is the only truth." And it gets even a little bit more potentially confusing because, you know, when we, when we realize a certain aspect — or I think of it as a facet

of truth. Um, I think of like enlightenment or reality as, metaphorically, as a diamond. I am not the first one to look at it this way; it's sort of historically been viewed this way. And each facet is a particular viewpoint on that truth. So let's take the viewpoint of the facet of no-self. When there is a realization that there is no separate self. That is a particular facet. The difficulty can become with each facet of that jewel, that diamond of enlightenment, each facet because it is reality; it feels like reality. And any time you touch upon reality it feels completely complete, absolutely complete. It feels like nothing left out. You can't touch upon reality without it feeling like that. The difficulty is, the confusion is because each facet of that diamond feels like that, that you can mistake the facet for the whole of the jewel. It is very easy to do unless there is somebody to go "Oh, wait a minute. That is not.... It's a facet; it's very profound, but you are mistaking a facet for the whole jewel."

R. Yeah.

A. And that is really, really common, again, because each facet feels like the whole jewel.

R. It is a good point. You know, it reminds me of the hologram. You can take a slice of a hologram and shine a laser through it, and you get the same image that you would get if you had the entire hologram. But with the entire hologram you get a lot more detail and a lot more, sort of, perfection of the image.

A. Yeah, that's a great example, just like that. Yeah, yeah. So it makes it more complex when you are, when you are a teacher. You know, it is easy if you are kind of have one message and one thing, and you just can keep hammering home on that over and over and over and over. And for some people that might be fine. That might work for them, you know. But if you are someone like I am, which I have a great appreciation — not only for the simple, but also for the very subtle, and, and with depth, then, you know, like you said, you listen to a week of my teaching, and it is hard to like extract, you know, the, The Message. You know the one message that it is all about, and that is because it is not about one message.

R. Huh, good. So I pass. (Laughter) I didn't flunk.

A. No, you can't flunk. I find that people just resonate with ... I always tell people: Just pay attention to what resonates for you because that is what is important for you now. Don't worry about the rest; don't confuse yourself about the rest. Just if it resonates, if you feel that thing in you that goes, "Oh yes, oh yes. I didn't know that I knew that, but somehow I understand it, or I am starting to understand it." That is what is important for that person at that moment. You know, the rest — you know, leave it till it is relevant.

R. We were talking about ego a few minutes ago, um, so did you ever come up with a definition of "ego" that is, that you are comfortable with?

A. Well, my, the one I use the most is just “the resistance to what is.” Ego is, ego has a quality of resistance. At its base when you get down to sort of the root of it, which is in your, the gut, the sense of self it is literally just like a closed fist in the gut. It is like this energetic ‘No’ to life. And then it comes up into the heart, the energy is in the heart, and there it is sort of an emotional feeling-based protectionism and fear. And then, of course, in the mind then that same, what started out as just a reflex in the gut, of “No” — of just a contraction — becomes one’s whole psychology, which is often, it is a pushing away and/or a grasping. So I would say, you know, ego is the thing that is always negotiating with life.

R. So is that what the ego does, or is that what the ego is?

A. It is both.

R. Both.

A. Because to me, “ego” is a verb. It is a movement; it is a happening, right? In other words, people can notice this if they just sort of bring attention to it. There are times when you just stop thinking about yourself in any given day. You just don’t remember yourself. You are not sitting there telling yourself your name. You are not fantasizing about where you will be in the next minute, or you are not arguing with, you know, your co-worker in your mind when you are at home. There are these are gaps. For a lot of people, unfortunately, they are very small, but when their whole thought process is no longer about themselves, and at those moments there isn’t, there is no ego at that moment. Now they will probably go in a relationship with the world or another person, and it will immediately come back as a reflex. But to me ego, it is not a noun; it is not some *thing* that is, sort of, that’s stable. It is a verb.

R. So using yourself as a case in point, um, presumably you, you’re very sort of deeply accustomed to not trying to manipulate and not trying to force things to be this way or that, or not trying to resist and, um, and yet also presumably — and correct me if I am wrong — there is some sense of self. I mean if — this always puzzles me — if somebody comes into a room and says, “Hey Adya,” you turn your head. You know, Terry doesn’t turn her head. So if Terry stubs her toe (Terry is your assistant; I am referring to Terry) if Terry stubs her toe, Terry feels the pain. You don’t feel the pain that Terry is feeling. So there’s ...

A. Right, fortunately!

R. Yeah. So I hope she doesn’t do that too often! So there is still this sort of like individuation, at least by, for all appearances, and yet I hear people saying, “There is absolutely no one home. Stubbing the toe is happening, but

there is no one whose toe has actually been stubbed. There is no one whose head is actually turning” and all that. So please elaborate on that.

A. Well, well, I can't necessarily elaborate on the way somebody else puts it, but I can ...

R. Well, the way you would put it. Yeah.

A. Yeah, because I think the problem, again this becomes a difficulty because we, you get into these realms of experience that are, that are very, very subtle — very subtle — and I don't mean subtle in the sense of not obvious. But they are very, very hard to really conceptualize. Um, so let's get back to the first thing you mentioned, which is self, right. So, you are right, self, there is, to operate in the world of time and space, there has to be some element of self, if only enough to, when someone calls your name your head turns around, right. The way I like to describe it is self is sort of like a perfume. Um, that your, your humanity, your humanness is, just has a perfume of self in it, and it is functional. It becomes operational. When you can get into states of meditative absorption, where even the most subtle sense of self is completely obliterated ... and if that has ever happened to you, you realize that you become completely and absolutely, totally dysfunctional.

R. (Laughter)

A. You cannot function. You can feel hunger, but you won't, you literally won't know where to put the food. I have experienced it. I have seen it in people that have been sitting at a retreat, and they are in a cafeteria, and they have got food in front of them. And they will tell me this later, and they felt hunger, but they couldn't figure out who ... where to put the food.

R. Wow.

A. Because the sense of self was still temporarily obliterated.

R. There have been saints like that who are like that a lot of the time — Anandamayi Ma and Neem Karoli Baba. I mean, they had to be pretty much taken care of 'cause they were just so out there.

A. Yeah, so you can get in a place where that, that level of self becomes, is totally gone. But then you are not really very functional in the normal, you know, human way, you would say. You know if you don't have devotees to put food in your mouth, then you are not going to last very long, um. Now that is a very subtle, subtle, subtle, subtle sense of self. That is, that is, you know, one ten-thousandth of the amount of self to, to recognize when somebody calls your name, or to know where to put food when you are hungry. That is a fraction of the self that most people go around experiencing and feeling.

R. Yeah.

A. Right, so the sense of self is, it is that sense of self, which is what the ego conglomerates around, builds itself around, right. Energetically it builds itself around that. So, there can be the experience of no ego. Ego can disappear, depending on how you define ego. There can be, then there can also be the experience of no-self, but in the ... no self would be not that the entire sense of self disappears. It would be more like the, to reflect, if you tried to reflect upon yourself, but you just couldn't come up with ... there would be nothing to reflect upon. That would be no-self. Ego would be, when ego tries to reflect upon itself, and it can't find ego. None of those, neither one of those means that there is not a personality still there. Neither one means that there's not various types on conditioning, both biological and cultural, you know. Indian saints tend to act like *Indian* saints. They don't tend to act like, you know, African saints, or, you know, Native American Indian saints. I mean, so clearly there is a cultural type of conditioning that is still, still present, and it is still operational. But again it is, it becomes a very subtle, subtle area.

R. So would it be fair to say that for the enlightened person who is well-established and has worked out a lot of the post-awakening stuff that may have to have been worked out that through ... in their daily functioning enough sort of ego, or sense of self is spontaneously and naturally assembled to make that functioning possible and efficient, and beyond that there is nothing more unnecessary added. It is just sort of like the essential.

A. Yeah, that is probably the closest that I would, that I could put. Just speaking from my own experience is I think that it is harder to say what is there than what isn't, you know. 'Cause one just starts to notice certain things, um, like I think we only understand something really deeply and fully when it falls away from us to good measure because then we notice its absence. Then we can define what has fallen away. Now we know what has fallen away because it is no longer there. And so there is lots of types of, you know, reactivity. There's, I could just, you know, I could talk on and on about certain things that used to be there and then aren't there at a certain point. So it's not in a sense of what shows up but in a sense of what disappears. Actually, I think it is beyond, beyond the first opening of awakening, one's whole spiritual development, if I may use that word in non-dual circles ...

R. It's OK with me.

A. Good. One's spiritual development is much more from that point on, defined by what disappears than what appears. It is defined more by what falls away than even by what is realized.

R. So stuff keeps falling away.

A. Stuff keeps falling away. Right, right. Now it would be up to someone's personal interpretation or description of ego to say: has all their ego fallen away? Well, it depends on how you define it. So I mean I wouldn't go

to say to somebody, "Oh, all my ego has fallen away." Number one, because I wouldn't have any idea of what they meant by it. Do you know what I mean? And number two, why would we ever say that to somebody? (Laughter)

R. Because you are ...

A. It had to impress them.

R. Right, in which case, it hadn't.

A. It's like that old joke about a party for only enlightened people. And anybody who showed up would be automatically disqualified from enlightenment because you showed up.

R. (Laughter) That's good! So in hearing you talk and reading your books and all, I have heard you refer to two major kind of milestones. There was the awakening when I think you were about 25 or something, and then there was one when you were about 32 or so. In light of what we have been talking about for the last half hour or so, um, you know, ego and things falling away, and all these points we have been considering um, how would you define those two awakenings? You know, what fell away with the first one, and then what was it about the second one that was so different from the first one?

A. Well, the first one that, two things stood out the most that fell away, was: seeking because I was a *tremendous* seeker.

R. Yeah, you were intense. I mean you would go from four in the morning till midnight meditating sometimes.

A. Yeah, I was like an Olympic champion of seeking. If they could have handed out gold medals, I might have got me one. So, but after that sort of experience at 25, the seeking just fell away, and it never came back. It just seemed completely ridiculous to seek for what I knew I already was, so it just never came back. And the other thing ...

R. Which is not to say that you lost interest in this stuff, or even maybe that you stopped meditating or stopped going to satsangs or whatever, but that sense of desperation probably fell off.

A. Yeah, I didn't stop anything; I kept meditating. In fact, that is the first time that voice said, "This isn't all of it; keep going."

R. Right.

A. But from that point on I was, I didn't keep going. In other words, I didn't keep meditating or do whatever I was doing spiritually in order to

attain more. The attainer wasn't there. And it is very hard to, to tell someone what that is like until they have experienced it, that just because there is no seeking, just doesn't mean that all the interest disappears or whatever, so that fell away. And the other thing that fell away was fear. All of a sudden, I had no fear at all.

R. Right.

A. Just none, which was, you know, kind of, it is a little dangerous to take all the fear out of a 25-year-old male.

R. (Laughter)

A. It does have certain wise, limiting, wise, limiting factor to it.

R. Well, if someone had taken, hung you from the Golden Gate Bridge by your ankles at that point, you think you would have felt fear?

A. Oh, I don't know. I am glad I didn't have to figure that out. You know, it wasn't necessarily like no fear, like, you know, if I stepped in front of a bus, and they honked their horn, and I had to pull myself back that I wouldn't feel an adrenalin dump, you know.

R. Right, right.

A. That is a very biological kind of fear. But it was all psychological fear, all fear based on psychology, like, like anything or anyone ever could harm me psychologically or emotionally in any way whatsoever.

R. Did you have to go through a sort of a sound barrier in which you felt a great deal of fear before you got to the other side of it, or it just dropped away? Because a lot of people do that; they go through this huge fear thing, you know.

A. You know, I, I did. It was all, that was part of that the opening of that experience. I wasn't fear ... at least obvious fear wasn't very much part of my experience during my whole life. You know, fear wasn't a big issue. Fear in other forms probably was — you know, anxiety, that is a type of fear — there is lots of ways fear can manifest, but as obvious, overt fear wasn't a big thing for me. But in this particular opening I had at 25 (the first) when I had this sort of kundalini explosion in my body, and I didn't just think, I knew with sort of absolute certainty that this was going to kill me if I didn't find some way to stop it. And for whatever reason, I couldn't even tell you, but spontaneously something inside of me, I literally said to myself, "If that is what it takes to find out what Truth is, OK, I will die now." And that wasn't courage, you know. It wasn't macho; it was just like a fact. And I was as surprised to hear it in my own mind as anybody else would have been. But as soon as that voice or whatever it was said, "OK, let's die now," all of a sudden, you know, everything changed, everything. I won't go into great description because, you know, I am not a great fan of, you know, great detailed spiritual awakening experiences, but a tremendous amount shifted like snapping your fingers. And so from that point on, there was no, sort of psychological or emotional-based fear. I just never, it never came back. It

didn't mean I was, you know, I was far from some saint; I still had a lot of emotional, ego and spiritual issues to be, to be, to be worked through.

You know, I worked through, I kind of went into hyper-rocket mode of working through karma really quickly. The next five years were not a five years I would wish on my worst enemy. They were probably the hardest five years of my life that came after. And yet I got what I asked for because I wanted, I wanted real, the whole of Truth, and I didn't care. Especially after that I didn't care what I had to go through. I really didn't care; I didn't care if I burned in the pits of hell to find the Truth or if I could have a life of you know, luxury, it didn't matter anymore. And I got what I needed, you know, just lots of really up and down life situations.

R. You said that when you had that second awakening at 32 that, at that point, every ... you began to see that you were everything. You walked around the house, you looked at the toilet you know, "Oh, that's me, too." And in the light of what we were talking about earlier, how one can have a sort of a non-dual realization, but then the whole world is separate from that and then later on one can realize: "Oh, it's all one reality." Would those two phases characterize those two awakenings, or not so much?

A. Not necessarily, the first one was I just realized, I literally, when I, it happened when I was meditating ... before I get into any kind of meditation I literally just sat down and — boom. And then when I got up, and I bowed to the meditation statue I started laughing, and I literally said out loud to my meditation statue, I just said, "You son of a bitch; I *chased* you for all these years, and here I find out that you are what I am." It was like hilarious. Um, you know, and I wasn't angry, but it was a kind of anger that is funny. I just couldn't, couldn't, it was just funny. But what, so I knew that I was that which is eternal and cannot be born, cannot die, cannot be hurt, cannot be harmed. But when I went outside I saw, that same thing everywhere I looked, so there wasn't that separation. I thought everywhere I looked it was like I could see some hidden little secret in everything, every blade of grass, everything. But the question that I had was, even though I saw *it*, I wasn't clear on what *it* was. Not that I wanted a better description, but I knew there was *something*, there was *something* that was ... I didn't have all of it. I just knew that intuitively.

R. This is after the, after the second awakening?

A. That was after the first one.

R. After the first one. OK, I'm sorry.

A. 'Cause I think your question was, did it, did it go from the first one being about the formless and the second one being about seeing ... it was really there all... it was really the form and the formless altogether right from the very beginning. Um, but it just wasn't real clear. At 32 then, that opening was just extraordinarily crystal clear because, at least my thought about it, my experience of it is, it had absolutely no emotional overtone at all. There was no excitement, no joy, no bodily ... no kundalini, just literally nothing. And

what it allowed me to do is I could see just what was true because there was no by-product. You know, later then there was some by-products: some happiness, some ... But at that moment it was so clean, and so obvious and so un-adorned that, you know, I just couldn't miss it.

R. And did that pretty much persist thereafter? Was there any backsliding?

A. Yeah. It didn't persist with the kind of vividness that comes when you see something for the first time. You know, 'cause there is a type of vividness with anything that we experience for the first time that is not the same after you have experienced it for the hundredth time.

R. You get used to it.

A. Right, so there is like an adapting to it, and sometimes it would get very, very subtle. Sometimes it would be more obvious. You know, for a while a kind of, would go from something so subtle I would wonder if it was gone, and then it wasn't when I really looked and then something so obvious that, you know, almost overwhelming. And, but that happened for a few years and, um, I wouldn't say it ever went away, never went away, but, um, but then it sort of all calmed down, even that sort of waxing, that sort of more or less obvious, just calmed down, it literally became more into something that is, had a normalcy to it, in a way. I mean there is a beauty to it, of course, that doesn't go away, but unity is, it is just the way things are, isn't it? It's not actually, you know, it is just the way things are. It is the way things always will be. Everything is unified; everything is actually one. And so, and at a certain point something inside spontaneously just stops making such a big deal out of it.

R. (Laughter)

A. You know, at first it feels like a big deal because you haven't seen it. But after a while, it's like, "OK, everything's one. Lovely."

R. And that was what, 10, 15 years ago or something?

A. Well, I am 48 now and that was ...

R. So it's like 16 years ago or so. And, but we spoke earlier about the fact that there seems to be no end to the refinement or the ability to express or embody that can take place. So how would you characterize this, what's happening with you these days, like say over the course of the last year, in terms of, you know, what areas are being refined?

A. I don't know if I could just take it in, in that small of a timeframe even though I know a year is a pretty big timeframe. But in general, like I said, what stands out to me from that time on and still more and more, is, as just of what falls away, of just less and less and less and less and less...

Really hard to describe what it is that falls away, and I often only recognize it when, um, I am watching, I am in a situation when I am watching other people, and I am seeing the way they are processing what is happening, whether they are talking to each other or their environment or whatever. And I will just realize, "Oh yeah, that stopped happening a couple of years ago." I might not have been conscious of it until that moment. I go "Yeah, that stopped happening, and oh, that stopped happening and ... " So you know, those kind of things actually are what still probably most predominant of what falls away.

R. It's like what Joni Mitchell said: "You don't know what you have got till it's gone."

A. Exactly, exactly. Yeah, and the funny thing is the farther it goes the more it is sort of like: Gosh, I don't, I don't even think anybody actually could want, want this because this really isn't ... it sounds so trite, you know. It sounds so silly in a certain way 'cause these words are often spoken, but it is almost like there is really nothing here in it to want. Because ...

R. Well, you know, they might not ...

A. In the end it is defined by what is not really, what's not happening anymore. That is, and yes, you could talk about, there is an underlying sense ... all that energy isn't going into those various forms of conflict, right, both subtle and overt, and that is really nice, and that is really pleasant, but the thing that would sit there and say to itself, "Wow, look what I am realizing." *That thing* falls away, too.

R. Yeah.

A. You know what I mean? And so, it, I think it is sort of very odd, that it certainly I don't think ends up what any of us really had in mind.
(Laughter)

R. No, 'cause we can only sort of envision it from whatever state we are in, you know. But I am sure you wouldn't trade.

A. Hell, no. Wouldn't trade at all, no, no, no.

R. Go back and do it all over again!

A. No. Don't want to oversell it.

R. And it does get oversold.

A. It's not just I don't want to oversell it. It's ... I think there is something that has a truth to it when you realize that in a strange way what, what people are truly pulled to, in their, from their real spiritual yearning. It is

what you are pulled to, towards, is something very different than what you are seeking. And that is fine because what you're ... the pull towards your own reality, it utilizes the seeking,

too. So it is not like there are two separate forces, but the seek ... a lot of the seeking in it is an anticipation, right, an anticipation of "Oh, the enlightened ones must experience life like this, and like this and like this. And I want that. I want to experience that. I read this in a book, and I ... " And it is interesting how the pull, which I think is a very non-cognitive thing, just the pull of whatever you want to call ... of the Divine, of Truth, of God, the pull is very different than ... that aspect of the seeking, is very different than the seeking aspect of it. It ends up that the pull eventually kind of pulls you into a reality that was very different than the one that you thought you were seeking.

R. And that is why I think it is worthwhile probing a bit and trying to get you to articulate some of this stuff because it might help people; it might help people divest themselves of all sorts of false notions of what it is going to be and might enable them to realize that they have actually already realized it more than they think they have.

A. Yeah, sometimes people have. I think one of the things that just came to my mind, Rick is, um, that people experience sometimes even way before awakening, and it certainly gets into high gear often afterwards, at least when they've come back from their spiritual honeymoon, their ... is the erosion and, in the end, the disappearance of their personal will. That is not something that one can really plan on, and it's hard to imagine it again, until you kind of look over your shoulder and go, "Now where did that go?" It is also the reason as people, as this personal will tends to drain out of their system, which spirituality will do, but it also has its dangers. You know, there are lots of spiritual ... and I don't say this in a derogatory way because it is not what I mean, but it might sound like it. But there is lots of spiritual shipwrecks.

R. Yeah.

A. And a spiritual shipwreck, there are people who have seen enough to have their personal will to a great extent eroded out of their system. 'Cause the will is like, it is sort of the base energy, which motivates the life of separation. It literally gets you out of bed, to work, to take care of your kids, too. It's this base energy that separation needs to move. Now if you can see through enough of illusion, that personal will energy can be greatly diminished, maybe 90 percent diminished. But if you haven't seen deeply into the Truth, then you are simply left in a state of separation, with almost no personal will. It can be very debilitating, and in all kinds of spiritual communities across all kinds of religions, you find people that can get easily stuck in the place of very little personal will. You know, or they are caught in what I call limbo zone, between the disappearance of personal will then you are in a limbo zone, where there is really no energy motivating you, not only no cognitive but no physical energy, and then eventually there is like, there is a different energy that starts to inform the way, what moves you and what inspires you in life. And that is something, an energy that comes more from

the whole, from the all, rather than from the personal. But it is one of the most confusing things that

I find that people experience, especially now, everywhere I go, 'cause lots of people have had significant spiritual shifts, not everybody, but a lot of people have. And they are dealing with ... I call the disappearance of your personal will the dirty little secret of spirituality 'cause people all over are experiencing some awareness. Nobody's really talking about it because they don't have a language to talk about it, and almost nobody is talking about it, and if they do, they talk to their doctor. The doctor will often say, "Oh, we need to put you on some depression medication. We need to do this to you, you know, talk to your family members, or you have just got to get it together." And they don't realize; they can't get it together. And, you know, so it's a, it is one of those things that I find when I talk about ... and I am just doing a very, you know, quick introduction, but I find people really, really respond 'cause people do experience that, and a lot of what keeps people stuck in these various places is just a basic ... they have no understanding of it. They don't know what is going on.

R. So what can people do? Maybe there is no universal prescription, but what can people do to get through that phase and have the, sort of, the larger will get into the driver's seat and motivate their life?

A. Well, part of it you just said it. The larger will get into the driver seat, which means you have got to, you got to at some point completely relinquish the seat.

R. Huh. So is that what gets you stuck there? That you are not letting go, you are not relinquishing, and you could end up with doing that for five or 10 years and you ... it might be a month instead or a week if you really ...

A. A lot longer than five or 10 years. You can do it almost indefinitely.

R. Yeah.

A. You can get it really ... there can be even a sort of morbid comfort in it. Because you know, at least you are not being bothered by all that driven energy anymore. Or maybe somebody kind of wanted to be a dropout anyway. Maybe that is part of their conditioning, that they, maybe that is how they egoically hide, right? — they defend — is by kind of dropping out. And so they might get the erosion of the personal will, but for the part that wants to drop out, that can be very alluring. It can be hard to say, "Hey, that part that wants to drop out, that is the part you have to let go of; that is the part you have to surrender. Otherwise you are going to get stuck here. And your life is going to fall apart." So, you know, with each person, again, it is very unique to their own circumstance, their own makeup, but, in general, I think you really, you put a really good generalized description of what is necessary. It is really letting go of one's sort of personal relationship to their own existence.

R. I am kind of reminded of the Gita, actually, where Arjuna just lost the motivation to fight, to do anything. He just sat down, dropped his bow and said, "I would rather just live on alms than have to do this," and in the course of a two-hour conversation Krishna got him to the point where the

Universal will had taken over and was then motivating him, and he was established in *being* performing action rather than just established in individuality performing action.

A. That is it. That is it. That is the whole Gita right there, isn't it? It's dealing with that issue, I mean, most of the Gita, but at least the relationship between Arjuna and Krishna is dealing with that issue. And 'cause there is ... you know in Buddhism they call it right action — not a very good word because it goes into people's idea of right and wrong — but nonetheless where does action come when it comes from wholeness? And it is a selfless action. Sometimes as a human being you might like it; you might not like it. It might be easy for you; it might demand a lot of you. Um, it is just a totally different energy, so for a certain segment of the people that go through this, simply having an understanding — a container to understand it — sometimes that is all they need. So their mind can stop telling them that there is something wrong. And then it is like they are back in this stream, and everything just starts to move again. For other people, they have to start to see where they are actually holding onto this sort of desert phase because there can, like I said, there can be a part of a subtle remnant of ego that literally wants to hide there, that wants to stay there, that wants to be a dropout.

R. Yeah, I remember one time I was on a course, doing a lot of long meditation, and then towards the end of the course I went, and I was sitting with Maharishi, and you know I said, "Oh, it was so nice, just meditating and reading scriptures, and I would just like to continue doing this." And he said, he said, "If you think that idea has anything to do with enlightenment, you are wrong." He said, "You should get out there and do something dynamic" and just, basically, just get off your butt.

A. Yeah. Good, that was really wise, wasn't it? Yeah. There's an old Zen master who said, "It's not doing nothing; it's *doing* nothing." And that's it. There's a doing of nothing that is different than just dropping out. But for a while dropping out is, might, you know, most people in this society don't even have that option, but ...

R. Right.

A. You know there is a certain style of that, which is something that a lot of people would, are just going to go through. It doesn't mean they are going to drop out of life. They may experience it while they are raising kids and having a family and all that, but their relationship with it may transform and change right in the middle of ... In fact, I always think that people that don't have the luxury to drop out of life, they are actually lucky.

R. Yeah, in a way.

A. Like Maharishi was saying, it makes it harder for you to get stuck. If you have got somebody other than yourself that you have got to be responsible for and answer to.

R. Very true, very true.

A. It can be really useful.

R. Are we doing OK? Can I ask a few more questions, or are you feeling ...

A. I am perfectly fine.

R. OK, good. Um, I want to shift gears a little bit. Um, you told a story about how when your dog died, and you just sobbed uncontrollably, you know, for quite some time, lying on the floor, you know, just really losing it.

A. Oh, yeah.

R. Which is probably what we will do when our dog dies, but I have gone through a couple of those things. One time at my sister's wedding, I was standing up in front of a couple of hundred people I just lost it. And people do that at weddings, and another time I was watching "It's a Wonderful Life" with Jimmy Stewart, and it was the end of the movie where everybody comes in, and they start putting money in the basket, and the angel, the bell rings on the Christmas tree. And I just lost it; I started sobbing. And I sort of got the feeling at the time that just some calcification of the heart that had taken place, without my even knowing it, had just been broken by, you know, that catalyst of that scene in the movie. And I wonder if you could talk about that a little bit — how we tend to unknowingly, unwittingly build up a shell that needs to break, either suddenly or slowly.

A. Yeah, yeah, well, there it is, We do, we do tend to build up a shell because certain things ... grief is not necessarily a pleasant experience to be having, is it? It doesn't ... you don't have grief and go "Wow, I feel great." You know, and so, I mean that is just fairly rudimentary. But there are certain types of experiences that aren't really what we would think of as positive, and so we sort of energetically, you know, there is a deciding "Oh, I don't want to experience what is not positive." And then you, that is simple. And then you throw up on someone's life experience, and then people have been, have had these, you know, throughout their whole life from early childhood on, where they have been in very open states and been in very lovely, unprotected states and had some idiot stomp all over it, you know, especially when they are children, you know, there is a vulnerability there, you know, because one can't say "no" with a lot of effect. And so there is all those things that happen. Some are natural; some are sort of come out of painful experience, but they become these calcifications, sort of walling around of the heart and of the ability to truly feel, and one of the problems of that is there is, sure, in our heart there's this ... we think of it as

emotional center, but it is not just an emotional center. The heart is literally sort of a sensory organ of spirit, just like your eyes are, and your ears are, right. I mean these are how God sees the world — is through those eyes — and hears itself and touches itself, and this organ of the heart; this is where, this is the organ of perception. This is what perceives Oneness. And I don't mean in some flowery spiritual sense; I mean in a very ... just like your eyes perceive form and your ears perceive sound. It is the heart that perceives Oneness.

R. More so than the head or the gut.

A. Absolutely, absolutely. Yeah, yeah. There is, in fact, when people kind of awaken to being "I am pure awareness, pure formlessness and nothing else," and they don't get that the whole world around them, that the awareness and the world around them is unified — it's actually the same thing — it is usually because they haven't penetrated through the protective barrier of the heart.

R. So would you say that that awakening has taken place in the head more or something?

A. Exactly what I would call it. That is exactly, their awakening ... I use this as metaphor, but it is also has a concreteness to it. There is awakening that I call on the level of mind, which, which is experienced like pure, vast, awake conscious space. Wakening on the level of mind, which really means identity is freed up from the level of thought, the level of mind. And it has a particular feeling: vast, clear, empty space. On the heart, awakening on the level of heart is an, a total, absolute intimacy with all things, so all things are experienced to be as close as your skin; they are your own skin, not as a concept or an idea but from an experiential point of view an extraordinary intimacy with all form. That is at the level of the heart, and, of course, on the level of the gut we talked about earlier, what I call our most existential sense of self, which just a, is just like a grasping, right in the gut. Did you ever notice when someone starts to tell you about their fear, they start to talk to you, nine out of 10 times, unconsciously, they will put their hand on their gut? 'Cause that is also the seat of fear; 'cause this seat of self is this irrational clench, this irrational "No" to existence. It is constriction, right. So awakening there, on that level, that is when you really awaken from, to awaken from self is really to awaken from that constriction. That constriction is no longer there.

R. I realize perhaps that these don't have to strictly take place sequentially, but it sounds the way you present it like tend to anyway — head, heart, gut. And so that would imply that one could have that vastness of awareness and yet, you know, there is still that shell around the heart, as you were just saying, or one could have had a heart opened and being, sort of, appreciating the one

ness of everything, and yet there is still a resistance to what is, still a sort of an ego trying to run the show.

A. Yeah, yeah, there still can be that self. And people experience these different levels oftentimes sort of competing with each other. When some, like, I hear this all the time, and I imagine other spiritual teachers do, too. They say, "I know this isn't true, but ..." You know, they have a thought. "I know this isn't true. I know; I have seen through it." And they may know from a really true place of knowing, right, not just intellectual, but they really know, but ... And when they say "but" it means the next thing they are going to say is going to tell me where, what, what, what part of themselves isn't clear yet, right. "I, I, but, but I keep, I keep saying it." "OK where is the saying of it come from?" and then maybe you can start to sense it's actually in the heart or in the gut. So this can be sequential. Oftentimes, sometimes at someone's first awakening you can, the whole thing, all of it will just burst open, but then there is usually kind of a bungee-cord effect. So maybe the whole thing, right, woke up, but then it like, what becomes obvious to you is maybe a month later is awakened mind. I am pure formless space-like consciousness, self-luminous consciousness, and these other two may have gotten, you may, you know, they may have sort of closed down or something. Or someone can skip one and go to the other, so it's again a paradox, where it is not sequential necessarily 'cause you can go, it can bounce all over the place, but in the big scheme of things, there is a sequential nature to it at the same time. It is, and it isn't, you know.

R. Interesting. Well, I love the nuanced nature of the way you speak, you know. Because for so many teachers it sounds so black and white, on and off, you know, hot and cold, and you kind of, you give it a sort of a, a complexity, which is not over-adorned. It is not confusing, but I think it speaks more to the actual reality of the situation, uh, and really does justice to what people are going through because, you know, generally speaking, I think there is going to be, you know, no two people having it the same way and a great deal of, of variety.

A. Yeah, yeah. And in the end the only thing that is relevant is, you know, is, is what works, what is working. Is it working? Is it actually working for you, you know ... and not being, um, and not, um, not fooling yourself, you know, not lying to yourself about, you know, whether something is working. If it working, great.

R. Yeah, very important. There is a Tibetan proverb that I came across a while back that I have been beating to death in these interviews, and maybe I will put it to rest after running it by you, but it is, uh, don't mistake understanding for awakening, for *realization* ... "Don't mistake understanding for realization. Don't mistake realization for liberation."

A. Yeah, yeah, that is true. I would go right along with that. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because it is, it does go, it does go beyond even realization, a form of

insight or whatever. There is a deeper realm than, than ... any kind of insight.

R. And I mean the first part of it, I mean, a lot of people go to a few satsangs and read a few books, and you do get a genuine intuitive understanding of this because it is right there in your blood, but I think very often people mistake that for the full enchilada.

A. Yeah, yeah. You know, one can always check. You know, we can walk around thinking, "OK, I am totally awakened, and I am totally liberated." There is a, there is one proof of the pudding. Are you still in conflict?

R. As Ram ... Go ahead. I am sorry.

A. Do you experience emotional and psychological conflict? If you do, that doesn't mean you have got to, you know, throw out everything you think you realized, but it means, um, there might be more to see, you know, because that is the liberation part. The liberation is, is the disappearance of conflict, or as I like to say: No more argument with yourself, no more argument with God, no more argument with the world and no more argument with death.

R. Sounds good.

A. And all the arguments are gone. OK, now we are talking about something significant.

R. As Ram Dass put it: "If you think you are enlightened, go spend a week with your parents."

A. Yes! That is probably the best one I have heard. I have heard that before. I love that. (Laughter) Right.

R. You could also say, your children or your mother-in-law or whatever.

A. Absolutely. Yeah, go home for the holidays. In Zen they have a saying that is somewhat like that. If you want to know how enlightened the master is, ask his wife.

R. Very good. (Laughter)

A. Or her husband, as the case may be. Yeah. That is the one thing I got out of the, one of the really good things I got out of the Zen tradition is Zen, it is focused on insight, and it is focused on realization, but it is most, it is even more focused on, can you express it? Can you put it into action? That is, I think, as a tradition what Zen holds; you know, different traditions hold different things. And Zen really holds, can you, can you put this into action? "OK, I am awakened." "Show me."

R. Yeah.

A. "Show me in a way that is not intellectual. You know, don't tell me you are consciousness and all that kind of stuff. Show me." And there is a part of that that I have always really respected, really respected and really was happy that was part of my own path, I would guess you'd say.

R. I like that. If I could impose upon you a few more minutes. There are some questions people submitted when they knew I was going to interview you. And if we could take another five, 10 minutes, would that be all right?

A. Mm-hmm.

R. You're not running out of steam there?

A. No.

R. Some guy said, "Since the beginning of the year your live sessions seem to have a greater urgency. Is this a conscious ramping up, or has it happened naturally?"

A. *Wow.*

R. Or are you even aware that it has happened?

A. Well, my mind just went to the – I can just tell you where my mind went. I don't know if I have had a, if I personally felt a sense of greater urgency. I don't really feel that inside. But I certainly did this year start to talk about things that I didn't form— ... that I didn't talk about in the past much — um, you know, things like real experience of no-self, um, and some other things, which I tried to talk about 10 years ago, and everybody was wrapped up so much in "We are all awakened." Nobody wanted to hear it. Yeah, and I used to literally say to a couple of people who are close to me, I would say, "I wonder what is going to happen when the other shoe drops," which means there is more to this that they now imagine. And then now they are. Now people you know, they are, now they're ... People, wherever I go, their own depth of their own experience, their own realization, is, is maturing — as it does. So now I start to talk about some of these things and, that are much more challenging, you might say. That's maybe why he feels a sense of urgency because they are just more challenging by nature. Um, and yet I have found that, wow, it was interesting because I have found that actually that is the stuff that people want me to talk about.

R. Yeah.

A. They didn't want me to 10 years ago, and now I get, I get by far the most letters and emails that are positive when I talk about sometimes the most difficult and challenging things. That is really, that shows that people are maturing in their own spirituality. And their ... they want something deeper. They want something beyond just "Don't struggle and stop" and you know.

They have done that. And I think that is something quite beautiful, so maybe that is what he sensed.

R. It is interesting that the whole collective is kind of evolving together in a way, you know. You are seeing this wherever you go.

A. Yeah, yeah, it is. It is really interesting.

R. It is kind of exciting.

A. Yeah, it is. It's actually quite beautiful, yeah.

R. Here is another one, and maybe this will be the last one.

"Adya, you have mentioned that awakening is a major shift in identity and also that several people who have undergone this awakening have asked how to reverse it. From what you have said, it sounds as if the initial experience is strange and perhaps lonely. Could you discuss this, how awakening progresses?" We have kind of done this in this interview, but maybe you could just touch on "how awakening progresses, and if these people eventually find being awakened a better and more enjoyable state than being un-awakened."

A. In the long run I have never had somebody come back and say, "Gee, I really wish that didn't happen." You know, sometimes, I have had people, usually in the midst of something, that, in the midst of something happens that some remnant of ego goes: "Whoa," gets really frightened 'cause it's sensing that it is losing its; it's no longer going to be the center of their, of what drives their life. It is very, it can be very, very frightening for an ego. Or, and also, there is a phase that many people go through that — where you really experience your own aloneness. And that is, some people get like an intuitive glimpse of that, before some real spiritual shift. Some people don't, but they are certainly going to get some, a real deeper experience of that after a real shift. A lot of people really experience a deep aloneness, which for some people will trigger — given their conditioning — will trigger memories and feelings of, of loneliness, you see, And so they will have to see through their ... because loneliness and aloneness are very different. Aloneness in its deepest sense is all one. It is all one, and it is all alone. 'Cause there isn't a but; there isn't something else out there. Um, but even getting near that recognition can often, does trigger people's experiences of loneliness and the pain and the isolation of it. And they are afraid that they might end up in that same kind of isolation and pain, um, so I really cued into that word when he ...

R. Yeah. Usually loneliness or aloneness means this little me is isolated from everything else, but the real aloneness that you are referring to — the Sanskrit word is "kaivalya" — is that you are the only thing that is. So really you are in good company.

A. That is right. That is right. The only thing that is, then loneliness ... there has to be two to be lonely.

R. Right.

A. There can't be really loneliness when there is one. But when you kind of put your foot in one, the one can feel very lonely when it is being interpreted, right, by your own separateness.

R. When you are not all the way there really.

A. Yes, especially if you have had a life when you have experienced a lot of loneliness.

R. I exchanged emails with someone who had been watching some of the shows, and she said she had had this enlightenment experience, and that it was so bland and flat and blah. And, you know, it wasn't what she had hoped and expected. And I said well, I said, "Well, don't necessarily assume that is the fully blossomed matured state that you may have eventually develop into. Just, take that as a glimpse, and don't get discouraged."

A. Yeah, yeah, don't get discouraged. Keep going, keep ... just not keep going in the sense of keep grasping but like, like don't worry, Get back to me in a year or two.

R. Yeah, exactly.

A. It will not be exactly ... it will not seem like it seems now. You know, sometimes that is all you can say to somebody, which actually is a, is a statement of great trust because it does, there is a, I know this isn't sort of the right, the correct non-dual language that people like, like to use. But there is a process to all of this, especially the process that unfolds after you have had a real, a real glimpse. It gets deeper and it matures, and it, and that usually isn't something that happens in a twinkle of an eye, you know.

R. Well, maybe it is time for the "correct" non-dual language to sort of be phased out. (Laughter) In fact, some of the non-dual teachers who were really adamant of speaking that way a few years ago, are saying, "Wait a minute. I am changing my tune here," and they are developing into more the kind of way you put things.

A. Well, you know also, well, I'll just end on this. Um, is what I have really seen is over the years is, there is a great value in something just its newness. When it is new, it is extraordinarily powerful. I mean when Maharishi came and brought TM yoga, and man, it was ... nobody was doing meditation. Nobody was doing it.

R. I know. The Beatles did it, and it exploded.

A. Right. And so it was new and because people didn't have a category to put it in their minds, it had a very deep impact. Something doesn't grow

that big because it has no effect on people. Things grow big because
actually something

does happen for them. But the problem is once our mind has got used to language and a certain teaching, it is has got into its habitual pattern. Then the exact same thing, it doesn't have newness. And that becomes problematic because it is newness that breaks through the mind. It is when your mind isn't used ... it doesn't have a category to put it in. It is like it gets caught by surprise. When it is no longer caught by surprise, it just gathers. Oh, yes, there is nothing to do. There is nobody to do it. It is all one, you know, and those same teachings 10 years ago — great impact. There was nowhere to put it inside of the spiritual condition. Now, you know, there is shelves full of where you put that kind of, you know, not that the teaching is bad. It is just like anything; it gets too familiar, and we tend to start to kind of go to sleep a little bit.

R. Which is, we have come full circle because that is how we started this interview. I was talking about how I enjoy listening to you so much because it almost seems like it is ever fresh, and there is, you know, you are not just saying the same thing over and over again. So it will be interesting to see how you continue to do it over the days, weeks, months, years. I will be fascinated to continue to listen and watch and, uh ...

A. Maybe by next year you will be going, "Good Lord, Adya, can you change what you are saying!"

R. I will let you know if that happens.

A. OK.

R. But so far I haven't had that problem.

A. I think I will be the first one to know because I have very short patience for sounding the same.

R. Yeah. So I really want to thank you again for, for doing this interview. It has been really enjoyable for me, something I have been looking forward to for a long time. Um, I would like to apologize to our viewers if the video you have been watching is anything like what I have been seeing on my screen, where Adya looks alternately like a space alien and a burn victim because we are getting such poor quality. I really apologize for that. We tried to fix it. There was not much we could do to get it any better, but hopefully you ... the audio is good because that is what really counts.

A. Well, I appreciate you giving it a good try. There is only so much you can do with a face like this!

R. Your face is OK! (Laughter)

A. It's great to talk to you Rick.

R. Oh, it's really great.

A. I was looking forward to it.

R. Oh, thank you, and I look forward to, you know, meeting you again in person, maybe some retreat or some ... get you back to the boondocks of Iowa or something or other because it is always a joy.

So just to conclude you have been watching.....