

{BATGAP theme music playing}

Welcome to Buddha at the Gas Pump. My name is Rick Archer and I'm very happy to say that my guest today is Dr. Deepak Chopra. Last time I saw Oprah interview you she said, "Man, it's really hard to get you in this chair!" So I consider this something of a miracle to have gotten you in my chair [chuckling]. Deepak and I met over 30 years ago in the Cambridge TM Center, where I was teaching Transcendental Meditation. He came in and learned, and we became friends, and I ended up living with his parents in India for a couple of months. But I haven't really seen him since that time, so it really warms my heart to be able to see you again.

It's been since 1980 or so.

So 33 years.

Yeah, 33 years or so.

Which is a lifetime in Jesus years [laughter]. Now you and I were both students of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, and I thought I might start by bringing up a principle that Maharishi often stated, which is the principle of "the highest first." And as I understood that principle, if you have a lot of things to do and not enough time to do them all, start with the most important thing. So I thought I'd start by asking you what you consider to be the highest, most profound, most influential thing that you would like to discuss in an interview, and we'll take it from there?

Self-awareness.

And why is that the highest?

Because that's who you are, before your mind, or your body, or the universe.

And how much can one actually say about self-awareness before really needing to get down and experience it?

Well, you bring yourself to every situation, every circumstance, every event, every relationship, every environment. As the phrase is, "Wherever you go, there you are," so if you don't know what the self is, how do you know anything else? In order to know the universe, in order to know relationship, in order to know the environment, you have to start with who wants to know.

So the implication is physicists who are trying to understand the universe, or married couples who are trying to get along would do well to know the self, because that would be the foundation for really understanding the universe, or being in a harmonious relationship, or anything else, right?

Yeah. In every observation there's an observing self. In every experiment there's an observing experimenter. In every relationship there's somebody who's engaging in the relationship. If you don't know yourself, how can you know anything else?

And in your opinion, rough guess, what percentage of people in the world know themselves?

[Chuckling] I think less than .01% of people even have thought about it.

Why is it so rare?

Because our education and our upbringing is not about who we are, but about what we want.

Now of course some spiritual traditions and teachers would hold that it's rare because it's so hard to access, or realize. Or you know, even the Gita says, "Hardly anyone knows about it, even those who hear about it don't understand it, and those who really go for it are only a small percentage -it boils down to actually ever realize it." So why is it so exclusive?

I think it's a recycling of the hypnosis of collective conditioning, more than anything else. We're in a certain stage of our development as a human species, and there are – as they use these words – early adopters and outliers. And for most of history we've been like that, because history is recent. Human beings only learned to speak 15,000 years ago, write only 5,000 years ago. There was the so-called "axial age" around the time of Jesus and a few other people, where you have, within a few hundred years, Buddha, Jesus, the Greek philosophers, the sages of the Upanishads a little later actually, and the prophets of the Old Testament. That's when apparently, according to many, self-awareness got to be recognized in the human species. Before that, in the jungles as hunter gatherers –there was none of that. We've been through then; we've been through many stages. You had the hunter gatherers, you had the agricultural horticultural state, you had the industrial age, then you had the information age. And now we are living in, I think, the cusp of the information age and the age of knowledge, but the next jump, I hope, will be the age of self-awareness or wisdom, as the goal of all previous goals.

It's very interesting you know, hunter gatherers just killed – that's all they did. The age of agriculture, the whole world started to recognize that you could feed yourself by adopting agricultural methodologies. Industrial age it was all about minerals and machines. Right now, the sources of wealth in the world are silicon chips, which is information on a piece of dust. What are we gonna do with this information and data? By itself it's meaningless. So we see all across the world that knowledge is coming through information technologies. You can be in China and get Harvard to educate you. I think it's only natural that as we progress in our own expansion of what is, that wisdom, which is the nurturing of life and the whole ecosystem, will become the next phase of our evolution. And that's when self-awareness will blossom as a worldwide phenomenon - my hope is, at least my thought is – if we survive. And then that should happen. In Jesus' time you know, he didn't have the Internet or Oprah [chuckling], for that matter.

Now as an Indian of course you're familiar with the cycle of yugas. And if we buy into that theory, then there were actually enlightened ages a long time ago, where perhaps, self-realization was the norm, and we've sort of descended from there.

Yeah, but I have no way to document that or know that right now. But, yeah.

So, whether or not that happened, we seem to be on an uptick if as you say, we survive, but there seems to be some sort of epidemic of awakening taking place.

There seems to be. At the same time there seems to be a lot of destruction taking place, especially ecological destruction. There seems to be a lot of mechanized death, which we take for granted actually. Everyday people are killed with drones. Every other year you hear about chemical weapons being used. There's war, always. It's a permanent condition – war. So I don't know if we're on the uptick, maybe we're at the crossroads.

Yeah. Two things that Maharishi said come to mind: there's one in the early part of the Gita where he talks about when negativity reaches an apex, and it can't be tolerated anymore, then the Lord comes and reverses the situation. But I've also heard him say -and the Lord might come in the form of many people getting awake, and I'm not talking about an avatar walking among us - but yet another thing I remember hearing him say is that the polarities will actually increase, that there could be a simultaneous increase of both, negative and positive forces kind of duking it out with each other [chuckling].

Yes, looks like that. Yeah, I just had the idea we should let them duke it out and just watch.

Well, aren't we on the good team?

Why be on any team? Because you know, then you're engaged in the drama, and you're engaged in the madness. As I was saying a while ago, at this moment in meditation I realized we're living in a lunatic asylum. There's no other way to describe it. Everything that we see is madness, but it's normal. So we're in it; there's no escaping the lunatic asylum. You can choose to be an inmate or you can pick up your visitor's badge. So I chose, that day, to pick up my visitor's badge. And I realized - yeah, the good guys, the bad guys, that's eternally going on. It doesn't really solve the problem of do the good guys win? Sooner or later the cycle reverses, as you've said, right? So you must transcend the duality, and in a way, you help the evolution if you transcend the duality.

Yeah, that's kind of what I was implying, is that there's this beneficial influence to this spiritual stuff; it's not just a self-serving kind of thing.

There's a benefit in that the spiritual being is not a person; it's a unified consciousness that transcends space-time. And just by improving the quality of collective-being, then the evolutionary impulse takes over, speeds up, and gains advantage over the inertial impulses. And that probably is what the Bhagavad Gita is about. You know, if you really read through it, the battle is in consciousness, and both the Divine and diabolical forces are in consciousness. And the vanquishing of evil is really not bow and arrow, even though it's part of the story; is the four yogas as taught by Lord Krishna in the 18 chapters. You know, Raj yoga, Bhakti yoga, Jnana yoga, and Karma yoga – that's what is taught. So Arjuna, the great warrior, is vanquishing the demons in consciousness through the practice of yoga. That's a totally different way of looking at the good guys and the bad guys.

Yeah, and with regard to your insane asylum metaphor: two people can be walking down the same street, and one of them is in hell, one of them is in heaven – it's the same street. So that's your visitor's badge, you know -if you're living in heaven, what others perceive to be a hellish world [chuckling].

That's right.

So over the course of - since I first met you and you learned to meditate – I'm sure that when you first learned, in fact you used to talk about this with me, you know, you were kind of an ordinary, stressed out guy. An endocrinologist in Boston and a little skeptical about some of this spiritual stuff, and you've obviously undergone a dramatic, profound transition over the years. I'm a little bit curious about what it's like to be Deepak. From your perspective, do you feel like you're not doing anything, and there's this sort of instrument that you're somehow associated with that's carrying out some kind of cosmic purpose [chuckling] or something, if you want to call it that?

That sounds too grand – that I'm carrying out a cosmic purpose. I'm also on the other hand not doing anything. My life with my family and my children is the same as it always was before. I am a bit surprised at the public image that I seem to have. I don't take it seriously, myself. But people ask me, "Do you feel a sense of responsibility?" and I actually don't! I mean, like singing in the bathroom and some people like to hear the tune [chuckling]. So I'm just doing what comes naturally to me. And you know, I'm still a doctor, I'm still a physician, I keep a license in California and Massachusetts. We have a group practice at The Chopra Center with other physicians. We really only focus on that thing as a group, you know, me and my cohort of M.D.s, and over the years we've created a course called "Journey Into Healing," which incorporates a lot of the Ayurvedic principles as *kawalya* medicine, and we call it an integrative medicine. And we've successfully taught thousands of doctors now. And our courses are recognized for CE credit by The American Medical Association. We do collaborative research with the universities in California, with Harvard. We have medical students going through our institution, and we are a university –Chopra University. It's a recognized university in the State of California, so that's been our focus. Now because what happened is that the people whom I'm associated with are so good at what they do, that I only spend maybe 25, 30% of my time teaching a course in unrequired. We're right here right now, the Center is going on because of the people that we have there. And so I spend my time in public speaking and writing, and it seems like people respond to it. So when people respond to it, I do more of it. And so it's nothing I planned, really.

Well the reason I ask that question is because I'm reminded of a lecture that Maharishi gave one time about realization of God ,and the kind of climax of the lecture was when he said, "Finally one reaches a point where one says to God, "Use me and I'm fit to be used in Thy service.""

Well I don't say it verbally, but I feel like I don't need to do anything, yes.

Yeah, like there's something else animating you.

There's the ocean is moving and I happen to be on the crest of a wave.

Yeah, that's nice. And that, you know, there's so much talk about non-doing in spiritual circles ...

I feel that.

Yeah, but you're not TRYING to non-do.

[Chuckling] No.

Which some people actually advocate, you know – “just be the witness, don’t assume authorship of your actions.”

Yeah, that can be contrived. To not get involved - as forcing to not get involved, forcing to be a witness, manipulating, can be contrived. On the other hand, I can very comfortable, without trying, manage to slip into that.

Into a sense of doer-ship?

No, into the witnessing awareness.

Could you get out of it if you tried?

Ah..no.

[Rick chuckling]

But it’s like...there, you know?

Yeah, yeah, it just becomes second nature. And in fact, you and I were talking at breakfast the other day about the fact that...

Sometimes a little push-flow. For example, a few years ago I started actually focusing on what is called yoga nidra. Just with a little bit of attention and a little bit of a simple technique that I learned, and sure enough, the witnessing and sleep became much more. So there is that too that, you know, if you put your attention – it may or not even be a technique; it’s just the fact that you’re doing it [chuckling] that triggers the process of attention.

And because some people might not be familiar with the term, just perhaps elaborate on what we mean by “witnessing” and “sleep”.

It feels like your body is either dreaming or even in deep sleep, but there’s a part of you that’s fully awake, observing it. And there’s a nonverbal recognition that ‘I’m not my body or my mind; I’m the one who’s witnessing that, it’s not me.’ That ‘maybe it’s my destiny to play an infinity of roles, but I’m not the roles I’m playing.’ You know, in theological literature you often hear the expression, “imminent,” “transcendent,” “to be in the world, not of it,” etcetera – “the lamp at the door,” so many expressions. So it’s an interesting experience because you lose your fear of death as well. You say, “Death happens to that, not to me.” You know it’s very subtle, but when you look back it’s very profound.

And I’m sure you’d agree it’s not something you’re thinking about. Obviously you couldn’t think about it while you’re asleep. You couldn’t just be thinking, “Oh, I’m the inner awareness.”

No, but the sense of existence never goes away.

Right.

It's just a sense of existence. I exist, not verbally, but knowing that you're pure awareness does not go.

Right. I took your workshop yesterday – you gave a 3-hour workshop here. And as I was listening to it, I felt like every point you made could be a springboard into a whole discussion [chuckles]. We could sit here for years, but perhaps you could just sketch out some of the points that really light your fire, that you like to talk about, and that you talked about in that workshop and we can delve into them a little bit.

Well the most interesting thing for me, the most interesting thing for me was the insight that what we experience as perceptual reality is not fundamental. Okay, so the whole question is, "What is reality?" When we do science, for example, we say, "I want empirical evidence. I want to know what is real, if it has units of mass and energy. Can we prove it? What's the technology that comes out of it?" And I was brought up in that scientific tradition and it's based on what, first of all, is called a "subject-object" split. There's an observing self, never mind we don't know who that observing self is, or where that observing self is, but we do say there's something we can observe. And that which we can observe is real! It's solid - this chair that I'm sitting on. I look outside, that tree – it's real. And of course it's real but is it fundamental reality? Is it what's really going on? And the more you look into this, both intellectually and experientially, you realize that what you see is not what is. So what's that tree? Well, it's a quality of consciousness – I'm going ahead now because I feel I have no choice – but that tree is a form of consciousness within consciousness. It's in me and actually, I am that tree. Okay, and so I am this chair, and I am you as well. But that for many people is a leap, so you have to go very gradually to that place – both intellectually and experientially, because otherwise it becomes a problem. The first thing to recognize is that perception is species-specific, and even culture-specific. So you know, I used to use this explanation a long time ago, if you bring up a group of kittens that are in a horizontal room, when they grow up they can only see a horizontal world. A group of kittens brought up in a vertical room with stripes on the walls – walls are horizontal or vertical – then they grow up seeing a horizontal world, because their experience has shaped their brain into neuronal structures that allow them to see only that. So everything that we see is actually conditioned by experience, which actually creates a brain that reinforces the original conditioning. And so everyone is walking around with that conditioned mind – culturally conditioned, religiously conditioned, historically, economically conditioned. But even more importantly is, it's a prison that you don't recognize. And once you start to recognize that your perceptual reality is, first of all, a very small part of reality, and furthermore, it's totally species-dependant also. What would I look like to an insect with 100 eyes? So there's only versions of perceptual reality, then which one is right? And the answer is, none.

Or, all.

Or, all. Yeah, then none or all, but it's not fundamental; something more mysterious is going on, and science has struggled with it. Sir Arthur Eddington used to say, "Something unknown is doing we don't know what." And I think that's where science gets stuck, but a lot of people are wedded to that, you know? People like Dawkins and all; they think that this is the real reality. But when you get to it, your empirical evidence is just a description of a mode of observation, nothing else. It doesn't even ask the question, "Who's observing?"

Your example about different types of animals and insects perceiving, I mean everyone's familiar with the electromagnetic field and the fact that we only experience a small sliver of it visually. And then there's radio waves and gamma waves, and x-rays and all that other stuff that's part of the same field, that we're not physiologically equipped to pick up on, and then other animals and life-forms actually experience slightly different slivers of that field according to their capacities.

But see, the electromagnetic field is not fundamental.

No, not ultimately.

And even that's a kawalya.

What I was getting at is, using that as just an example, is it the case that there is some kind of template of reality in which there's intersubjective agreement, whether you're a bat or a human being, you're going to perceive that tree in some way? A bat, if you're fly into it is going to hit it, a human being can see it, and that we're all just filters who pick up a particular snapshot or sliver of this totality. And I'm not just talking about totality of abstract, absolute, unmanifest totality, but somehow the relative structure seems to have a consistency of it.

We're in a virtual game, a virtual parlor. And let's say we're playing virtual tennis, and you're across the net. The only consistency is that we trigger our own experiences and we relate to them, and you can play the virtual game with you tennis ball, and my tennis ball are not the same. Okay [chuckling], but we are in a domain where we can still relate to each other. It's a virtual game! It's a virtual reality, it's not real!

Let me put it this way: when we all go to sleep at night we dream different things. And I don't know what you dream, you don't know what I dream, even if we're sleeping in the same room. We're experiencing completely different realities. When we wake up, you know with perceptual variations, we seem to see fundamentally the same reality. If one of us dies, other people still see the same room, the same tree and so on. So is there some sort of cosmic dreamer - if this is all a dream - who is, there is a consistency in the universe because of a larger mind that's dreaming this thing, and we're just kind of little people, or sense organs of that larger mind?

Yes, the cosmic dreamer who is dreaming through insects, and through bats, and through chameleons, and through elephants, and through dolphins, and through whales, and through giraffes and hippopotami and tortoises. I don't know what they're looking at, I have no idea. And yes, even as human species there are certain elements that are common, but many of them that are not common. You know I walk in New York City frequently, I have an apartment there, and I can almost sense that every person on the street that I'm seeing, is a different universe. I can sense that, you know? That when I go to Grand Central Station and everyone is going hither and thither, there's a whole universe going with them, and I have no access to their world, other than the fact that we're using the same subway, or what seems like the same subway to us. But the reality is totally different, it's totally different! Where that person is going, what that person is thinking, what that person is anxious about, what that person's

personal relationships are like, their love, compassion, anger, frustration – that’s their reality, and that’s a different universe.

Bob Dylan said, “I’ll let you be in my dream if I can be in yours.”

Yeah.

But when you go down into the subway to get on it, it’s not like you see a subway, this person sees a sailboat, that person sees a go-cart; there’s a certain subway-ness to that.

That’s that collective agreement.

Yeah, and I don’t know why I consider this interesting or significant, but I’ve been chewing on it lately. I was talking to Manos about it a little bit too.

I think all the conflicts in the world are conflicts between the dreams. Everybody is basically fighting in the world right now about...

My dream’s better than your dream [chuckling].

Yeah, my dream is better, or my idea, or whatever you know, and all the religious wars about that. Communism versus capitalism – it’s all about ideas, but the conflict is all about the dream

So we started out talking about the value of self-awareness, and so the question here would be then: if that became more or less commonplace, would conflicts cease because there would be a sort of agreed upon dream, if it’s a dream at all anymore? There wouldn’t be this sort of rigid, polarized, friction-based way of interacting; we’d all be more of one mind, so to speak?

Yeah, we would move more the direction of evolution. I don’t think it’ll completely disappear, but it would be a better environment, more wholesome, more loving, more compassionate, more joyful, more peaceful, but contrast would still be there I think.

Some would have to be, I would think, in order for people to function there’s gotta be some diversity. Maharishi called it “Leisha Vidya,” some faint remains of ignorance necessary, otherwise you couldn’t function. Distinguish your hand from your mouth [chuckling], and so on. You used the word “kawalya” a lot, and a lot – it’s your favorite word these days. What is kawalya and why do you consider it so important?

When we experience anything, there’s a quality to that experience. The smell of onions, the taste of garlic, the texture of a rose, the color of a sunset, so that quality is referred to as “kawalya”. It’s like the quantum is a unit of measurement, kawalya is a sensation or an image in consciousness, or a thought or feeling, an emotion – that’s it.

So anything that we experience by any means is a kawalya?

[Agreeing] ...Is a kawalya. And so what is a kawalya? This you just mentioned [tapping on table], this is hard, but what you’re experiencing is hardness. You’re not experiencing “this is hard;” that’s a concept.



Even the idea that there's a sofa is a concept. Hardness is what you're experiencing, that's a kawalya. Hardness, softness, lightness, heaviness, brownness, those are kawalyas and that's all we experience. We call it the world, we call it the body, we also call it insight, cognition. They are all kawalyas, different levels of experience of kawalya. So in science there is something called the "hard problem", which we cannot explain how electricity going to the brain creates a 3-dimensional world reality, and everybody is befuddled by it, they can't explain it. Well if you just go back to what the Vedanta says, is that reality is consciousness and its contents. Okay, that's it. The whole universe in fact, Brahman and Brahmand – Brahman is the consciousness, Brahmand is the universe – the entire universe including all bodies, all minds, are consciousness and its contents. And there's one consciousness but differentiated into these different kawalya experiences, so the sense of a personal I is also kawalya – it's a feeling.

Are the contents any different than consciousness? When you say consciousness and its contents it makes it sound like there's two different categories of things.

The consciousness [chuckling] experiences itself as the contents. So that's all it is, the kawalya as forms of consciousness within consciousness.

So somehow consciousness is experiencing itself as the lamp, as the tree...

...As Rick Archer, as the microphone, as the stars in the galaxies.

And some people describe that experience. They say they're living in a state where when they see the lamp, they're primarily seeing themselves; they're seeing consciousness. Secondly it's a lamp, and so on.

Yeah, the lamp is a concept. The lamp is a concept. I don't think that an ant would have a concept that that is a lamp, right?

Right.

So yeah, what we call reality is a symbolic representation of consciousness within consciousness.

So this "hard problem", how it's such a mystery to scientists that our neurophysiological apparatus can...

[Interrupting]... the neurophysiological apparatus is in fact kawalya gestalt. The brain itself is a kawalya gestalt. We assume that the brain produces consciousness - at least in science – but the physical brain that you see is an experience in consciousness, it's kawalya gestalt in consciousness. The body is that and so people say, "Oh you know...", they have these ancient arguments between idealists and realists, as they call them. And what's his name, Bishop Berkley, said everything is thought, consciousness, contents - he said it in some other way. And the guy who was debating him said, "I kick you and what is that?" But if you understand that the body itself is a kawalya, then there's no problem with that. The body itself and you kicking me, they're all kawalya experiences.

You probably know the story of Shankara when he was going to go meet some king. The king thought he would test him and so he let loose a mad elephant, and when the elephant started coming, Shankara

scampered up a tree. And the king said, "Aha, you big phony! Why did you bother climbing the tree if the world is an illusion?" And Shankara said, "Well, the illusory elephant chasing the illusory me up the illusory tree."

It's beautiful! Yep, that summarizes the whole thing [chuckling].

Which then doesn't mean that it's not an experience. It's an experience and the fact is, science cannot explain an experience. Not quantum science, nothing. No science can explain experience. Quantum physics cannot, so therefore I don't think quantum physics is the key.

And do most scientists acknowledge that they can't, or is this more of a fringe perspective that science can't explain experience?

No, I think science acknowledges that it cannot explain experience. You cannot explain mental experience, you cannot explain physical experience. You cannot, in other words, explain perceptual experience, or cognitive experience. Anything we call experience you cannot explain in science, because as soon as you say, "Oh, your thought is produced by a chemical." How? "Electricity produces a 3-dimensional world." How? There's not even a theory.

But you know, we turn on a radio and we start listening to Mozart, but really it's just the electromagnetic field is fluctuating in a certain way, but the radio is an apparatus.

The field itself is kawalya [chuckling].

Right [hesitantly].

There's nothing outside, it's all kawalya - the electromagnetic field. It's a very interesting thing you know, we give a name to a phenomenon and then it becomes real. So I'm actually, unfortunately, tomorrow I'm going to Washington to speak at a memorial for my friend Candice Pert. She was a colleague and actually, I met her during the Maharishi days. She had described the opiate receptor and her boss got a very prestigious prize, almost won the Nobel Prize, etcetera, although she did all the work, but she objected to that and became very famous. And she ended up being the director of brain chemistry at the NIH, and we've stayed in touch with her and she came and did meditation at the Center in Lancaster at that time. And she wrote a book called 'Molecules of Emotion', I wrote the introduction and you know, described opiates, serotonin, all this stuff that everybody talks about. Dopamine, serotonin, opiates, oxytocin, and all these neurochemicals, and the book was called 'Molecules of Emotion'. And I went to Maharishi and I said to Maharishi, "She's written this book called 'Molecules of Emotion,'" and he said, "What are molecules?" And I described what she was talking about, what we were saying, and kind of waved his hand and said, "They're not real." Okay - which we now get, but what I realized many years ago is science is very interesting enterprise, and the only reason we believe in it is that it works in creating technology and making life comfortable. All it's doing is manipulating kawalya experiences and measuring the regularities with which those kawalya experiences occur. But it occurred to me that we name something when we perceive it. The perception itself is snapshot. If I took your snapshot and I said, "That's Rick Archer," you'd say no, "That's a photo of Rick Archer." And each

time I see, that's a snapshot of moving reality. It never stops, it just flows. I take a snapshot, I call it a thing. I call it a tree, I call it a bird, and now I've created something that actually was the whole universe in motion. Now I study this and make it real, oxytocin becomes a word, every time somebody says this is a molecule, and now I take snapshots of things that assumedly interact with it, and we've created science! But it's a purely human activity in human consciousness that is manipulating forms of consciousness within consciousness. And we then say, "Okay, we'll advance - we'll call these "forces," "electromagnetic fields," "strong and weak interactions," "gravity."" What is gravity? It's the experience of being heaviness [chuckling], of being held together. It's a kawalya! I experience electrical shock – it's a kawalya! There is nothing other than forms of consciousness within consciousness. There's no electromagnetic field out there.

Well there is and there isn't.

Yeah, well it's an experience in reality. You can put it in equations and all that. And then equations are mathematical constructs in consciousness. There's no empirical observation that is an equation. There's no empirical measurement that is mathematics. You know I used to talk a lot to scientists and say, "Would you agree that life is there?" And they go yes and fall for it. "Would you agree that life is biology?" "Of course." "Would you believe that biology is biochemistry?" "Of course." "And that biochemistry is chemistry, right?" "Yeah, Yeah." "And chemistry is physics?" "Of course." "And physics is quantum mechanics?" "Yes." "And quantum physics is mathematics?" "Of course." "Where is mathematics? It's in consciousness." So then they object – "This is a very reductionist approach," etcetera, etcetera, but by then they've actually been caught.

See to me the name of the game is to...

[Interrupting] ...the name of the game is naming.

Yeah, but we do that.

That's what you do, that's what you do, but as soon as you give something a name, then it's no longer fundamental reality. That that whole fall from the garden of - whatever that garden was that Adam and Eve lived – the tree of knowledge is naming things! That's what God did with Adam. He started to name things, and as soon as you name you create things., which was – till you named it – the whole universe.

But we're not going to stop naming things, and it wouldn't be realistic to assume that we were.

But we must then recognize that no system of thought - scientific, mathematical, theological, religious, philosophical – no system of thought will allow us to pierce the veil that separates us from reality. Reality will not be experienced through a system of thought. And a true spiritual experience is not a system of thought; it's transcendence, it's emergence of platonic truth, it's loss of fear of death, it's – I think – extreme humility at the mystery of it all. The most ordinary of things is extraordinary, because it's totally inexplicable.

This thing about naming though, some people get silly about it. They go, "Alright, well naming things is the problem, conceptualizing is the problem, I'm not going to refer to myself in the first person anymore."

They do that in chankracharya, they do that. In chankracharya they don't call themselves a person. "The speaker," – Krishnamurti used to say – "The speaker will now stop." Chankracharya even goes further and says, "The speaker will give instructions to the vocal chords to stop vibrating" [chuckling].

They call it "Advaita speak." You remember that story about Maharishi eating rice with some pundits, or some saints or something, and one of the pundits said to the other, "What are you eating?" And the guy said, "I'm eating Brahmin," and asked Maharishi, he said, "I'm eating rice." You know, he didn't have a problem with naming it, and giving it a name didn't in any way hamper his ability to perceive it as essentially 'the Self', [Deepak in background says, Yeah, I get that] as essentially consciousness. So names aren't a trap; they're just a tool.

As long as you will understand that an object of perception out there is not fundamental reality, that's all.

And ultimately, as long as you experience that, because merely understanding it by listening to us describe it isn't going to get you too far.

Yeah, although as you know, intellectual grasping of something leads to different feeling, different kawalya experience.

Yeah, it's kinda half the battle at least [chuckling]. Maharishi used to always emphasize the two steps of knowledge: experience and understanding, and the two had to be fully developed and integrated. Good. Well I know you're very busy and I don't want to make this too long of an interview. We've been going almost an hour, I think, so I should probably let you go so that you have a chance to eat lunch and everything. Any closing thoughts you'd like to leave people with?

Well it's interesting, when I met Maharishi, when I met you, I didn't know that some different world was going to unfold. It did. I have a lot of experiences with Maharishi, I got very close to him and I found him an amazing presence, also quite a paradox in many ways, a contradiction. But then I also realized as they say, that the measure of enlightenment is the degree that you are comfortable with that paradox, and that contradiction, and that ambiguity. It set me free.

Somebody recently sent me a t-shirt with the word "paradox" on it, because I had mentioned in a number of interviews how much I liked the word [chuckling]. And in fact I said they should put "ambiguity" on the back, but they didn't, so maybe I'll get another t-shirt [chuckling]. Well great, thanks Deepak. Really enjoyed connecting with you again, hope we'll see each other from time to time, more frequently. If we don't we'll be well into our 90s [chuckling].

Come by the Center.

Yeah, I'd like to do that sometime. Let me just make a couple of concluding remarks that I always make. I'll keep them short. You've been watching an interview with Dr. Deepak Chopra, which I'm sure you realize. And this is one in an ongoing series of interviews that I've been doing, and will continue to do. There are about 200 of them archived on BATGAP.com, B-A-T-G-A-P. So go there and you'll find them listed both alphabetically and chronologically, and there's also a discussion forum, a link to be notified by email of new interviews, a link to an audio podcast so you can subscribe to it in iTunes, a "Donate" button, and some other goodies probably. So thank you for listening or watching, and we'll see you next time, which is going to be soon because I'm doing a string of interviews here at the Science & Nonduality Conference in California. I just want to thank Maurizio, who organizes this conference for allowing me to do these interviews. He's gone through the trouble of bringing all these people together, and I highly encourage anyone who feels inclined to attend one of these conferences in the future. They're a lot of fun.

Thanks Rick.

Thanks Deepak.

{BATGAP theme music playing}