

Susanne Marie - BATGAP Interview

July 8, 2013

{BATGAP theme music plays}

Rick: Welcome to Buddha at the Gas Pump. My name is Rick Archer and my guest this week is Susanne Marie, and I'm pronouncing it that way because it's German, so it's not just Suzan, as Americans would say it.

Um, and Susanne was living in the Ashville area, right? I almost snagged you for some kind of an interview down there, but you said, "No, I've moved to the West coast." So now you're out there in Nevada City, as I understand it. And all that is relatively superficial information but it's kind of nice to know where people are.

Susanne: Yeah, I actually returned back to Nevada City. I was here first and then I went to Ashville for a year and a quarter and then we moved back - my whole family.

Rick: That's up in the Sierras, near Tahoe or something?

Susanne: Yeah, it's in the foothills.

Rick: Great, beautiful out there.

Susanne: Yeah.

Rick: So, Susanne Marie – as is her full name – sent me some stuff to read, which was very nice. I felt like we had sort of read from the same playbook because a lot of the concepts and principles you brought out are things interest me a lot – talk about a lot, think about a lot and experience, and so on. Another thing we have in common is that we both recently spent some time with Amma, the so-called "Hugging Saint". Maybe we'll be able to talk a little bit about our experience of *that*.

Susanne: Yeah, sure.

Rick: But you mentioned in the stuff you sent that you experienced unity as a child, and that over time it started to fade. So it's usually good to kind of start with a chronological discussion of a person's life, so let's start with that.

Susanne: Okay. So I didn't know that I was experiencing unity as a child, until later in life when the concept of unity came to my awareness. So what my experience was as a child is that the way that I knew that unity was leaving, was by the relationship that I had with others started to become more fragmented.

And um, I looked for connection with others, with the adults around me. It was like very important for me to feel connected to the adults around me, and I felt how the adults around me weren't connected to themselves. So I was aware at a very young age that my parents and the adults around me suffered from some kind of disillusionment. Yeah.

Rick: And then you found yourself slipping, involuntarily, into that same illusion.

Susanne: Yeah. I told my mom, at the age of nine, that – or maybe it was seven – that my childhood was ebbing away, and she didn't know what to make of it. And the way that I describe it is that I felt like a cloak was descending over me, and it was actually visceral - this cloak – and now we can use the word 'maya,' you know, or something.

So, I had this beautiful relationship with my brother who was one year younger than I. And with him I maintained the connection of um ... unfragmented connection with my brother, and with other children and with nature. And I would look for that kind of connection with the adults around me, and sometimes I would find it in glimpses, here and there. It was almost like a desperation, that I craved that kind of connection.

Over time that this illusionment took more and more place, took hold more and more, but it never completely ebbed. So you know, I have a lot of story that I can tell during from the course of that time to now, of what occurred in terms of reconnecting to that place. But when I *did* reconnect to it, like ten years ago, I call it a remembering, rather than 'an awakening.' And all those words can be used but for me, personally, the word that I relate to it the most is 'a remembering,' it's like, "Ah, here I am again."

Rick: It's often referred to that way, traditionally too. At the end of the Gita, when Arjuna finally wakes up after this dialogue with Krishna, he says, "My memory has been restored. I remember my true nature," you know?

Susanne: Oh, beautiful, yeah, yeah. So at the age of nine I went to boarding school, so I lived for 14 years in Europe. My mother's German, I was raised in Europe, and at the age of nine I went to a Swiss boarding school. And I feel like, intuitively, I wanted to have that experience, to be in that particular place for several reasons. And one of the reasons is that the director of the school was an incredibly spiritual man, a beautiful – he's still alive – a beautiful human being. He actually was adopted from Tunisia and he was raised by Swiss parents. And he started this Swiss International boarding school.

Rick: What city was that in?

Susanne: It was outside of Vevey, so that's close to Genève – Geneva.

Rick: What year was that?

Susanne: I'm terrible with time! So, um ...

Rick: I'm just curious because I might have been there, then.

Susanne: '74.

Rick: Yeah, I was there!

Susanne: You were there?

Rick: Yeah, except I was up near Lucerne though, but I also got down to Geneva. I was up in Lavarias, which is up near the mountains outside, near France, not too far from Geneva. It's a tangent but hey, you were down the road.

Susanne: Beautiful, yeah at the same time. Oh, that was with the TM group?

Rick: Right, right.

Susanne: I heard about that. So later, not at nine ...

Rick: Sorry, go ahead. I had a really funny story once when I was coming from Lavarias down to the Genève airport, and my French was so poor that I ordered a glass of milk in a little sidewalk café as I was changing buses, and they brought me a tall, full glass of crème de menthe syrup. And everybody at this place stared at me like, "What is this guy gonna do with this?"

Susanne: That's funny.

Rick: That's how good my French was.

Susanne: Well I was thrown into having to speak French so it was a total immersion, and that's like the best way, especially when you're young.

So this director at the school, he was like my spiritual father. We had a very strong, beautiful interaction, and it sustained me. I had a loving relationship with my parents who lived in Madrid at the time, and there was a lot of kindness and physical demonstrations of love in our family, but there was a disconnection that my parents had from themselves, as is typical in the collective.

Rick: And you were aware of that?

Susanne: Yeah, very aware.

Rick: How aware? I mean, were you really ... could you have explained it to someone at that age, if it were someone who could understand what you were talking about? Or was it just this sort of deep, subliminal sort of sense that things weren't right?

Susanne: I would have appreciated someone to have asked me, probably, yeah. Because it was this personal *awareness* that I didn't feel like I could share with anyone. And I went through a period that when I was in Spain with my parents, that I thought my parents were robots. So during certain times they would be the robot and at other times they were my parents. And when they were the robot was typically when they were with other adults, you know, doing the adult thing.

Rick: Because they seem so artificial or unnatural, or out of touch with themselves?

Susanne: Yeah, yeah. I mean I wasn't scared, but I was curious. I was like, "Why are they different at different times?" So I would say that it wasn't subliminal; I would say that it was a real conscious awareness.

Rick: Mm-hm. I'd like to throw something in here because in a way you're implying that children are born as wholeness and enlightened, in a sense, and then that the world sort of wears them down and they lose that, and then maybe later on if they're lucky, they regain it.

From a sort of reincarnation perspective it's said that if you're born at all, it's because you're not enlightened, or you're not fully established in wholeness, and there's some work yet to undertake, unless you're some kind of avatar or something, and you're sort of born in a self-realized state. Granted though, I mean I can remember such things myself, perhaps not as clearly as you, where there is sort of a freshness, an innocence about a child that we may seem very enlightened.

But still you know, kids, they scream and they have tantrums and they don't necessarily seem established in equanimity, which is characteristic of a true experience of wholeness. So maybe we romanticize childhood a little bit, but there's also some truth to the notion that we do lose something of which ... and there's certain childlike qualities to enlightenment such as innocence and spontaneity and so on, which you know, a saint has regained.

Susanne: Well, I hear what you're saying and I can't speak for every single person who remembers their childhood, how it was. I'm guessing that for some people that the experience of separation took hold better than perhaps it did for me and it wasn't remembered, it's not remembered.

The concept that you speak about, enlightenment, if you're reborn, you wouldn't be reborn, well I don't know if that's true or not.

Rick: Yeah, it's a philosophy.

Susanne: Yeah, yeah, yeah, but I do know that having forgotten, to a degree, that experience of being one with everything, when it was remembered it was remembered in a more deeply embodied kind of way. So perhaps what I came in with, I'm guessing, wasn't perhaps able to sustain the density of the maya that exists now.

If you're looking as a child, if you're looking at the adults around you for confirmation of this connection and you're not getting it, perhaps at another time it was confirmed all over the place. That can, I don't know, that's just being born here, now. That's just time.

Rick: That phrase you just used, "being able to sustain the density of the maya," I think is really critical. And obviously there are degrees to which the maya is thrown at us, you know, depending on the circumstances you're born into - for some people it's horrific - and there are also degrees of capability of sustaining, you know, wholeness or self-awareness in the midst of whatever the circumstances may be. So there are those two variables and some people have the intense maya and very little sustenance ability, and for them it's really hell, and others have a lot of wholeness to begin with and you know,

maybe not too many challenges, and for them it's an easy ride, and for some it's more kind of more a fair amount of both.

Susanne: Yeah well, I wouldn't say I had a totally easy ride, but I mean, going to boarding school at nine is not necessarily an easy ride but the gift was this person. So it's like, if we want to talk about the intelligence of life, it's like it placed me. And I actually had a choice, like I chose to go to that school.

So, during my childhood I feel like there were these little islands of relief where I would be seen. And another time occurred when I was 15, there was a faith healer in Germany by the name of Jakob, who, he was like the real thing. He was a beautiful, beautiful human being and he was already in his 70s when I met him, and I just felt so seen by him.

I think that's a lot of what happens when you recognize a teacher outside of you, and you know that it's a teacher that's going to provide you with the things that you need, is when they're able to reflect back your true nature, you know what you are.

So this being, he was a channel of Saint Francis and he would heal people. So he was in the Christian tradition but it was beautiful, gorgeous, shiny. And all I did was laugh when I was with him, I felt so light.

Rick: Nice.

Susanne: Yeah, really nice. And so that, experiences like that, helped a lot during the teenage years of when persona really wanted to take hold more fully. And speaking of persona, I was never very successful at establishing anything that I could really believe in. So including when high school came, I got out as soon as I can, I did an early exit program, and by then we were living in the States.

And then I wasn't able to complete college because I couldn't put myself into anything that was abstract and didn't make sense to my being, which you know was difficult for my parents to see.

Rick: You couldn't take it seriously enough, in other words.

Susanne: Mm-mm. Yeah, there was something that kept wanting to go for what's true, what's true. So I studied yoga and meditation when I was, I think I was 24 or younger.

Rick: What kind of meditation did you learn?

Susanne: I didn't learn any.

Rick: You just studied on your own?

Susanne: Well, I took classes for a whole year and became a yoga teacher and did pranayama, and that kind of leading in, but the first time – when I say I studied meditation, that's probably not true; it's more like 'I meditated,' – so the first time I sat, I was home.

Rick: Just came naturally to you.

Susanne: Mm-hm, yeah, yeah.

Rick: Hmm. It's my kind of understanding of things, for what it's worth - and I didn't dream this up; I learned it from books and teachers and what not, it seems to resonate – it's just that people are born at different levels of evolution, different levels of spiritual development. And people with a fairly high level of spiritual development are going to perhaps not get that entrapped in the maya, and will break out of it again relatively easily compared to others.

I have this friend who says that from childhood he had self-realization, but he said when he was like in his early 20s, he experienced [a] ten minute or a 15 minute period of ignorance, and that was it for his whole life.

Susanne: Oh my gosh.

Rick: But he said that 10 or 15 minutes he wanted to die. He said, "How could people live like this?" And he was just greatly relieved when it faded away again.

Susanne: That's not really my case. I mean for me, I feel like I had my dose of ignorance.

Rick: Yeah, but on the general scale of things, compared to *me* for instance, I feel like you managed to keep it together pretty well.

Susanne: Well um, it wasn't without its own form of suffering because I wasn't clear inside what it was I needed to do to go back home.

Rick: But at least you realized there *was* a home.

Susanne: I did!

Rick: That's big, yeah, I mean, most people don't even realize that there is such a thing, much less aspire for it. And so you know, you had this clear sense that there was something I have somehow gotten estranged from and I need to return to, and that's significant.

Susanne: Yeah, it is, and I had to trust in the knowing inside of which way to go. It's like I started to develop, pretty young, an inner compass of which way to go, and it wasn't always easy to follow that because it was, in general, it was against the wishes of my parents and things like that. So the strong authority figures around me who were paying for my existence when I was going to college or something, were totally baffled. I was confused too.

I was confused why it was and I thought there must be ... there was a part of me that actually thought 'well maybe it's just I need therapy or I need something.'

Rick: Something wrong with me, yeah.

Susanne: 'There's something wrong with me that I can't seem to want to *become* something,' you know? In this world of becoming, you can see how quickly a label of "something wrong" could come up.

Rick: So did you sometimes ignore your inner compass and listen to what other people were telling you?

Susanne: Yeah, yeah, for brief periods and then it just ...

Rick: You probably got whacked for doing that, right?

Susanne: Yeah, it was just like “die, everything would die, everything would dry up, you know? No joy, no juice, the inertia would set in.

Rick: Yeah, and so after that happened enough times, I imagine, as you said, you just got more adamant about following the inner compass.

Susanne: Yeah, yeah, I threw it all in and I became a yoga student and then a yoga teacher, where I have to say that was [an] incredibly wonderful time, for me, to just throw in the towel and say, “This is what I’m doing.”

And at the same time I was trying to look for the truth within these ancient texts, you know, the sutras, the yoga sutras and all these things. I was trying to find these nuggets of truth and I would find them, but I would have to sift through all this wordy, heady, and old-fashioned way of describing it. And I was going towards the Hindu tradition, in that sense. I wasn’t aware of the Buddhist tradition, at the time, or nonduality; I had no clue about Advaita or anything like that.

Rick: Well you weren’t far from it if you were studying Patanjali, you know what I mean? That’s just one of the branches of yoga and Vedanta is another one – I mean of Hindu philosophy. And there are, you know, hints of that in Patanjali too, aren’t there? - I mean, Advaita and nondual stuff?

Susanne: Yeah, and I didn’t have a teacher to point that out to me.

Rick: Hmm.

Susanne: It was just something that would hit me and I would resonate, and I didn’t discern what it was exactly. Yeah, so I went to live for a little while in an ashram in Virginia – Yogaville – Satchitananda’s ashram.

Rick: Oh, right, sure, mm-hmm.

Susanne: Yeah, and I came across a little book by Shivananda called *Nada Yoga*. And so I discovered in that way that the meditation that I had been doing naturally, was being described in this little teeny book.

So little by little, the outside references started to point to things that had been true for me, or had been developing organically within me.

Rick: Yeah. Just to get esoteric again, there’s many references in scriptures, like the ones you referred to and traditions like that, of doing spiritual practices over many lifetimes. And you know, there’s a verse in the Gita about “if you’re fortunate, you’re born in a family of yogis and you pick up where you left off.” Well you weren’t quite born into a family of yogis, but ...

Susanne: I must have done something really bad.

Rick: No, but you did kind of catch onto this at an early age, and in a sense you just picked up where you had left off.

Susanne: Perhaps, yeah, it's hard to know. On one hand, that really resonates, and on another hand, I think that it's so mysterious, it's hard to know, right?

Rick: Yep.

Susanne: I mean, in that sense it's just too mysterious to really know, but we can kind of feel into what might be true. And it's really nice for me to be able to - now - to do this work that I love to do, that is what was home for me from the beginning. To have it be something that is actually interesting to others, and that there are others who know it to be valuable and pointing to what's really true.

So because I spent so many years, as I described, as a child, leading to discovering yoga, being on my own, you know?

Rick: One thing you said about your childhood years, well a couple of interesting things you said, one was "understanding others before language," like you sort of kind of like picking up on a level of their thought process before it even formed, or some such thing?

Susanne: Right, because I learned four different languages within a four year period of time - I don't remember one of them so well - but it was so fast. I was thrown into Italy - Italian, I was thrown into Spain, I was thrown into the French-speaking part of Switzerland, I already spoke German, English.

So I think what happened is I was just paying attention, and it was already kind of my nature to listen and to pay attention to what people were really saying since I was little. You know, what are people *really* saying? What are they really communicating, even if the words that are coming out are bla bla bla? What is really happening?

And so, it's like an intuitive faculty, it's another sense almost. I think we all have it, but it can be strengthened like a muscle.

Rick: Yeah, and you also mentioned communing with beings and guides from other realms. That was happening while you were a child?

Susanne: More when I was a teenager, they started to really come in that I would ... it started off with having a real interest, probably around the age ... well actually I started having an interest in the mystical when I was in boarding school. We would call in ghosts and different things; you know how kids will do.

So I actually would *see* stuff - I don't know about the power of imagination in this case - and it just grew from there. So in my teenage years, when I was sleeping I would wake up and often there would be beings in the room. It felt benign.

Rick: Human looking type beings?



Susanne: Yeah, ghostly, like kind of ephemeral.

Rick: So, subtle perception?

Susanne: Hmm, yeah, and then when I was meditating a lot and doing yoga, I had some visitations from beings. I think that for me they became guides, on a certain level, of tuning into higher, more subtle realms.

Rick: Did they give some actual direction to your life in a concrete sense, or was it just sort of abstract infusion of wisdom, which hard to pinpoint exactly how it played out in the relative?

Susanne: No, I felt guided, I felt guided.

Rick: Like your inner compass was being magnetized by them a little bit.

Susanne: Yeah, I felt like that was aligning myself with the mystical realms and I thought that that was the way to liberation, you know? It must have been like you were talking about earlier, just something that I came in with – this openness towards other realms, other beings, being guided in my dreams – very active dream life.

And whenever I felt things slowing down on the inner, in terms of my inner development, I would ask for a dream and boom! – I would get this dream that would point, you know, and dreams of opening up the third eye, and I mean, on and on. And when I met Amma, I would have dreams of Amma. And then dreams of ... I lived in Taos for six years - Taos, New Mexico - and I went to the Neem Karoli Baba ashram there. I don't know if you know who he is.

Rick: Oh yeah, sure, in fact, when I was seeing Amma in Santa Fe one time, a bunch of his followers came down and did some chanting of something.

Susanne: Probably that Chalisa.

Rick: Yeah, that was it, that was it!

Susanne: Yeah, so when I got connected with the temple there, I had dreams of Neem Karoli and of Hanuman. So it's like wherever I would open myself up, then it would just come rushing in. I can say that I was *wired* that way, you know, just some people are – more wired that way – but as you know, it doesn't really have to do with awakening.

Rick: It doesn't but I wouldn't brush it off to the extent that some people do, you know? Cause I think, especially people who have never had such experiences tend to brush it off like, "That's just a distraction." But I think, you know, awakening is a much more sort of a multifarious phenomenon than just locking into the absolute; there's all this subtle unfoldment that can be associated with it, either before or after the big event, if there is a big event, you know what I mean?

Susanne: Yeah, I think that you're right. You can't really separate out what leads to anything. You can't say that 'it has nothing to do with it,' but in a sense, when realization happens, then it is the same

experience, the same realization in every phenomenon, in all phenomenon, whether it's in this more dense form, and on the subtle realms. So realizing that, for me at least, I had to step out of the stream of being attached to that kind of phenomenon. I would say it was a form of addiction.

Rick: Well you say you studied Patanjali, I mean even in the Yoga Sutras it says don't be caught up if the celestial beings invite you and you know, try to get you all engaged, that can be ... I forget the word ... that can be a deterrent or a hang up, an impediment, and you have to move beyond that.

Susanne: Yeah, because it's very seductive, right?

Rick: It's charming.

Susanne: Charming, like, 'My life is really hard, let me just have a little hit of the beyond,' you know?

Rick: Yeah.

Susanne: So my life did get really hard when my brother died in 2002.

Rick: The one you were so close to.

Susanne: Yeah, so we were one year apart and we had maintained this connection even though we didn't live in the same town anymore. We had maintained this, whenever we got together, it was this same, instant oneness between us – very beautiful.

So he died in 2002 from a drug overdose.

Rick: Funny, I was thinking that might be what it was but hadn't even asked you but, somehow that ... yeah, go ahead.

Susanne: Yeah, so I had two children at the time – a five year-old and a three year-old. And in my bio I say that several traumatic events happened in a year's time, this is the "year's time" that I'm speaking about.

So first, the kids' father left. I just have to say, he came to be with the kids, but in essence I was single-parenting for the next five years. And so he left, my brother died three months later, and then I was with my father when *he* died, nine months after that.

But what happened when my brother died is that I made a vow; I made a vow to find out where he went. It was so important for me. And I can tell you, Rick, that right when my brother died, immediately, I asked all those beings who had been so informing my life and making it ... making it so that I could really be here, actually, because I think being here is pretty hard for someone who's really sensitive – for all of us really, right? So it was making it so that I could be here, in a way. So I asked them to all take a hike.

Rick: Ha! - interesting. Some people might think you would have asked them where your brother went: 'Is he with you guys? Where'd he go?'

Susanne: I was pissed. I was pissed and I was, well, I was just incredibly, I felt incredibly let down because I don't know, it was some kind of really naïve, innocent understanding of what this world is about, that you could be protected in *any* kind of way from the harshness of these uncompromising realities. There's no going back, right? Death, boom!

So when he died, I asked them to take a hike, and within, right away, they were gone. Like well, where did they go, right? – but in terms of my dream-life I had no more dreams. I mean, it was just astounding the black and whiteness. So I was sobered up like I landed on this planet, finally, mother Earth, in a more solid way that was without any kind of protection between myself and reality.

Rick: So did you feel like you had lost something then, or did you feel like out of a, sort of an imaginary realm that you ... that it was good to have left?

Susanne: Well I didn't feel like I lost anything. I didn't want it.

Rick: It felt like you sobered up, in a way. Yeah.

Susanne: Yeah, we can talk later about how I feel about it now, but then it was just that's what I wanted. I wanted to just have the pure experience, unadulterated, of being here. But I was overcome with grief. I mean really, it took several years, and still happens, where the realization of boom! – he's really gone, or you know reality really meeting me, *me* meeting reality here, like that you know, without any kind of gap or imagination in-between.

So really, imagination in a certain sense died, hope ...

Rick: So do you think all those beings and what not were imaginary, or real but subtle?

Susanne: I don't think they were imaginary like I made it up, but it was intangible – that doesn't mean it's imagination.

Rick: Subtle.

Susanne: Subtle. Yeah, yeah.

Rick: I mean celestial beings are not concrete, physical blood and bones entities; they're made of subtler stuff.

Susanne: Right, right, right. I don't mean to say that they're imaginary but, maybe what I did with it created more imagination, as if it would protect me from life.

Rick: Like you were taking refuge in that realm and not fully coming to terms with this one.

Susanne: Right, so it was like a buffer. It was a sweet buffer and I didn't want to be protected anymore, on a certain level, you know? And who knows, right, do they really go anywhere? Do they really stop being a part of your life? Is that all imagination? – I don't know.

But the experience was it was like an honoring of what I was wanting. But really, it's like intelligence once again was stepping in and saying, "The way to realization..." and you know, I didn't know this at the time; it was *completely* intuitive – that "the way to realization is through stripping away beliefs!"

Rick: And assumptions and, yeah, right.

Susanne: Right, so platforms of belief, you know, that the mind rests on.

Rick: Yeah, and I think in your book you use the word, either 'deconstruction' or demolition' – that it can happen piece by piece, carefully, or it can be one of those big explosions where the building just collapses.

Susanne: Uh-ha, yeah, it was like that. It was like somebody pulled one piece that was very vital and...

Rick: Like a house of cards sort of thing.

Susanne: Completely. Later I found myself being incredibly grateful for the experience, just wishing that it didn't come at such a price, yeah.

Rick: So you're kind of saying that your brother's death, your father's death, and your partner's departure, those were the thing that pulled the critical card. And if so, these external events shocked you into some different, sort of orientation to life.

Susanne: Yeah, shock is a good point. Yeah, that's a good way to put it. So I was in shock, I was in shock, but slowly the fog of being in shock started to lift, and seeing things as they probably are, more truly, began to take form. And I actually didn't even want to go see Amma for a couple of years – maybe it was a year. So I just felt like letting it all go and just being with myself, really stepping back into myself and being really honest, while I was parenting these two small children.

And a year after that occurred I met Adyashanti. Meeting him was very helpful for me because I didn't want another teacher that I felt put a layer of (sighing), I don't know, let's not put it that way, but who was so sober in his teaching, in the teaching. I needed someone who didn't even talk about the mystical realm so much. I just needed some silver teachings because I was totally ready.

I didn't even know that I wanted to have another teacher, but someone took me to see Adya and I was living in Marin at the time.

Rick: So you met Adya, and?

Susanne: All these memories, hmm? -going back in time. At the time, my mind was very active with trying to figure things out or undo itself. It was like, the way I felt was like this Rubik's cube, you know...

Rick: Spinning around.

Susanne: Going, doing that thing, yeah. Have you heard of that before?

Rick: Well I've certainly heard of Rubik's cubes and I've seen people solve them in 15 seconds or something!

Susanne: Well that's what my mind was doing. It was happening at night at the expense of my sleep, you know, cause I was taking care of the kids in the day. So two things were going on in my life: I was a mother – a single mom to these two kids, and luckily kids at that age, you don't have to think and talk too much, cause I was really slowed-down, I was very slowed-down. And then the other thing that was going on was I was just fascinated by materiality, and I would stare at simple things, like lamps.

I wanted to know the essence of things. So this Rubik's cube was going on and the complete simplicity of essence was starting to reveal itself to the point where, I didn't even know it then but now I can describe it as like emptiness, started to reveal itself.

Rick: Do you feel like it had already kind of revealed itself within you, like on some kind of abstract inner level, and that your fascination with material objects such as lamps and trying to find the essence in them, was kind of a further, an expansion of that inner realization, or did that thing with lamps, using that as an example, come first?

Susanne: No, no, that's really insightful. I think that's probably what was happening, is that the inner understanding, because one thing I didn't mention earlier is that when my brother died and I made a vow to discover where he went, I actually, at night, was taken on a journey travelling with his soul, or his essence, into these different dimensions, and until the point came when he disappeared.

Rick: Hmm, cause you couldn't go that far.

Susanne: Couldn't go that far, but part of me went that far. It was like a three-week or longer process, and I remembered feeling, "Oh, he's gone. It's over, it's gone, like a trace."

Rick: Almost as if he's in some sort of transitionary realm and you could sort of accompany him in that realm, but at a certain point he had to go on.

Susanne: Well, and I felt myself go on with him to a point, so becoming less and less, more and more subtle, whatever was of him, of Daniel, was becoming less and less until it disappeared. And after that there was a part of me that felt like I was dead too.

Rick: Interesting.

Susanne: Like I had gone into, I could even say that there was a part that I felt that I had one foot that was in death. So there was one foot in life and one foot that was in the beyond

Rick: But to me that doesn't have a negative connotation, that other dimension was enlivened in your experience by virtue of his death and that's a really good perspective to have, actually.

Susanne: In this kind of stuff, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Rick: I mean I sat with a friend who died about a month ago and meditated with his body for a while and all, and afterwards, and even ever since then till now, there's this sense that it changed my perspective somehow. I can understand why yogis would meditate in cremation grounds and stuff.

There's kind of this locked-in assumption that we have, ordinarily in life, where we feel like we're going to live forever or something, and that this is all there is. And then when a person leaves and you realize, "Oh, well that animating spirit that was making this body move and talk and speak, that's gone. Where did it go?" - like you were saying with your brother. And you begin to see everyone as basically dead people who still have their animating spirit there, but that's going to leave in a matter of decades, or days, or whatever.

Susanne: Yeah, exactly. There's a part of us that is dead already.

Rick: Yeah, I know what you mean.

Susanne: So that's how I felt on the inside.

Rick: The Grateful Dead, hmm?

Susanne: Yeah, I was just about dancing. So um ...

Rick: Sorry to interrupt, you kind of eluded to the idea that emptiness or the absolute value had actually dawned, somehow or other, as a result of all these tragedies but you didn't quite make that explicitly clear, but you just implied that that's what happened.

Everything was stripped away and you kind of got grounded in the real world, but it sounds like you're saying that somehow or other, that was the time at which you really kind of came home to absolute realization, also.

Susanne: Yeah, and I wasn't reflecting on it so I didn't have awareness of it. It was just this deep sense of - and it was prior to meeting Adya, so I didn't have any words for it.

Rick: But when you met Adya and the whole thing matured a little bit, you kind of realized in retrospect that this is what had happened?

Susanne: Yeah, but it's not over yet. It's like, I don't even mean presently, I just meant then. The awareness of emptiness had already been seen to some major degree, without the ability to self-reflect on it; it was just there.

Then the next step for me was seeing it in the outside, and so the lab and the cars ... when my kids were in their schools I would park my car - in Fairfax, California - and just watch, fascinated, people walking by, cars driving by, and I was in bliss. I mean literally, I was just in bliss with what it felt like. It wasn't in color anymore; it was ... shades of grey were appearing two-dimensional rather than three. Things were becoming flat and color was leaving.

And it wasn't at all times, I could still function, but it was as if what I had - and I didn't even know this then - but what I had infused life into with my own awareness, you know, putting life, seeing things as real started to return, and the ephemeral nature of things started to reveal themselves.

The fact that, I don't even know how to describe it because I didn't think about it back then, all I knew was it was such a relief.

Rick: So is that what you mean by shades of grey, and flat - two-dimensional, it's that the life which you had attributed to those things was no longer there?

Susanne: It was like it was returning back the meaning and the *substance* that things contain, things were being seen more for what they really are and it was reflecting back as visual ... on that level.

Rick: Yeah, so *literally* you were seeing things more in shades of grey and two-dimensional, not just a metaphor.

Susanne: Yeah, yeah.

Rick: And did that continue in that sense, or was that just a phase?

Susanne: It was a phase, yeah, yeah.

Rick: Because I would say that, you know, you could say that, but on the other hand, everything is completely saturated with intelligence and Divine quality and you know, Divine nature is so you know, the tiniest little stone on the ground is like this miraculous thing throbbing with life, and *isn't* meaningless.

Susanne: Well, there are stages. So if you really, in order to realize emptiness when it occurs, it's different for everyone. And in my case, the way that it occurred was that meaning was returned *back* to the source that imagined it to be real.

Rick: Well that really makes sense to me, and it actually jives with traditional explanations that I've read and heard, where you do go through a phase of flatness, where the outer world just seems sort of dead, but kind of meaningless, flat, devoid of significance, or whatever. But then eventually, appreciation begins to dawn more and more, and there's a whole new richness that everything is seen in terms of, you know, and that just continues to grow.

Susanne: Yeah, so just to make it more rich, so what happened is that I had this beautiful experience in Point Reyes, at the ocean, where I had some time to myself, which did not occur very often, when suddenly the waves and the sand and myself - and so a oneness stepped in, and awareness of *being* part of every single thing emerged.

So when you talk about the richness in the stone and every particle being it, it's absolutely true. So the life came rushing back in full of, you know, wonder and vitality and color and beauty. So much so, that I became kind of drunk on it, you know? The person who has discovered the oneness and all that, really, truthfully, in a way, I can say that's never left.

Rick: Since Point Reyes?

Susanne: Yeah.

Rick: Right.

Susanne: And it's ... of course it became normalized.

Rick: Everything does.

Susanne: It took several years and for about a year I could actually talk about it, or so, and after that I couldn't even reflect on any of it. I couldn't reflect on the emptiness for a few years, I couldn't speak about it. Every time I thought about it or tried to think about it, I would just kind of go into some stupid zone.

Rick: You're doing pretty well right now.

Susanne: Well, no, it's coming back, the ability to speak about it.

Rick: I see, yeah. All this to me seems very natural and you know, it's going to be a little bit different for different people, but it's completely natural that we go through these phases of inability to speak and integration, and familiarization, acclimation, to these different stages of development.

Susanne: You have so much experience in people you've interviewed that you have that awareness, but I didn't really have ...

Rick: You were kind of on your own.

Susanne: Yeah, I was on my own but I was connected to this sangha with Adya.

Rick: Right, so that must have helped a lot.

Susanne: It helped a lot. So you know, it is wonderful to have a teacher and to have sangha who confirm and understand this kind of thing that we're speaking about – was invaluable for me, really. Really helped it to stabilize and to not question it one bit, to have no doubt whatsoever that this was exactly what needed to happen.

So I had the context, I had the container to be able to hold me in a beautiful kind of way, even though you know who Adya is of course, he doesn't ... he just doesn't babysit people. So it was more an abstract container, but for me it was enough of a container.

Rick: Oh, he's a good container. A large part of his role seems to be dealing with post-awakening issues, you know?

Susanne: Yeah.



Rick: I mean, *if* we want to demarcate a particular thing as awakening, because you can probably draw that line in a number of places, but you know, this coming home, self-realization kind of thing that we're talking about.

A lot of what he deals with seems to be *post* that awakening, cause you know, it's not all peaches and cream necessarily, after that awakening. There's a lot yet to unfold and explore and understand, and so on, and we need teachers who specialize in that kind of thing.

Susanne: Yeah, exactly, and then at some point, six years ago or something like that, I stopped going to see Adya. In fact, at one of the volunteer meetings that they used to have, these volunteer satsangs, he told me that I didn't need to come anymore. I took him to heart, I took that ... I was a very good student.

Rick: Were you in the least upset by that or you figured you knew where he was coming from and it seemed right?

Susanne: Oh, no, I wasn't upset, but it was a letting go. It was a graduation that you know, took some time to acclimate to, because I moved from Marin to Nevada country, here in California, and I left the sangha, I left my volunteer position in the organization – in the Open Gate Organization – and I just went cold turkey.

[I] came to a community who at first I didn't connect with on that level, so I really stepped out into the unknown, within myself, because in the end that's what we have to do anyway. We can't refer anymore to what the teachers say; it really needs to be lived.

Rick: Have you had a teacher in any formal sense since Adya?

Susanne: Um-uh, no.

Rick: What's your experience when you go to see Amma now? Cause you've resumed going to see Amma, I guess with your daughter or something?

Susanne: Yeah, so a year after this occurred with my brother I went to see Amma and I had the most beautiful experience with her. I took a picture of my brother with me to have her bless, and she asked her Swami – you know the big guy?

Rick: Yeah, big Swami.

Susanne: Big Swami. So she asked Swami what happened to my brother and I told him. She got this look on her face that, truthfully, took about 50% or more away of my grief, just by seeing the reflection she gave me – a total dismay, pain, [it] was life reflecting back to me how I felt, or the truth of the matter of how tragic it was.

So she gave me this reflection on her face, and just to be met in that way was incredibly powerful.

Rick: It's interesting how Amma doesn't just sort of brush things off as, you know, with some philosophical attitude; she really feels people's grief.

Susanne: She does. She penetrates everything.

Rick: Yeah, I was just recently I was sitting a few feet from her and a woman came up who had a broken leg, and she told this whole story to Amma about how her husband abused her, you know, and all this terrible stuff. And Amma was just like crying, you know? Tears coming down her face, she's consoling this woman and all. So it's [not] this whole notion that we become aloof in some cosmic la-la land, just by her example.

Susanne: Yeah, yeah, exactly, I'm so grateful to her and to the experiences that I've had with her.

Rick: What is your experience now when you go to see her? This is, you know, this interview is about you and we're not just going to be talking about Amma, but I'm interested in what you, in a relatively awakened condition, what influence ... Someone might ask, "Well why would you bother to go see Amma now, aside from your daughter's interest?" But secondly, for your own purpose, what is the influence or impact or effect on your inner experience, or your inner development, as a result of that association?

Susanne: Yeah, well I don't see her as outside of myself, so going to see her is going to see an aspect of myself that is just like to me, a *huge* container. A huge container of what's possible, with the things that she does, what she's capable of – the love and the work that she does and gives to the world.

So for me to go see her is just 'this being meeting that being,' and in gratitude. I just feel gratitude and love and appreciation, and it's like a yearly pilgrimage that I do with my kids, and last time with my daughter. They love it – my daughter now because my son's 16, so he has other things to do, but she, she still really loves going to see Amma.

There's just this one little story, an Amma story. When Gaia, my daughter was 9, she's going to be 14, we went to see Amma and my daughter was acting out a lot to her teachers, and acting out a lot to me - doing a lot of pushing away kind of, she wasn't contented inside. Well we went to go see Amma and Amma you know, Gaia's been seeing her since she was in the womb, but Amma took one look at her and bit her on her cheek, pretty hard.

And so my daughter walked away and said, "Amma bit me and there are some marks," – you know, not hard hard, and she looked so blissful. And Rick her attitude completely changed, her teachers saw all this change in her, she was a new person. And the way that I see it is that Gaia was trying to be the pack leader, she's a very kind of strong leader type of girl, and she was trying to be the pack leader and she wasn't satisfied with what she was finding in *me*, as her mom, or with her teachers – it just wasn't doing the trick, you know? But Amma saw what was needed, you know, and put her in ...

Rick: Did what an alpha dog would do to establish pack leadership.

Susanne: Exactly, exactly, since the Divine is in charge, not you. And it changed, it changed everything.

Rick: That is so interesting. That's an interesting topic that we could talk about is, life lived with the Divine in charge, and how things happen that you would never have been able to figure out or determine, 'Okay, I think I'll bite this girl on the cheek,' or you know, whatever, but there's this kind of spontaneity that works out in kind of miraculous ways sometimes.

Susanne: It's true hu? Yeah. It's in charge regardless of whether we're aware of it or not, even if we *think* we're getting in its way, it's in charge.

Rick: Yeah, like when I was at the Amma thing in Chicago just now, I noticed the car parked next to me in the lot had its lights on, and so as I was walking back to the hall I thought, 'I want to meet the person who owns the car so I can tell him about his lights, and now I'm just going to drop this desire and let it just happen if it's meant to happen.'

So I went into the men's room and the guy standing next to me, in the next urinal, was a friend of mine. And I said, "Hey, do you know anybody who has a Honda Civic with such and such license plate?" And he said, "That's my car!" So he went out and turned off his lights.

Susanne: Yeah, that's amazing, yeah, synchronicity at the urinals.

Rick: There's another little story. Swami told this story about this woman in some village several hours from Munich, and she was a single mom, no money, somehow scraping barely enough money for food, jobless, somehow scraped enough money for train fare to come and see Amma.

And so she got there and told Amma her plight, through a translator, and Amma said, "Come back tonight." And she said, "I can't come back tonight because I'm committed to this train ticket. I'll forfeit it and I don't have enough money to buy another one."

But somehow she just .... And so Swami double-checked and Amma told him, "Tell her to come back tonight." So she did it, she came back in the evening. And when she came back there was some guy standing by the couch who was some kind of a business man, who happened to live in her town back there, wherever that town was, and Amma looked at the guy and she said, "Can you give her a job?"

And the guy said, "Yeah, as a matter of fact I need to hire somebody." So it all worked out.

Susanne: Oh my, that's beautiful.

Rick: And Amma didn't even know this person or the guy, or anything else. It just all somehow clicked together.

Susanne: Gorgeous hu? Talk about a big container.

Rick: Yeah, and which kind of leads us, you know we can play with this some more, because you talk a lot about in the things you sent that I read, about how we're really not this little pin point of an

individual that we think we are; we're cosmic intelligence. The individual is cosmic and there's so much that can be appreciated when you kind of dwell on that experience and understanding. Maybe why don't you – I've been talking too much – why don't you talk about that concept a little bit?

Susanne: Oh, but you're entertaining. Okay. Well, the way that I describe it is that, and maybe you've heard of this analogy before, that the experience of being 'I' is like the pin prick. It's this narrowed down lens, really, of consciousness. It narrows its lens down to a point and it knows itself in the miniscule. So, you know, in the particle, in the rock, in the cell, in the most tiny experiences of phenomena, and that includes the sense of 'I'.

And then it has the capacity to open itself up more, the lens of consciousness, to include more and more of itself, to include awareness of the body, of its surroundings, to forget this pinpoint, you know, of an 'I', to include more and more.

You could say that could be imagination, but truthfully, where does consciousness go? It goes where you pay attention, what you pay attention to. So if you're paying attention to the whole, more and more of the whole, the experience *is* being aware of the whole. Isn't it kind of what you run into in terms of...

Rick: Yeah, and the way I see it is that we embody cosmic principles, and there's this principle of individuation, specification, that really is necessary for there to be a universe. You know, this kind of amorphous "stuff" of which the universe is made, congealed, and individuated into specific molecules. And those molecules organize themselves into bodies, and those bodies regard themselves as having small identities, compared to the vastness of the whole.

But there's kind of a counter-balancing principle, which is that, as you refer to it often in the stuff that you write, of wanting to come back to Source. So there's this kind of whole cycle from here, all the way through this, back to here – you know, from 'I' all the way through individuated, all the way back to 'I'.

I was discussing this with a friend and we were saying, you know, "What force could be adequately powerful or alluring to counter-balance this tendency toward individuation and towards outward-directed attention, which seems to be driving everything?" – and that force is bliss. It's sort of sufficiently attractive to the mind that it can take it all the way home.

Susanne: Hmm, that's sweet, I like that.

Rick: Yeah.

Susanne: Yeah, and it melts that individuated sense of 'I', doesn't it, the bliss?

Rick: Yeah, there's that saying: "Contact with Brahmin is infinite joy."

Susanne: Yeah, what's interesting is that awareness – God, or whatever word you want to use – has the capacity to be a pin prick of a sense of 'I' as well as have that sense of bliss.

Rick: Simultaneously, yes.

Susanne: Yeah, so it has the capacity to be all of itself. So that's what realization really is. It's when awareness wakes up to itself and it's not glued to its identification with form anymore, or with thought – diffused form.

Rick: Yeah, and sometimes it seems to be presented that it's going to be a complete loss of 'I', you know, or complete loss of individuation, but personally, I don't understand how living would be possible if that were the case. There needs to be the whole spectrum there, as you put in something you wrote, "You need to know whose mouth to put the food in."

Susanne: Yeah right, it's just stories that we tell, you know, or that have been told of how it's supposed to look. But to function here, and to move through the world, and to know yourself as that, more and more fully in everything that you do, in every object, that is the ongoing embodiment that takes place, that's never ending.

Rick: You said here, "The maturation of that takes the rest of one's life, I don't see how there can be an end to it."

Look at somebody like Amma as an example, are we there yet, in terms of the degree to which we are embodying and expressing that? Well, maybe not.

Susanne: And every life form is going to have its own unique expression, right?

Rick: Right, right, we're not all going to end up like that.

Susanne: No, and the comparison mind really, really slows down, and appreciation for what *is* in the moment, contained in the moment ... and knowing that everything contained in the moment is that, is Brahmin, is God - every single thing, from the microcosmic to the macrocosmic, including thoughts.

Rick: But nonetheless, it seems like there is this evolutionary force which never quits, you know? It just keeps refining, and expanding, and engulfing. You know, it's kind of like this amoeba which keeps eating things up. In fact there's a saying, "Brahman is the eater of everything."

Susanne: Yeah, bon appetit, you know? Everything is delicious, you know, everything is delicious. There is something that, as you know, there's something that remains the same, right? That is the same in the midst of its growing, and its expansion, and its deeper, more deeply understanding itself. In every single being, every single thing, there's something that's the same.

Rick: Yeah, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi used to talk in terms of the "circumference growing," that things are first seen in terms of the self, in terms of your primary object of perception, and then the circumference just continues to grow and grow and grow, until it sort of incorporates the whole universe.

Susanne: Mm-hmm, yeah, exactly. And then you can *be* that single solitary object and there's nothing that's being lost; it knows itself there. So it knows itself there in the midst of the growing, growing, growing. So when I think about my childhood, that awareness wasn't there yet; it got lost. It

got lost in the maya, in the dream, to growing of consciousness, it was beyond what it had known before and it got lost, seemingly right?

Rick: Yeah, which is all well and good, natural.

Susanne: Yeah, [we're] just making it wrong.

Rick: Maharishi one time said in front of a group, "Who among you is a walking universe?" And a friend of mine got up and said, "That's my experience."

And Maharishi said, "Is it flat or is it lively?"

He said, "It's lively."

He (Maharishi) said, "That's it."

And in fact you say here, "When the return is done *here*, it continues to unite itself as others, because it is seen that there are no others." So again, it's this sort of metaphor of an amoeba that's continuing to incorporate more and more into itself, until the whole universe is contained.

Susanne: Yeah, it's interesting how delicious it is to imagine that or to know that, you know? Because just talking about it feels good. Feels good just talking about how vast we are.

Rick: Mm. People have heard me say this before but I always use pictures of galaxies as my screensaver on my computer, so as I'm talking to you I see a galaxy here.

Susanne: I was wondering where all that imagery was coming from, yeah.

Rick: Well it fascinates me because you get the sense of, when you look at presentations on astronomy and see pictures of galaxies, you just get a sense of the vastness, you know? And you can imagine how infinitesimal the life forms in that galaxy are, and if that's all that one thinks one is, that little tiny – tiny like you said before, pin prick, I think you said – you know, what sort of life is that compared to the possibility of living as the vastness?

Susanne: Yeah, yeah, and then never being afraid again of being a pin prick, that is also bliss. Being just that point, that reference point, because that contains the whole.

Rick: It does. They speak of the holographic universe and how the part contains the whole, you know, what is here is everywhere.

Susanne: Yeah, when the 'I' believes in itself and it feels like it is the whole and it doesn't know anything other, it's just suffering ensues, it can't reference itself.

Rick: Yeah, and again when you say that I think, 'Yeah, you're right, but it's natural.' It's not like anybody's done anything wrong, although sometimes this is referred to as 'pragyaparadh' – the mistake of the intellect. It's a mistake, but it's not a mistake that one was capable of not making, you know; it's

just the course of evolution is such that we get down to the “point” value, and then from there we come back to the wholeness.

Susanne: Exactly, there’s intelligence there, it can’t help but be. And there’s innocence, complete innocence in all of it – being lost in the sense of being an ‘I’ and not even knowing it, is a completely innocent thing. Beginning to be aware of it [is], probably more suffering ensues when you start to become aware of it – in a way. But all of it is innocent, is how I see it, we’re innocent.

Rick: Yeah, there’s this whole concept of ‘original sin’ and all that stuff is a little heavy-handed.

Susanne: Well when you say that there’s no mistake...?

Rick: All is well and wisely put.

Susanne: Yeah, I mean it doesn’t mean it’s easy, it doesn’t mean the world couldn’t use a good dose of remembering, in terms of the way things are going environmentally and such, you know?

Rick: Seems to be getting that, from what I can tell. It’s as if consciousness were rising to meet the challenge that has been presented by inordinate fascination with ‘point’ value, with material value. Like it’s a balance, it’s swung as far as it can swing in one direction without dire consequences, and so it’s starting to swing back.

Susanne: Yeah, the way I see it is everything born returns back to source. So the sense of ‘I’ has it’s life, it’s born and it has it’s livingness, it doesn’t feel right anymore, it starts to question itself – this is all consciousness’s journey – and then it returns back to itself and it remembers itself.

And then it does this whole thing consciously, hopefully! You’re right that the pendulum is swinging to a place where en masse we can be doing that, you know? And you, sitting there doing these interviews, you probably have more of a sense of it than I do, about how much awareness is starting to take place within the population.

Rick: Well, I do have 860 people on the waiting list, you know – new recommendations coming in every day. I don’t think I would have had that in 1955 or something ...

Susanne: Oh my God .... Oh, that’s beautiful

Rick: 30, 40 years ago, 50 years ago, there just wasn’t that much appreciation of this thing, and who knows, maybe ... I’m sure there were awakenings happening here or there but now it seems more epidemic.

Susanne: I think that’s what the invitation is, for what I’m offering too, in terms of my sharings, it’s just the one thing that I feel that I *can* offer, really.

Rick: Yeah, what do you offer, and to whom, and how?

Susanne: It's very small scale right now and it's all organic. So the way that I move is through authenticity, being invited on the show, you know, this is what I'm doing right now. And I have two satsangs a month that I lead, and sometimes I invite teachers to join in.

Rick: In your area there, Nevada City area?

Susanne: Yeah. And then I work one-on-one with individuals who would like to.

Rick: Over Skype or telephone?

Susanne: Many on Skype and then one-on-one ... yeah.

Rick: Well, sometimes people experience what I call the "BATGAP bump," which is you do one of these interviews and then it picks up the pace a little bit, in terms of inquiries. Do you charge money for these sessions? You must need to support yourself.

Susanne: Yes, I like to have an energy exchange, it feels fair to me, you know, because I'm a single mom, still, raising these two kids. I have a sliding scale, but I won't turn people away.

Rick: Okay, that's fair. Let's say I were to have some Skype sessions with you, what would you do with me and what would I get from it? Would I learn techniques, or would I just talk to you, or what would happen?

Susanne: It just depends on what you're bringing, you know? Techniques, they come in the moment. So it's a very intuitive thing that arises, so an understanding and a knowing of what is needed seems to arise ... so, I can't describe it to you Rick.

Rick: So, it's not a cut-and-dried path sort of system, it's sort of organic, as you say?

Susanne: Yeah, it's more of a felt thing. And insight comes, you know; this connection that we're really not separate emerges. And so what's needed, and what the other person may not even know for themselves necessarily – but it's always done in a kind way, with love, emerges.

And so that's how I see it, it's very organic and tends to go on for a while – an hour, an hour and a half – is generally what I do.

Rick: And do you have people that generally tend to call you back a number of times?

Susanne: Yeah, yeah, luckily, luckily.

Rick: And do they report any sort of transformations as a result of this?

Susanne: Well, you know I'm not sitting out with a goal in mind; it's kind of unique. It's kind of different, you know, to be working with others without this idea that something really needs to happen.

Rick: Right.



Susanne: It's coming out of love and it's coming out of truthfulness in the moment. So wherever the other person is willing to meet me is what ends up happening, however deeply someone wants to go. So in terms of people coming back, yeah, I have people who are coming back. As long as they feel compelled to come back, I welcome it.

Rick: Sure. So I get the sense that you kind of are able to tune into people where they are at, so to speak, and then you just take it from there.

Susanne: I think that's probably the gift that life has given me, in terms of an offering. Like we all have gifts and we all have offerings, and so the gift that life has given me, and probably because of my whole past, is exactly what it is that I did for myself.

I don't know how to do anything differently than that. I don't know how to do something out in the world and become something other than *offering* this gift of what it is that I feel like I received - that was received - and that's this impulse. And it's really ... it's coming naturally and organically. It seems seamless to me.

Rick: Yeah, no, I'm sure it does and I'm sure it is. If one is functioning as you are functioning, then it can't be anything *but* a kind of spontaneous expression of Cosmic Intelligence, to use that phrase. We're all kind of ... I think you said, let me see what did you say here, "We're all sense organs of Consciousness," or something. We're all like little puppets of the Infinite, playing our roles, and the more fully we cooperate with that, then the more effective we can be as instruments of the Divine.

Susanne: Yeah, when you're out of the way, because you see that we don't even exist.

Rick: Exactly. When I say 'cooperating,' then the next thought was 'out of the way,' yeah.

Susanne: I'm happy to work with people who haven't realized, seen through the 'I' - from the spectrum of that who are still "seekers," so to speak - to the spectrum of that they are finders that are integrating it.

Rick: Yeah.

Susanne: Because I have been integrating it for eight years now, and so ... and still integrating, you know?

Rick: I could talk to you 20 years from now and it probably still will be.

Susanne: Yeah, so I just love that, you know, that it keeps going. But understanding that we're the whole keeps happening.

Rick: Yeah. It's like the blob - that was before your time - but back in the 50s there was this horror movie called *The Blob*, you remember that?

Susanne: That was my first fear, like I got afraid of "*The Blob*," it was so scary. And now I welcome the blob, you know? More and more and more.

Rick: You just mentioned the word 'seeking,' and I made a note to talk to you about that too. Seeking sort of has a negative connotation in some spiritual circles, but my attitude toward it is just that it's natural, like everything is natural.

And at a certain point, the whole 'seeking flavor' kind of relaxes cause I guess there's been sufficient 'finding,' and you know, one no longer feels that desperation and that yearning and so on, and that emptiness. But there's still that never ending fascination with discovery and it turns more into exploration than a desperate quest.

Susanne: Yeah, exactly, seeking is just a longing for ourselves. So we have a longing for ourselves and we, at some point, probably starting very young, we put it outside of ourselves. We put *ourselves* outside of ourselves and we try to regain it.

We put it in objects, we put it in the people, you know, we're wanting confirmation. Seeking is really a longing to come back home, and so it's actually, when you talk about natural and innocent, so many people put seeking as – like you say –bad connotation, but really it's that outwardness. That outward momentum that was put by Consciousness out into the world to know itself, to understand and differentiate itself, and it gets lots there, apparently.

And then it longs, at some point, that return. Everything born returns back to itself. So seeking, when it's put in its rightful place, because you know how many ways people can seek, right?

Rick: Sure, well you know, you can seek through faster cars and flashy ... and all that stuff.

Susanne: Right, but what I say is the best use of spirituality, in terms of seeking, is being able to discover some good truths that actually point you back home, and point to the fact that really what you're looking for, resides right here.

So in the end, that seeking energy can be fuel, can be used as fuel to *return* back home. It doesn't have to be seen in any kind of way that's not useful. In fact, what can you do? Can you really stop seeking when you are a seeker?

Rick: Yeah really, I mean, great point.

Susanne: Just like say, you know, "I'm going to stop because I heard that you shouldn't be seeking."

Rick: There's an Indian story about how the king could never be comfortable until he sits on his throne. He can't sit on any other chair and he's just going to keep wandering until he finds his throne; that's where he's supposed to sit. And so you know, the mind is going to be restless until it finds that which can really satisfy it, which is Being, Absolute, whatever - that's the one thing.

You said an interesting phrase: "The mind will take you to the gate but not beyond, but at least it can do that." And once it's taken us to the gate, there's this certain momentum that carries us beyond.

Susanne: Exactly, and that's the seeking. You know, the seeking can take you to the gate – that's part of the mind wanting to find peace, because the mind, when it's in that seeking mode, is just like, "Give me something to stop this restless mind, this outwardness has got to end, it's causing so much suffering."

Rick: And even when you realize that the goal is within, that it's not to be found in outward things, it doesn't mean you just get to it just like that. And it also doesn't mean you're a neophyte if you have a seeking energy, I mean, look at someone like Amma. She almost threw herself in the ocean and drowned herself because her desperation for God was so intense, and she just couldn't tolerate living in the world without satisfying that need, you know?

So sometimes you read of very advanced souls who became great saints, who were just on fire with determination to realize God. You can say they were seeking, to a very incredible degree.

Susanne: Well yeah, for me as well, the seeking was intense. Like after my brother died, when the mind kicked in and wanted to understand itself, it was like *intensely* focused. And it's almost like seeking can channel, it's one-pointed, you can use it, in a way, to penetrate maya. It can be an incredibly strong tool to penetrate maya and to get beyond itself, but like you said, the mind could only bring you to a certain point.

Rick: Take you to the gate but not beyond.

Susanne: Right, it can't go any further than that. It can *result* in letting go, because you give up. So you know, when people who are proponents for letting things be as they are, I think that it's really individual, and that everyone is going to do it in the way that life's intelligence is guiding them to do.

In my case it was an intensity and it was kind of like a Jnani path, you know the path of Jnana, to inquire and penetrate reality. But in the end, what is it that actually happened? Well, it was just stopping. Everything stopped.

Rick: Yeah, at the right time.

Susanne: At the right time!

Rick: It says that in the Yoga Sutras. Patangali talks about yogis being of "mild, medium, or vehement intensity." And he talks about the ones with vehement intensity of their quest, as the ones who realize most quickly.

Susanne: Yeah, but you've probably interviewed enough people to have probably witnessed people who *haven't* had the intensity, like Tony Parsons or somebody, right? I mean, I don't know.

Rick: Tony did a fair amount of seeking before he had his awakening. He studied with Osho and he did a bunch of stuff, he did a bunch of meditation.

Susanne: Oh okay. Yeah, his teaching is ...

Rick: Yeah, I mean Sailor Bob, who I haven't interviewed, he meditated for years and years and then he eventually had an awakening. So a lot of times people will do spiritual practices for 30 years, have an awakening, and then turn around and say, "You don't need to do anything," you know?

Susanne: Exactly, and I'm not one of those. So I really trust in the inherent intelligence of each person that's coming, in terms of that, you know – the internal guidance system.

Rick: Yeah, one size does not fit all.

Susanne: No, absolutely.

Rick: Ah, well I feel very content. I think, partially, it's the spillover from the Amma thing. I've just been kind of floating in bliss ever since being there.

Susanne: Oh that's wonderful.

Rick: Talking to you enlivens that all the more.

Susanne: Thank you.

Rick: Really, really enjoyable. Anything ... I know you probably need questions to come out with more specific information, but is there anything you feel we haven't covered that is kind of in the back of your mind, or anything?

Susanne: Not really, I just, if I have any final words of parting ... that your audience is to trust where life is leading them, in terms of listening more to the inner, the inner guidance. I know that we look outside of ourselves a lot to all these teachers, to see which way to go, and they can be useful but in the end, it's all going to come to knowing for oneself what is true. And there is an intelligence that guides that knowing.

Rick: Which wants this for you more than you want it for itself; more than you do for yourself.

Susanne: Because it is you.

Rick: Yeah, it is you.

Susanne: And you are that, so there really is no separation. So the small you is contained in the vastness that you are, it's just a pin prick. So knowing yourself as the vastness really, really does alleviate so much suffering. So I understand the quest, completely.

Rick: It also imbues you with, in general, a great degree of energy and intelligence because that's the kind of the nature of that vastness repository. Physicists tell us that a cubic centimeter of empty space contains more energy than the whole manifest universe, in terms of our being able to live that as a human being.

One thing you wrote was, "Being inauthentic takes energy." It's *exhausting* to merely be a pin point, you know, you don't have the underpinnings, you don't have contact with the reservoir of infinite energy

and intelligence that you actually are, and so, I don't know, you can use so many different metaphors but ... Well as Amma put it, someone said, "How do you do this for so many hours?" And she said, "Well, you know, if you're working in somebody's factory, it's tiring, but if you *own* the factory then you have plenty of energy," she said, "This is my factory."

Susanne: Beautiful! Thank you for sharing that. I love that. Everything's our factory, every single thing that's happening, including feeling lost.

Rick: Then you're still working in the factory and you haven't owned it yet, if you're feeling lost.

Susanne: Yeah, well, some day everything returns back.

Rick: Some day all this will be yours.

Susanne: Nothing is left behind. I mean that's really where the lack, in a sense, of concern; I don't have an intensity of wanting to share this because I really *trust* that everything is returning back to itself, in its own time. It was born in time, so it's going to return in time.

Rick: Generally people who have an intensity of wanting to share, whom we regard as proselytizers, that sort of thing, they haven't really owned it yet, you know? There's this sort of insecurity and a fear that needs to be ... one needs to reinforce one's confidence by getting other people to do the same thing. But if you're really established in that, then that desperation, that proselytizing tendency drops off.

Susanne: And maybe there's one more thing I'd like to share, is that, I see so many people not being kind to themselves, on the inner.

Rick: Hmm, give me an example.

Susanne: Well, just self-judgment and feelings of worthlessness, and such, and that really does arise from having a sense of 'I.' It could never feel complete; the 'I' will never feel whole, so it will always be in its comparison-mind - when you're in the 'I.'

When I work with people, it's one of the things that I work with. So finding more compassion and kindness for oneself, here, and it translates on the outer.

Rick: You mean in terms of your behavior towards others, and stuff?

Susanne: Yeah, in terms of in the outer, how you see life, and so working with that.

Rick: Good.

Susanne: Okay.

Rick: Yeah, I mean so many words, I can always just keep going but this is sweet, and maybe a good place to wrap it up.

Susanne:       Okay, sounds good, thank you.

Rick:    Okay but don't hang up, I have to make some concluding remarks here. I've been speaking with Sue-zana, right? Susanne?

Susanne:       Sussane Marie, yeah.

Rick:    Sussane Marie - the way German's would pronounce it. You know a lot about her now if you've been listening to this interview, so I don't need to reiterate anything, but on BATGAP.com I will have links. I've already prepared this; you've sent me some stuff.

There's links to her website and her Facebook page, and you know, how to get in touch with her, how to email her and all that stuff. So go there, feel free to get in touch with her. And you haven't written any books yet but I guess something's in progress? Yes? Okay. When that's ready, let me know and I'll add it to BATGAP.

And this interview with Susanne is one in an ongoing series. There are over 180 of them now, so if you'd like to watch more, easiest way to do it is to go to BATGAP.com because they're all indexed there. There's an alphabetical index of all the people, and then there's also a chronological index under the "Other Stuff" menu, so you can poke around and find different ones.

There's a discussion group that springs up around each interview, and there's a forum now where we have those set up, so you'll find a link to that on Susanne's page. And there's a place to sign up to be notified by email each time a new interview is posted, generally once a week. There's a "Donation" button, which I appreciate people clicking.

If my side of this interview, at least, looks any better than it has in the past, it's because I finally got a camcorder to work with Skype, which was purchased with some of that donation money. And we also have webcams in the field that we send around from - each guest sends to the next guest - and it improves the general quality of the thing, and we're always trying to make it as good as possible.

There's also an audio podcast that you can subscribe to, and probably as many people just listen to this in audio as watch it in video. So there's a link to that and it will take you to Apple iTunes, you can subscribe to the podcast, get it on your iPod.

And I'm just going to elaborate a little bit. I was just talking to somebody and they didn't know this, and they said, "Well I just have to listen to the interviews many times, because I can't finish it all at once and then my computer doesn't remember where I was, so I start it from the beginning." The nice thing about iTunes, if you subscribe to the podcast, is it remembers where you are. And so if you leave off and you go to play it again, it will pick up exactly where you left off, so that's an incentive for figuring *that* out.

Well, that's about it. Thanks for listening or watching and we'll see you next week.

{BATGAP theme music playing.}