CONDUCTED BY RICK ARCHER OF BUDDHA AT THE GAS PUMP

Welcome to Buddha at the Gas Pump. My name is Rick Archer and my guest today is Robert Svoboda. Robert is the first white member of Kenya’s Pokot tribe, and the first non-Indian ever to graduate from a college of Ayurveda and be licensed to practice Ayurveda in India, where he lived for more than a decade. During and after his formal Ayurvedic training, he was tutored in Ayurveda, Yoga, Jyotish, Tantra, and other forms of classical Indian lore by his mentor, the Aghori Vimalananda. For a decade he was involved with thoroughbred horses as Vimalananda’s Authorized Racing Agent. The author of more than a dozen books, since 1985 he divides his time between India and other lands. I’ll be listing his books on my website.

RA Welcome, Robert. Thanks.

RS Good morning. Robert is out in LA and just experienced an earthquake last night, so his world got rocked a bit. We are going to be talking mostly about kundalini today, but there are a couple of points in my introduction here that people might have questions about. Firstly, the point about racehorses. I don’t reject it, but it’s hard for me to understand why someone who is quote-unquote “enlightened” or in a higher state would find that whiskey could in any way enhance his experience. I should think it would almost invariably dull the mind. It’s considered tamasic and so on, so maybe you could riff on that just a little bit before we get into kundalini.

RS Well—I’m speaking here about his opinion—his opinion was that many of the things that are written in the Vedas are true but they are not necessarily true in exactly the way that they are written there. Because, of course, trying to use ordinary human language to describe something that is not directly part of the physical world is not an easy thing to do. When, for example, the Vedas would talk about soma, and the uplifting effect of soma and how it could take you into the astral world and how it could put you into a place where you would be able to commune with reality much more directly, Vimalananda was very much of the opinion that the soma that the Vedic rishis were taking was something that we will never be able to replicate ourselves, at least not that specific soma substance. But he maintained that soma’s effects can be replicated, provided that you, as an individual, understand how your organism works, how your own physiology works, and you identify that substance that works for you like soma—the thing that uplifts you, that sends you into the astral world, that permits you to communicate more easily not only with gods and goddesses but with the supreme reality as well.

RA And whiskey did that for him?

RS Whiskey did that for him. It doesn’t do that for me; other things work better for me. But for him it worked very well. On dozens of occasions, I would be sitting there pouring him whiskey—not a lot at a time, just a little bit—and he...
would be sipping it. As he sipped, his awareness would become more open, and then to return promptly back to the place where he normally existed and then to repress the memory of the experience, which allowed him to perceive the perspective that he required in order to be able to observe and continue living in a place where he felt like he needed to live in order to deal with those karmic obligations.

RA In a piece that you sent me about kundalini, which we’ll be talking about in some detail, you talked about the tendency to individuate—for ahankaram to become more calcified egoism—and you referred to that as maya or maya. Then you said that the flip side of that is chit sabhi, where the force turns towards the spiritual. I wonder if possibly the appeal of alcohol is that it relaxes the rigidity of the ego and in some cases allows people to taste a more ego-free, unrestricted space. Obviously, in most people because it damages the brain and results in greater and greater bondage, but maybe that explains why people who are more homeopathic in their influence it doesn’t have deleterious influence.

RA Yes, I certainly think that’s part of it. In another case, another reason why he employed alcohol was because he was a long-time worshipper of Tara, who was one of the ten mahavidyas, and there were ten great emblems of wisdom symbols from which the universe is generated and by which the universe is resolved. Smashti Tara—the Tara of the cremation ground—is very similar to Kali, both iconographically and in the sense that she is fond of blood and of alcohol. So by drinking, Vimalananda would often permit himself to be taken over by a deity or a saint in the form of nature, and while he was thus possessed he would be able to make direct offerings via his own body to that personality that had possessed him over.

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You find similar rituals all over India. In the Himalaya, for example, you will find oracles. When you need advice about something, you visit the oracle to which the deity via a human into whom the deity enters. In Kerala a practice termed shamanism, in which people get possessed, often at the behest of high-caste people. For the time that they’re possessed, though, the low-caste people in the village regard the shaman as sanctified and goddesses and high-caste people. In any state of India you can find this sort of possession ritual and worship. In the Himalayan lore, about Tarapith it says, “in the river on the west they called ‘Hindustan’, and all the inhabitants of that area they called Hindus, whether they follow the Sanatan Dharma or not. Sanatan Dharma, which means something like “The Eternal Ordinance,” is the original name of what is now popularly called Hindus.

A large part of Indian religion has always involved being possessed, which means permitting personalities other than your own to enter you and take you over, usually temporarily. As Dr. Smith discovered during the extensive research he did for his book, you can find mentions of possession or of people in ancient Indian texts, including even the Vedas. Possession is not the sort of thing that the Victorian Establishment would approve of; there is something very non-vedantic about being taken over by a disembodied intelligence amidst loud music and wild dancing. The possession aspect of the Sanatan Dharma was therefore deliberately downplayed back when the British had a very strong influence on Indian thought. For the most part, the British wanted to at least the outer parts of Hinduism to be considered as being basically a superstition.

And to bring up the other points about possession. Obviously this is something which is worshiped under certain circumstances and even modern—we have all kinds of channels these days and there was Edgar Cayce and there are the ajabhaat acchaar people. There are all sorts of instances where people are connecting with and perhaps allowing some entity of some sort to come through them and provide wisdom. Of course, there’s the dark side of that, too, where many times you don’t know who you’re inviting. Just because you’re dead doesn’t mean you’re smart and there’s been all sorts of spirits that have been living as disembodied beings and are being used by people.

RA Absolutely. Many people in India claim to be wonderful sadhus and shaktis and channelers and they drink chillums all day long. As Vimalananda pointed out, give somebody a chillum or a bottle of whiskey and within a few years they will be more or less exactly what is really going on with him or her, what is underneath the facade. Twenty years ago, or more, I visited West Bengal, which is the chief center of Tara worship in India. Though there is a temple there, the main place of worship at Tarapith is its smashan, its cremation grounds. More than a century ago a famous saint named Ramakhepa lived in that smashan. Born a year later than Ramakhepa, he lived many years longer. While at Tarapith he built a hut into whose walls dozens of skulls were implanted. That hut, the bhagadi bhagadi, still exists; when I visited it still had quite a nice vibe to it, as did the cremation ground itself.

What disturbed the vibe for me was the observation. I can see that you’ve been using alcohol and doing what people normally do when they drink alcohol: talking excitedly, laughing, or whatever, but in my opinion these are so many charlatans there, many of whom I’ve met, or at least seen. At Tarapith I met some really disgusting people being dishonest, and I thanked my lucky stars that I had for that night a fine place to stay. I was able to get away from the scene, and I had a few experiences ruminating over the fact that at any moment the possibility exists that an earthquake (one just happened last night in the area), a lightning bolt, an eagle carrying a turtle, something might easily be the end of you. I like to remind myself often each day that in our world mortality is everywhere, and death can take you away at any moment.

RA Yeah.

And these drunken sadhus at Tarapith probably started off reminding themselves of that fact as well. But somehow they lost the plot; they began to listen to the charlatans, they employed themselves that they were powerful tantrikas, then reinforced that pattern repeatedly with alcohol. It is very easy to lose that plot, and the reason why alcohol used to be called spirits. When you drink alcohol and let the alcohol take you over, you attract these kinds of entities very much that feed on alcohol, and unless you are very careful it won’t be long before those things take you over. Pretty soon your own personality will begin to dissolve, and eventually so much of it will disappear that it will no longer be able to function independently; at that point your personality has become dependent on alcohol, and on the beings you have conjured up, in order to function at all.

RA It’s interesting. In the thing I read that you sent me, you were talking about spiritual crisis being mistaken for insanity. You were saying that sudden and even intense spiritual experiences are often a nervous system and blow a hole in the person’s aura. And that the aura’s job is to insulate us psychically from one another and to give us a sense of being safe. I think that might be something that would be useful for people to understand more clearly. You know, you hear about aura and you think about aura, and you think about aura, and they say you need to see them and some people say that they do see them. But what their actual function is—this whole notion of disembodied entities might seem esoteric to some people and fanciful or mythological or whatever, but in my opinion these entities are everywhere and all the time, and there is this whole notion of disembodied people who are perceived as being tools of some darker forces.

RA That happens quite often and of course sometimes it’s even more complicated than that. Sometimes people become tools of forces that are not friendly, and because the word ‘Hinduism’ sounds so beautiful, a lot of all kinds of strange stuff that muddies the reputation of this sort of thing.
and beneficial entities may sometimes also channel something very negative that is pretending to be positive.

RA Like the good angel, bad angel thing, on the shoulders.

RS Exactly. There's no reason why, simply because you're open to the one, that you're not going to be open to the other. The two boys at this house where My sister and I both enjoy watching sports: the two boys at this house where I have been watching some of the human beings or demons or Lucifer sitting somewhere, laughing manically and sending out all sorts of bizarre captivated Hieronymus Bosch ghouls. But there are many dimensions to the same possessed. You can get possessed by anger, lust, greed, or any other powerful emotion. Certain disease 'beings' can take you over, as can influences conjured up by black magicians. Many get possessed by ancestors. You don't have to think of your ancestors as still existing to know that, because you've received your genes from your ancestors, they can affect you. And not just the genes; epigenetics tells us that the patterns of which genes are going to be turned on and which genes are turned off can also be passed down, sometimes three or four generations. So, if you have someone who, say, is an alcoholic—we know that as a disease that is often passed down from father to son. People in the past, maybe they were thinking we can find a gene or even a few genes that determine alcoholism, which is often passed down from father to son. But it's not so much the genes themselves as it is the pattern of which genes are turned on and which are turned off, and the circumstances under which a gene might be turned on or off in the context of this bigger pattern. And this is but one way in which your ancestors can affect you.

And then come mind viruses—fascism, communism, capitalism—all infections of the psyche that took over the minds of hundreds of millions of humans, with catastrophic results. Some of the mind viruses are most curious. My family and I both enjoy watching sports, and the two boys at this house where I am now both play basketball. All of us have been watching some of the NCAA tournament games. St. Louis University played a game. St. Louis University is a Jesuit university. Their mascot is the billiken. When I Googled “billiken,” I discovered that the billiken was an image that came in a dream to a woman in 1808 in the United States, one that must not be confused with the kewpi doll which appeared the next year, which the billiken resembles. You will find the billiken on Google. It is a little big-eyed, baby-like character with carefully composed ears and feet. As fate would have it, later that year a temple in Yokohama installed an image of this billiken in its sanctum. The billiken went from being an American woman's dream to a Japanese deity within just a few months. It remained the mascot—or totemic animal—of a Jesuit university in the United States.

RA Funny. It’s interesting you are saying about forces taking over collective mentality, collective consciousness: consumerism, fascism, communism—all those different things. There's something in the bible about the sins of the father visited upon the son or some such thing—

RS —up to the seventh generation, like at the racecourse. While I was in India studying Ayurveda, I spent a lot of time reading the Thoroughbred Stud Book. All thoroughbred racehorses are derived from three foundation sires: the Darley Arabian, the Byerly Turk, and the Godolphin Arabian, and 90% of all racehorses today are descended from the horse Eclipse, who was foaled during an eclipse and never lost a race. When you mate a thoroughbred stallion with a non-thoroughbred mare, you have to continue crossing the progeny with thoroughbreds for seven generations before you can call the progeny of the eighth generation thoroughbred. Why? Because by the eighth generation less than 1% of the blood of the original non-thoroughbred mare remains. It takes seven generations to completely dilute a genetic pattern.

RA And we think of genetic material, of course, as being physical, but perhaps you and I would agree that the genetics is just a physical representation of an even subtler realm.

RS Absolutely.

RA For instance, in terms of reincarnation, if you reincarnate and you bring in certain qualities from a previous life, obviously there's no way that, physically, you could have been carried from one life to the next, but there's some subler vehicle which carries along and then manifests a physical structure and physical DNA appropriate to its tendencies and the tendencies you have to live out.

RS Or, as appropriate to its tendencies as can be the case in the context of the genetic material of the father and mother, which is one place where complications can start for human beings. You have these tendencies that are part of you, that want to continue to express themselves through you in your next lifetime. The tendencies have achieved momentum. There's something in the bible about the sins of the father visited upon the son or some such thing—

RA They say you can't choose your parents—but you do choose your parents.

RS You do choose your parents. The usual case, however, is that just because you choose your parents in the context of one thing that is essential for your current incarnation doesn't mean that the fit will be perfect. Sometimes the fit is perfect: the parents and the children create a unit that's completely and utterly harmonious with no seeming effort. They move ahead as if there had been born to do that, which they were. And sometimes—in my case, I never felt that I fit in, in Texas, Oklahoma, or Louisiana, and I was drawn elsewhere as soon as I could travel. My family never understood why I was there and I never understood why I was there. We found a way to relate to one another in a healthy, loving way, but living rather different lives. On the other hand, although when I first arrived in India I hated the place, it didn't take too long until it was all so familiar to me that I started wondering why I hadn't been born there.

RA Maybe the climate in the place where you grew up got you prepared for living in India.

RS Oh, absolutely.

RA Wouldn't you say that if we zoom back far enough and realize that we're swimming in an ocean of intelligence—it's kind of a cliché to say that everything happens for a reason, everything's perfect as it is, but I ascribe to that. If you look at it deeply enough, there could be accidents in an ocean of infinite intelligence?

RS I agree entirely. And I do not believe that this was an accident at all. It's just that human beings got to where they are because they are sometimes as a result of influences that promote their efforts, and at other times in spite of influences that tried very hard to discourage them.

RA I think of there being three main channels of inheritance that everybody grows up with: the inheritance that you bring from your ancestors, the incarnations, what you bring with you genetically from your mother and father and their parents and those gone before, as well as the effect of the culture in which you develop. My father's parents were from Moravia, Czech Republic, and my mother was not. Had his parents remained the same as my mother's parents somehow ended up in Moravia, and had I been born there, even from the same parents, I would have grown up very differently than I did growing up in Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma.

For one thing, I would have grown up in a place which was very different, and the language is extremely important. My father was born in Texas in 1920; until he was six, he only knew two words of English—eat and woe. Otherwise he spoke Czech, because his parents and siblings spoke Czech. My grandfather's hired hands were Mexican and spoke Mexican. My grandfather's hired hands spoke Mexican, and if we look at duality—we use the terms “positive” and “negative” and they have certain associations; the word “negative” has a pejorative association to it, the main message is that they are polarizing.

A positive charge is attracted to a negative charge, but under certain conditions they will repel one another, and the more they repel one another the greater the polarization of charge until the point where a spark across the gap, or like lighting bolt strikes, or the polarization is resolved in some other way. I agree with you in thinking that currently there is quite a bit of polarization in human society and that it is quite possible that this polarization will keep intensifying until some dramatic event causes it to resolve again. To zoom back far enough, it’s kind of a cultural history. Intense polarization took place during World War II, with democracies confronting totalitarian societies, and different from our present-day totalitarian society, fascist and communist, hating one another even more than the free societies hated the totalitarianism because people get very invested in their concepts of how things ought to be, and are often willing to defend these concepts to the death.

I am reminded of something that Ouspensky wrote in his book In Search of the Miraculous about his studies with Gurdjieff back in Russia in and around the time of the Revolution and World War I. At one point Gurdjieff observed that it was exceedingly fortunate

RS Well, if we do nothing but recognize that nothing would exist without duality—whether it’s in the terms “positive” and “negative” and they have certain associations; the word “negative” has a pejorative association to it, the main message is that they are polarizing.
that his group was able to meet during
the day in such a way that the
socially recognized men in the group
would not be aware of it. We would think of this as
a kind of terrorist activity, but that's not what it was.

Regular inputs from the external environment. Continuous interaction with the outside world is something that keeps us able to function. Whether or not we're aware of it, we're always hearing
subliminal sounds, always receiving
micro-movements of air via our touch
receptors, always seeing one thing or
another. All of these sensory inputs reassure us, remind us that we are part of
the world. From this, comes the sense that a 'no' and 'fruits exists between us.

I have a young friend who works
developing software for complicated imaging applications, some involving
radar. He was invited one day into a
room where they test radars and similar
devices, a room in which, because of the
way it's constructed, there is no
reflection of sound and no reflection
of light. If you shine a beam of light
directly at someone they can see the
beam of light but as soon as you turn the
beam so that it is not directed at
them, no light will be visible to them.

If I talk directly at you, your ears will
detect vibrations in the air away from your
head, you will hear me, but if I turn even
slightly no sound will reach you. This
friend said that after twenty minutes he
felt so weird that he had to leave, but he
discovered that even the guys who
work in there everyday have to limit
their work there to one hour at a time.

RA Wow. Because they need the normal
stimulation.

RS They need that normal stimulation. So
an hour and a half after John Doe ends up in
the giant server in the sky, then what?

RA Also, you know that the normal
totality that our personality can be uploaded
to a computer—I mean a single cell, a
single neuron, is far more complex than the
most sophisticated computer we've
ever designed. You wouldn't have
much of a personality if you only had a single
neuron; you need trillions of them and they
need to all be interconnected in
ways that are—you know, there are
more connections between our neurons than
the stars in the galaxy, so I think it's
going to be a long time before we design
a computer that could store a personality.

RA But not only that. Whenever I have
heard anything about kundalini, it's not
presented as merely some sort of
all-consuming energy, but being intelligent
and having a marvelous intricate way
of transforming us in various ways. If
it's intelligent, then we could certainly imagine
the background and it's just continuously
creating the foundation of this thing
calling it the personality, so—

RA Yeah, it's a nice sci-fi notion but—

RS Did you mean that he was a bit
wrong when he said that the
nucleus of an atom's electrons carry another charge,
the nucleus of an atom carries one electrical charge and
that the nucleus of an atom
Be able to function. Whether or not we're aware of it, we're always hearing
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“dividual,” because parts of us are separate and other parts are shared. So many scientists, in their excitement, missed but the most ‘personal’ part of a person is the personality. And here also we are ‘dividual.’ To paraphrase E.J. Goudsmit of the University of Michigan, the questions of our consciousness ‘is like a small town of Alandi, which boasts many features that are unique to the town, but sometimes you’ll have one only this one. Perhaps the jiva is the core of what we are as an individual. Yes? No?

RA Yes, except for the fact that we can’t even think of a jiva necessarily as being individual, because sometimes you will end up having one jiva manifesting itself in some sense, and sometimes you will have only one jiva manifesting—occasionally at the same time—in the same human being. Few are the people who don’t have to hear this, because almost everyone likes to think ‘I am an individual.’ The job of akamkara is to identify things that I believe are mine: this is mine; here’s my shirt; here are my glasses; here is my knowledge; here is my spouse; here is my house. It’s just the nature of akamkara.

RA So you would probably agree that there is no ultimate beyond which you can see everything. There is in my opinion no use to announce that we’ve come to the end of the universe, full of all sorts of potential possibilities. Instead there is one in a billion. For most people, they’re out of here. Anyone who could function within the universe as you mean enlightenment? Moksha literally means emancipation or liberation; it means that you’ve been freed. As my mentor liked to say, “moksha kahani iti mokshah;” the destruction of delusion is moksha. Vimalananda liked to say that the way it looks now, to modern physicists, big bangs are happening all the time, even as we speak.

RA Some physicists say it’s like bubbles in a gigantic ocean, all popping and all bubbling around. A few minutes ago you ranted off a description of what some people might like to do, which is sit down, awaken, awaken your dadaism, and don’t mean that you’re going to become supreme in the universe, or means that you have gained the ability to function within the universe as you mean to function. So as far as I have been taught, and as far as I have myself seen, every experience that can be had can also be transcended itself. You can’t do it, however tiny. As my Jyotish guru, a very eccentric Punjabi gentleman, likes to say, “a real guru makes only one mistake every thousand years or so. A mistake is still a mistake, still a limitation. Jesus Christ on the cross asked why he had been forsaken. He was taken off the cross, and there was an awareness that he had not been forsaken, but for that tiny moment he lost that awareness. And that was Jesus Christ’s experience of ignorance.”

RA Everybody has some limitation, and there’s no use in pretending otherwise. There is in my opinion no use to announce that we’ve come to the end of the history, or the end of the Vedas, or the end of anything else; and there is certainly no use to declare that you’ve become enlightened. As soon as you say that you’re enlightened—well, I don’t even think there’s a word for enlightenment in Sanskrit, in the sense that the word has taken on in the modern world.
experience it, if they do, of what happens when kundalini begins to awaken and the various stages of progress that one has to undergo in order for its awakening to reach its full blossoming or maturity.

RS I think the best thing that can be said about kundalini awakening is that it is truly individual, absolutely different for everyone who experiences it. I think it is best to put things into perspective, that people try to talk about a standard kundalini experience, as if there were such a thing. In fact, merely knowing the word ‘kundalini’ and having some idea about the chakras offers your awareness——offers your amakura and kundalini——something to identify with, and can in some cases distort your experience. Maybe, possibly, you have awakened kundalini without bothering to awaken any of the chakras or maybe you’ve only awakened one chakra but you read that there are six chakras that all have to be awakened and then you start to pay attention to all of those six chakras and meditate on each one to, since ultimately you don’t need to pay any attention to anything other than the supreme reality. What is important, for instance, is that you pay attention to the subtle body. Being a seed, it has a strong potentiality——in the subtle body——to act in any direction until the moment that it has gained immense experience, the awareness of the life force itself, the life experience of all protoplasm ever since.

During the more than three billion years of life on Earth, this awareness has been established in living protoplasm, from the very moment that protoplasm appeared on Earth, and has evolved its own awareness, the awareness of the life force itself, the life experience of all protoplasm ever since. From the perspective of the body——especially our commensal bacteria but also our human cells——prana is god, because it provides all of our cells with life and vitality. The amount of manifested awareness is not always limited in a human being, although it is not large, but the amount of awareness manifested in prana itself is indeed vast. Prana possesses consciousness, not only the subtle body, but also the real human being. We think of when we think about consciousness, but rather the awareness of life itself. Prana was born at the moment that the organism that has been called the ‘protoplasmic seed’ sprouted.

For example, if we think of the pranic body as the ‘best possible protoplasmic platform’ through which to radiate awareness, it is only after puberty begins that ideation really starts, because of the age at which sexual awareness begins. Everything that goes on in the universe has its own agenda, the agenda of nature is that all existing species should evolve, which require all species to undergo certain particular stages of growth that only individual species can undergo. One of those stages is the moment that the mind begins to evolve, so that the species-pattern that has been established in living protoplasm can continue and eventually create new species. Tremendous energy has been working tirelessly via the various species of humans for millions of years for the purpose of moving us in the direction of increasing openness to the supreme reality, and the energy of nature has been simultaneously moving us equally ceaselessly in the direction of continuing to evolve the various species of human. Both these agendas require reproduction, which can only happen when one sperm and one egg meet. It is speaking of the moment when the producers and bearers of sperm and ova come together. In plants pollen must first receive energetic force, via the wind and bees and other animals, be formed inside the spore. When we humans think of when we think about sex, we think of the moment that two men, or two women, or a man and a woman, meet. Nature furthers its agenda by promoting individuality, and this is why adolescence provides us an opportunity to introduce adolescents to the kundalini and reproduction.

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Only an opportunity, for often such an introduction is not feasible; today especially, kids get so easily taken over by Facebook and Twitter and other similar forms of addictive social media that they spread their awareness so far outside of the ‘take’ archetype, that they never become acquainted with the world of genuine archetypes. Even when it is feasible to introduce awareness to kundalini it may not be easy, though it is often easier for girls than for boys, because girls enjoy a natural ‘initiation into adulthood’ in the form of menstruation. As soon as a girl starts to bleed, a wise mother will take advantage of that radical shift from childhood into fertility by presenting to her the lady of the house for forty years thus far, ‘I met her husband a quarter-century back, and the two boys when they were born——they are now 24 and 19. I’ve met them regularly every year since their births, and now I often do things with them as adults, including traveling together.

RA Some people probably don’t do either.

RS Many people do not do either. Perhaps they’re helping out in some other way. I hope so. In any event, nature obliges all individuals of all species to go through sexual reproduction in humans happens solely as the result of the union of one female human and one male human. Now we’re talking fundamentally about the point of human life. Nature furthers its agenda by promoting individuality, and this is why adolescence provides us an opportunity to introduce adolescents to the kundalini and reproduction. Only an opportunity, for often such an introduction is not feasible; today especially, kids get so easily taken over by Facebook and Twitter and other similar forms of addictive social media that they spread their awareness so far outside of the ‘take’ archetype, that they never become acquainted with the world of genuine archetypes. Even when it is feasible to introduce awareness to kundalini it may not be easy, though it is often easier for girls than for boys, because girls enjoy a natural ‘initiation into adulthood’ in the form of menstruation. As soon as a girl starts to bleed, a wise mother will take advantage of that radical shift from childhood into fertility by presenting to her the lady of the house for forty years thus far, ‘I met her husband a quarter-century back, and the two boys when they were born——they are now 24 and 19. I’ve met them regularly every year since their births, and now I often do things with them as adults, including traveling together.

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When spiritual things get organized—organized—you know the old saying: institution. When things start to get thing. But not everybody can do this, world even though I’m going to be spontaneous, then that’s great. If you celibacy is something that’s natural and for a whole class of people, then there's mandated for everyone, at least we’re discussing here, but it’s not for celibacy, which probably arose in the We could talk about priestly limitations. But, in the context of those things that you can do that will move you to the supreme reality, or you will use these strategies work well for them. This work because humans are willing to identify these other species as members of the category of important, for some people, their pets are their family. Our species does things like this because of ahamkara, the ability to identify as self things other than ourselves. When you start to release ahamkara from your normal self-definition, you start to ask, “Who am I? Now I know that I’m not just the body, and if I am not just the body, then who exactly am I?” Just asking the question “Who am I?” was sufficient for Ramanuja Mahatirtha.Defense of the view that there is no self, but that there is only the universe. Creating a self out of the universe, because everybody doesn’t have that supreme ability to see things in their true nature, is a big limitation. Sh Mataji says that although people give discourses on the Bhagavad Gita all the time, they don’t realize that the Bhagavad Gita was written by Krishna, not by Shri Vishnu, to Arjuna, who was nearly a rishi himself. We only have the record of the words they used, unless you’re at a similar level of awareness, how will you be able to perceive the actual prana that was being conveyed between them, the emotions that were being conveyed? You won’t, and being human won’t you only be able to learn the words, and you will try to interpret the words without the shakti that they transmitted. Maybe you’ll come up with some novel interpretation, and you’ll find some people who will go along with those interpretations, and they will build you a temple and ashram, and you will start to get people who are creating more complications instead of disconnecting yourself from your already-existing complications.

RA You brought up some interesting points there. The one about the plants, I’d like to summarize that, I would say that there’s an evolutionary force that permeates and ultimately motivates all creation and that you can see it functioning in various plant and animal species. You contrast the way that you have—other species, and that’s mandated for everyone, at least in a very different place than you would have had you simply followed that desire to where it was leading you, directed by your personal karmas, the karmas of your parents, and the karmas of your culture. That’s of course where we hope that your desire to be a dancer, even when I was young and vital and enthusiastic. I could’ve tried, but I would have failed miserably. You have to know your limitations. But, in the context of those limitations, there are still many, many things that you can do that will move you in the direction where you really need to be. Limitations is being as transparent as possible to the supreme reality while at the same time being a functional human being.

RA We could talk about priestly celibacy, which probably arose in the Catholic church from this principle we’re discussing here, but it’s not for everyone and if it becomes something that’s mandated for everyone, at least for a whole class of people, then there is problems.

RS And we see what the problems are. If celibacy is something that’s spontaneous, then that’s great. If you realize to yourself, wait, this is not really what I want to do, I don’t really want to stay celibate, my desire is to be more spontaneous, then that’s great. If you want to spend my time more in that other world even though I’m going to be partly in this world—that’s a wonderful thing. But not everybody can do this, and especially not in the context of an institution. When things start to get organized—you know the old saying: God said, “Have you heard?” and the devil said, “Great, I organize it!” When spiritual things get organized—

not just in the Christian church, in any organization—problems will arise. Consider India’s sadhus. Though some are really genuine, fine human beings, and a few are most amazing, probably 90% or 95% are just ordinary individuals who should not have taken sahaj yana. A few of them are actually malign. Many wander around saying, “Yes, I’m celibate,” meaning “celibate” in every particular sense. As Krishna said in India, “Mile to mari, nahi to sada brahmachari,” which translated loosely means “If I find her I will enjoy sex with her” (actually a stronger word is used), “otherwise I’m always a brahmachari.” So, “I’m a brahmachari”—when I’m not having sex.

RS Yeah—a lot of hypocrites and phonies out there.

RS All of us, at some time or another, me especially, have acted hypocritically, but there is great value in being able to at least to admit to yourself what you are and not to try to hide it, and to find a way to stop doing it. Ultimately, once you develop in yourself a really strong pattern, it can become so strong that it can take you over. As Vimalakinda would say frequently when I was pouring out whiskey for him, “Whenever you drink, remember one thing: either the drink is going to drink you or you are going to drink it.” What he meant was that whiskey will change your internal chemistry, which will change your awareness, and either you will use that altered awareness to become more open to the supreme reality, or you will use that for reinforcement, to be the limitations of your awareness, which will drive you to repeat your usual mistakes. In this context your biggest mistake will be to think that you are diferente, because since that is alcohol’s chief agenda. Alcohol wants you to drink it, so that people will brew and distill more of it, so that more people will drink it. Michael Pollan—in his book is so appropriate, since he writes about botany—wrote a book entitled The Botany of Desire, a book about how four species—the apple, the potato, and the cannabis, and the potato—have given you an idea about potential creative uses for this energy, uses other than simple procreation, uses other than what they were evolved for, and what you may be imagining about it. Interesting transformational possibilities do exist, subject to practical limitations. In my case, I never wanted to become a professional dancer, but had I that desire, I would not have been able to fulfill it, because I was never coordinated enough to become a dancer, even when I was young and vital and enthusiastic. I could’ve tried, but I would have failed miserably. You have to know your limitations. But, in the context of those limitations, there are still many, many things that you can do that will move you in the direction where you really need to be. Limitations is being as transparent as possible to the supreme reality while at the same time being a functional human being.

RS Exactly. In my personal case, I had no idea at all about kundalini when just a few weeks after I turned 16, I took LSD for the first time. All of a sudden, without knowing anything about India’s spirituality—OK, I had read the Bhagavad Gita maybe, without understanding anything about it, it was particularly interesting—that was of course the Edgerton translation which was a bit—

RS Pretty dry—

RS Dry, yes. All of a sudden—I had never heard the word “prana” before but all of a sudden I KNEW what prana was, I felt it moving, I understood how it was moving, and I also understood that if I permitted myself to do so, I could easily depart from my body. I also understood without knowing how I thought it was something that I could use at that moment—having never had any ideas of this sort of thing before—I
still somehow understood that if I exited right then that I would be unlikely to be able to return. There was a strong pull to leave, and a strong sense of needing to stay; I spent quite a number of hours in that in-between state. Those hours during which I was neither coming and not leaving created some tensions in my psychical body that took many, many years to work out.

The next trip (I took LSD), I took LSD—I don’t know—another 100, 150, times even though it didn’t benefit me by providing me further clarity about how to proceed. However, LSD and the other entheogens I later experimented with were, at that time, in the 60s in Oklahoma, the only things that I knew of that I could use to expose myself to an immaterial reality that I knew I had to get more of.

Once I realized that I had to find another path to follow, I knew I had to go abroad to try to find it. When in the mood I can be methodical, so I figured out a way to graduate from college, and in May 1974 I went to Africa, which was, at the time, the most exotic location that I could think of. I crossed Africa overland from the west coast to the east coast. In Kenya I needed a long-term visa. The easiest way to get one was by applying to be a member of Kenya’s Pokot tribe.

Joining the tribe was quite an experience for me, though I had to proceed to Europe shortly afterward to intend to return and spend a longer time. That experience did, however, stay with me for many years to work out. Several other unusual experiences I had while crossing the continent. I was, for example, cured of a severe disease by a “witch doctor” in Ivry Coast, and while I was recuperating there, I read Autobiography of a Yogi. After finishing it, I knew I needed to check yogic breathing and not leaving created some tensions in my psychical body that took many, many years to work out.

RA You’re saying that perhaps your LSD use actually awakened kundalini and that once awakened it’s connected to your course of life in ways that probably your peers back in Oklahoma couldn’t have imagined and you could never have imagined. I would propose that the way to connect to that reality, to that universal and the individual and can live in that connected way. Is that what you’re saying?

RS Exactly. I would propose that awareness of your awakening is coming disconnected from your individuality and becomes connected to the cosmic or the ultimate or whatever you want to call it, that you are a part of. You are able to connect to that reality. At this stage it would probably be a physical connectedness. If you take it over by a disembodied human or some other astral being with a not-supreme reality; you would explode.

RA Western psychology refers to something else that it is that keeps you stuck in some concept and use it as a scapegoat. If the energy floods the left nostril you’ll start to burn up; if it takes over the right nostril is the sun, the left nostril is the moon; the right nostril is juna, the left nostril is bhakti. Eventually you need to do both and the channels in the pranic body that are associated with them, into balance. But that’s not so easy. Once you grab hold of the tiger, and the tiger starts to sprint, it will keep you from being able to do the internalization and externalization, this pravritti.

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chakra is supposed to be, but they are less subtle regions of the pranic body, and in its less subtle forms appears in regular expression of desire for food of awareness if you want to reach them.

body: so that you will have to willfully calm and stable, otherwise you can do directly connect to those five elements elements exist, the five elements that level of sushumna where the chakras more subtle before it can attain to the sushumna is doable, with some effort.

seeds of those chakras—subtle spaces where it can activate the RS Well, let’s suppose that the kundalini the takeover of unbounded awareness. And to prevent its dissolution, to prevent to reinforce, as you just said, to buttress That is a real interesting point you trying to dissolve it; and the personality continue to exist while kundalini is a sense of stability to permit it to a certain quality and degree of absolute whatever personality structures you may limitations continuously re-dissolved, and all detectable personality limitations continuously re-discovered, as well as the egoism of knowledge, the that suggest that, from a mathematical point of view, the entire universe is nothing but relationship. Forget the particles, the waves, and everything else. Relationships alone exist. In India, we say that these relationships with various forms of awareness interacting with themselves—RA—consciousness interacting with itself

Rs Well, let’s suppose that the kundalini is awakening, the prana is moving now, trying to get into upper, very, very subtle spaces where it can activate the seeds of those chakras—

Rs Getting your prana to move into sushumna is doable, with some effort. But prana moving in sushumna means nothing more than prana moving in sushumna. Prana has to become much more subtle before it can attain to the level of sushumna where the chakras are, which is the level where the five elements exist, the five elements that make up the fabric of our external reality. When you start to be able to directly connect to those five elements it is critically important that you be able to move that energy, but then fail to regain the real damage to yourself. That’s why the chakras are buried so deep in the pranic body: so that you will have to willfully apply your calm awareness of untroubled non-duality, to directly communicate with God, he had extracted the Israelites from Egypt and guided them through decades in the wilderness, and just at the moment when he and they were about to enter the Promised Land God said: “Speak to the rock over there and it will give you water.” Maybe because of the influence of Satan, or of his akamanka, he acted because God wanted to understand or for some other reason, Moses didn’t speak to the rock, instead he hit it with his staff. Water came out, no doubt, and everyone drank; but then God said: “Oh, my goodness, Moses, what have you done? Now, as a result of this, you can’t go to the Promised Land which you’re trying to enter; and the personality structures that are most likely to be available to be self-identified are those very blind spots.

RA That is a real interesting point you just made. It’s insidious. There’s this sort of subtle tricky tendency which usually flies totally beneath our radar to reinforce, as you just said, butters structures of the individuality of the ego and to prevent its dissolution, to prevent the takeover of unbound awareness. It’s so tricky. That’s what they say Maya is. There are so many interesting stories in the Vedic literature about maya tripping people up.

Rs Yes, like the story of Narada, the celestial musician who wanders from universe to universe as a devotee of Lord Vishnu—

RA Oh, is this the story about the water?

Rs Indeed. Narada asked Vishnu, who was in his true aspect, to begin to Narada said, “OK, go meditate over there.” Narada sat by the river, meditating on Vishnu. Before long an enormous horde of devas suddenly Narada was overcome by love for her, and forgot Vishnu entirely. Narada and the woman married and lived happily ever after until one day a terrible flood came that washed away Narada’s home and family. This made Narada miserable, and as he sobbed uncontrollably over his lost Vishnu suddenly reappeared and said, “Now have you seen Maya?” If Maya can do this to a being like Narada, what might Maya do to you or me? What about Moses? Moses was no ordinary person; he had directly communicated with God, he had extracted the Israelites from Egypt and guided them through decades in the wilderness, and just at the moment when he and they were about to enter the Promised Land God said: “Speak to the rock over there and it will give you water.” Maybe because of the influence of Satan, or of his akamanka, he acted because God wanted to understand or for some other reason, Moses didn’t speak to the rock, instead he hit it with his staff. Water came out, no doubt, and everyone drank; but then God said: “Oh, my goodness, Moses, what have you done? Now, as a result of this, you can’t go to the Promised Land which you’re trying to enter; and the personality structures that are most likely to be available to be self-identified are those very blind spots.

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experience the reality of the supreme 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, without dissolving. You must be so amazed, so filled with gratitude, or your nose, or somewhere else, there must be some interface that will permit you to connect to your limited being. Even if you are able to drive your organism from way up in the sky, you will still need to somehow connect the blissful you and your microscopic, mundane, blissless organism. Whatever is your connection will be your Achilles’ heel.

RA Yeah, and to a great extent it’s a matter of integration and stabilization. I think there are people who— I think there’s a phrase people use that you diged this the ultimate, the supreme— is largely predominant 24/7 but it’s like a zoom lens which, if they’re in traffic, it’s gonna reside in the background a little bit because they have to deal with the situation at hand. But it doesn’t take long for it to zoom forth again once it’s practice time. It’s a zoom lens that can take Christ earlier and getting crucified and kinda losing it on the cross for a bit. I always wonder about people who say they’re awakened or enlightened. “How well would this hold up under crucifixion?” It mean it sounds a little morbid, it sounds a little gruesome, but I think this is a way to make this enlightenment actually stabilized under the most severe possible conditions?

RS I have traveled to Italy on many occasions, and have often visited Assisi. I have traveled to Italy on many occasions, and have often visited Assisi. I have traveled to Italy on many occasions, and have often visited Assisi. I have traveled to Italy on many occasions, and have often visited Assisi.

RA It’s happened on many occasions. And if you don’t have a guru, there’s this Grand Example of Dattatreya. He’s not called Dattatreya in the Stridham Bhagavatam; in that text, he is known as “the avadhuta,” but Dattatreya is well known as the original and ultimate avadhuta. Dattatreya explains that he had 24 gurus, none of them was ever aware that they were acting as gurus to him. He witnessed what was going on in his lives, learned from it, and transformed himself. Of course, he was Dattatreya. So far there’s been only one Dattatreya.

RA And that is the story in the Mahababawata where Arjuna’s rival for supremacy in archery was rejected by their gurus because they found Arjuna’s student to be so good that Arjuna would murder him. The guy went off into the forest and built a little statue of the guru, worshiped that statue, and became the best archer, until the guru caught on to it. He made him cut his thumb off—but.

RS I get two main lessons form that story. First of all, Arjuna, in his dharma, in his obligation to his guru, had to murder his guru. He had to do something unfathomable. Number one is, if you are truly focused, as Ekalavya was, and not cheating your awareness, you may be able to project that quality of guru-ness onto something and have that thing guide you. But it is so easy to cheat your awareness: “Oh, my guru said this, or Arjuna has lasagna today. OK, I will or,” “The guru has revealed to me that you will become my consort.” Provided that you can sustain enough power to use such a guru-projection as a guru.

RA The other lesson relates to Dronacharya, Ekalavya’s weapons guru. If you are a guru and someone has gone through that guru-projection process and has succeeded so spectacularly that he actually became a better archer than any of your personal students, then you need to accept that face that you were in fact his guru, though you were never such in person. Making such a student chop off his thumb, which ruined him as an archer, is a terrific insult to the process of teaching itself; you perfect a student and then destroy their progress. You turn it all over to pay a heavy price for that karma, so it happened with Dronacharya. When during the war he (wrongly) believed that his son Adhvartana had been killed, he became so despondent that he permitted himself to be killed.

RS Interesting. I forgot that was the resolution of the story. It was something that Arjuna made his Kaliya cut his thumb off, I thought, wow, what a creep.

RA India has two epic. The Ramayana, which is all about Rama, who believed that his son Ashwattama had been murdered during the war he (wrongly) believed that his son Adhvartana had been killed, he became so despondent that he permitted himself to be killed. And in the Mahababawata where Arjuna’s rival for supremacy in archery was rejected by their gurus because they found Arjuna’s student to be so good that Arjuna would murder him. The guy went off into the forest and built a little statue of the guru, worshiped that statue, and became the best archer, until the guru caught on to it. He made him cut his thumb off—but.

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RS: That’s the same thing here. Because this is a kind of a death and rebirth experience that thought that you have as you’re dying to your previous self is going to determine substantially how you’re reborn to your new self, even though it happens to be in the same physical body.

RA: Although the last thought at the time of death is the most important thing in life to stay calm. That’s probably the thing that I want to emphasize. If you don’t have faith in the last face that you would see in the transition period, then I think that last thought at the time of death isn’t necessarily edifying.

RA: One thing more, which I would like to say about the kundalini problem. They might want to look that up. You’ve written about a dozen books, including Aghora, books I, II, and III, the Greatness of Saturn—quite a renaissance man.

RA: The last thought at the time of death determines the next transformational experience. Is there anything that is in your mind or that you’d like to throw out before we finish? Anything we haven’t covered?

RA: Yeah. Whatever is most dear to you will come to you if you like, if you are not misdirected being unblocked or redirected. And that thought becomes subtle enough to have a thoughtdominate. You’re reborn to your new self, even though it happens to be in the same physical body.

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RS: So wouldn’t you say that the real anchor that we need to take refuge in is the self, the absolute. That’s why Krishna was able to smile on the battlefield because he was that ultimate reality and therefore the drama unfolding before him couldn’t overshadow him. We can’t look to the ancient texts, the Vedas, and the Upanishads to address to people who are now asking themselves, is it not real? Both camps are divided—

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